

Commentary on the Gospel: Behold, the Bridegroom!

Gospel for the 32nd Sunday in Ordinary Time (Cycle A), and commentary.

Gospel (*Mt 25:1-13*)

“Then the kingdom of heaven shall be compared to ten maidens who took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. For when the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them; but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps. As the bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept. But at midnight

there was a cry, ‘Behold, the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.’ Then all those maidens rose and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said to the wise, ‘Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.’ But the wise replied, ‘Perhaps there will not be enough for us and for you; go rather to the dealers and buy for yourselves.’ And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the marriage feast; and the door was shut. Afterward the other maidens came also, saying, ‘Lord, lord, open to us.’ But he replied, ‘Truly, I say to you, I do not know you.’ Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.”

Commentary

In Jesus' times wedding celebrations were quite elaborate affairs, taking place amid a festive and joyous atmosphere. Some months beforehand the betrothal took place, where the future bride and groom publicly committed themselves to marriage. But only later was the bride received into her new home by her husband to begin life in common and form a family. In this second ceremony, the friends of the bridegroom took an active part in the celebration.

Accompanying the bride were friends from her youth, the "virgins" the parable speaks about, who were unmarried like her. These young women ordinarily arrived ahead of time in the place where the wedding feast was to be held. When evening was falling, and the groom accompanied by his friends arrived, they went out to meet him and the festivities began. Music started

playing, the wine flowed freely, and everyone danced joyfully until late in the night.

Jesus speaks about a wedding in which the bridegroom is late in arriving. Some of the bride's friends, with little foresight, failed to bring enough oil for their lamps. When they go to buy what they need, the door was shut and they were left outside.

The Master makes use of this parable to emphasize the need to always be well prepared to receive our Lord when he comes, since we know neither the day nor the hour. He will come at the end of time, but he will also receive each of us at the end of our earthly life to judge us. "That day will come for us," Saint Josemaria reminds us. "It will be our last day, but we are not afraid of it. Trusting firmly in God's grace, we are ready from this very moment to be

generous and courageous, and take loving care of little things: we are ready to go and meet our Lord, with our lamps burning brightly. For the feast of feasts awaits us in Heaven.”[1]

Our lack of foresight or our foolishness, putting off repentance or confession, delaying the decision to truly give ourselves, can deprive us of glory forever. In contrast, a life lived facing God, without neglecting small things, can open the gates of heaven to us. We see this in those friends of the bride who had the foresight to prepare themselves well, and went in to enjoy the feast, while the others remained outside.

Those young women, Saint Josemaria continued, “either didn’t know how to get ready properly or they didn’t want to and they forgot to take the sensible precaution of buying oil in due time. They were not generous

enough to carry out properly the little that had been entrusted to them. They had been told with many hours to spare, but they had wasted their time.”[2]

“Let us take a good honest look at our own lives. How is it that sometimes we just can’t find those few minutes it would take to finish lovingly the work we have to do, which is the very means of our sanctification? Why do we neglect our family duties? Why that tendency to rush through our prayers, or through the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass? How are we so lacking in calm and serenity when it comes to fulfilling the duties of our state, and yet so unhurried as we indulge in our own whims? You might say these are trifling matters. You’re right, they are, but these trifles are the oil, the fuel we need to keep our flame alive and our light shining.”[3]

[1] Saint Josemaria, *Friends of God*, no. 40.

[2] *Ibid.*, no. 41.

[3] *Ibid.*, no. 41.

Francisco Varo

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