

Homily of Thirty-Second Sunday in Ordinary Time of Year A, 2020

Wisdom 6:12-16; Psalm 63:2-8; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; Matthew 25:1-13

This Sunday and next Sunday, we will continue our reflection on the end of time, as we begin to approach the end of the Liturgical year. The first reading reminds us of Psalm 90:12 that says, "Make us know the shortness of our life that we may gain wisdom of heart." Our life on earth is limited. Psalm 90:10 says, "Seventy is the sum of our years, or eighty, if we are strong." According to Guinness World Records, the greatest fully authenticated age to which any human has ever lived is 122 years (Jeanne Louise Calment, 1875 – 1997 in France). This is nothing compared to eternity. The readings today teach us that we need wisdom to live our earthly life in order to prepare for eternal life.

We read in the second reading, "For the Lord himself, with a word of command, with the voice of an archangel and with the trumpet of God, will come down from heaven, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air." We do not know when this collective end of time will happen. Jesus, himself, says, "It is not for you to know the times or seasons that the Father has established by his own authority" (Acts 1:7). But we are sure of the individual end of time which we experience daily. We need wisdom to prepare for our personal end of time.

Wisdom is the first of the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit. The first reading says that wisdom "is readily perceived by those who love her, and found by those who seek her. ... Because she makes her rounds, seeking those worthy of her, and graciously appears to them on the way, and goes to meet them with full attention."

We are like the wise and foolish virgins in the Gospel. We do not know the arrival time of Jesus, the bridegroom. We need wisdom to stay awake and ready for his arrival to take us to eternity. We are the lamps; wisdom is the oil. As long as there is wisdom in us, our light will not go out. We will continue to be "the light of the world" (Matthew 5:14). Wisdom is life in Christ. Life in Christ means to be guided by the Spirit and the light of Jesus Christ.

The parable of the ten virgins teaches us the need to think ahead and plan ahead. This rule of planning ahead concerns every aspect of our existence. It is foolishness and at one's peril to disregard this rule.

The parable teaches us to remain firm on what is right. The foolish virgins' request represents those suggestions that put pressure on us to follow the path of sin. The foolish virgins' request represents trials and temptations that come our way, capable of swaying us away from the right course of action. The parable encourages us to be wise and courageous enough to decline such requests. The parable encourages us not to please someone and displease God.

Jesus says, "Stay awake, for you do not know neither the day nor the hour." Stay awake means stay awake in prayer; stay vigilant, stay watchful and alert against the deceits of the Evil One and his agents.

Wisdom 9:6 says, "For even if one is perfect among the sons of men, yet without the wisdom that comes from God, he will be regarded as nothing." The crises and chaos we experience in many places is because men and women have abandoned the wisdom that comes from God. The flask of oil becomes empty and the light goes out.

Let us conclude with these instructions from Proverbs 4:4-9: "Let your heart hold fast my words: keep my commands, and live! Get wisdom, get understanding! Do not forget or turn aside from the words of my mouth. Do not forsake her, and she will preserve you; love her, and she will safeguard you. The beginning of wisdom is: get wisdom; whatever else you get, get understanding. Extol her, and she will exalt you; she will bring you honors if you embrace her; She will put on your head a graceful diadem; a glorious crown will she bestow on you".

Fr. Martin Eke, MSP