

Homily of Thirty-Second Sunday in Ordinary Time of Year A, 2023

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

The readings of this Sunday and next Sunday call our attention to reflect on the end of time, especially as we begin to approach the end of the Church's liturgical year.

Today's readings remind us Psalm 90:12, "Make us know the shortness of our life that we may gain wisdom of heart." The readings teach us that we need God's wisdom to live earthly life with integrity and be ready for eternal life.

St. Paul writes 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 ... 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. But we are sure of the individual end of time which occurs daily.

We are like the wise and foolish virgins in today's gospel. We do not know the arrival time of Jesus, the bridegroom. Therefore, 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. We need God's wisdom to stay awake and be ready for our personal end of time.

The parable of the ten virgins teaches us the need to think ahead and plan ahead in a positive way. This rule of positively thinking ahead and planning ahead concerns not only for eternal life but every aspect of our existence. It is foolishness, and anyone's regret who disregards this rule.

The parable, also, teaches us to remain firm on what is right and not sway to what is wrong. The foolish virgins' request represents those suggestions that put pressure on us to follow the path of sin. The request represents trials and temptations that come our way, capable of swaying us away from the right course of action to the wrong course of action. The parable encourages us to be wise and courageous enough to withstand such pressures and to decline such requests. It is an unhealthy attitude to be a pleaser ("a person who has an emotional need to please others often at the expense of his or her own needs or desires").

The first reading says that wisdom is "readily perceived by those who love her, and found by those who seek her. ... She makes her rounds, seeking those worthy of her, and graciously appears to them in the ways, and meets them with all solitude." Wisdom 7:22-30 says, wisdom "penetrates and pervades all things" and "produces friends of God and prophets."

God's wisdom inspires, enlightens, and guides us. 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 our lives and in our world is

because men and women have abandoned the wisdom that comes from God. St. Paul writes, "The wisdom of this world is foolishness with God" (1 Corinthians 3:19). On the other hand, St. Paul exclaims, "Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God!" (Romans 11:33). If only you and I, and everyone would draw from and rely on the wisdom and knowledge of God, our world would be a better place.

Proverbs 4:4-9 advises us, "Get wisdom, get understanding! ... Do not forsake her, and she will preserve you; love her, and she will safeguard 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."

Seven ways we can get wisdom:

First: by praying for it. "If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God ... and he will be given it" (James 1:5). Solomon testifies, "I prayed, and understanding was given to me; I called upon God, and the spirit of wisdom came to me" (Wisdom 7:7).

Second: by knowing the word of God and acting on it. "For the Lord gives wisdom; from his mouth comes knowledge and understanding" (Proverbs 2:6). "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but from every word that comes from the mouth of God'" (Matthew 4:4). "Everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them to practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock ..." (Matthew 7:24).

Third: by knowing Jesus Christ, who is "the power and the wisdom of God" (1 Corinthians 1:24).

Fourth: by turning away from sin. "Into a soul that plots evil wisdom does not enter, nor does she dwell in a body under debt of sin. For the Holy Spirit of discipline flees deceit..." (Wisdom 1:4). Wisdom is the first of the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Fifth: by reflecting on events and signs of times and gaining wisdom from them. Jesus says, "You know how to judge the appearance of the sky, but you cannot judge the signs of the times" (Matthew 16:3).

Sixth: Proverbs 13:20, "Walk with the wise and you become wise, but the companion of fools fares badly." And Tobit 4:18, "Seek counsel from every wise person, and do not think lightly of any useful advice."

Seventh: by perceiving and comprehending what is perceived. Wisdom comes from having eyes that see, ears that hear, and a mind that is open.

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