Friday of the Twenty-first Week in Ordinary Time

Gospel text (*Mt* 25:1-13): Jesus told his disciples this parable: “The Kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish and five were wise. The foolish ones, when taking their lamps, brought no oil with them, but the wise brought flasks of oil with their lamps. Since the bridegroom was long delayed, they all became drowsy and fell asleep. At midnight, there was a cry, ‘Behold, the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!’ Then all those virgins got up and trimmed their lamps. The foolish ones said to the wise, ‘Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.’ But the wise ones replied, ‘No, for there may not be enough for us and you. Go instead to the merchants and buy some for yourselves.’ While they went off to buy it, the bridegroom came and those who were ready went into the wedding feast with him. Then the door was locked. Afterwards the other virgins came and said, ‘Lord, Lord, open the door for us!’ But he said in reply, ‘Amen, I say to you, I do not know you.’ Therefore, stay awake, for you know neither the day nor the hour.”

“Amen, I say to you, I do not know you.”

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Today, Friday the 21st of Ordinary Time, the Lord reminds us in the Gospel that we must always be vigilant and ready to meet Him. At midnight, at any moment, there may be a knock at the door, inviting us to come out and meet the Lord. Death does not make an appointment. In fact, “you know neither the day nor the hour” (Mt 25:13).

To be vigilant does not mean to live in fear and anxiety. It means to live our lives responsibly as children of God, our lives of faith, hope, and charity. The Lord continually awaits our response of faith and love, constant and patient, amidst the concerns and worries that shape our lives.

And this response can only be given by us, you and I. No one can do it for us. This is what the wise virgins' refusal to share their oil with the foolish virgins means: “Go instead to the merchants and buy some for yourselves” (Mt 25:9). Thus, our response to God is personal and exclusive.

Let us not wait for a “tomorrow”—which may never come—to light the lamp of our love for the

Bridegroom. Carpe diem! We must live every second of our lives with all the passion a Christian should feel for his Lord. It is a well-known saying, but it bears repeating: “Live each day of your life as if it were the first day of your existence, as if it were the only day you have, as if it were the last day of your life.” A realistic call to the necessary and reasonable conversion we must undertake.

May God, in his great mercy, grant us the grace that we may not have to hear in our final hour: “Amen, I say to you, I do not know you” (Mt 25:12), that is, “You have had no relationship or dealings with me.” Let us treat the Lord in this life in such a way that we may become his acquaintances and friends in time and in eternity.

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- “You have a task, my soul, a great task if you so desire. Scrutinize yourself seriously, your being, your destiny; where you come from and where you must rest; seek to know whether it is life that you are living or if it is something more. You have a task, my soul, so purify your life” (St Gregory Nazianzus)

- “It is not enough for the Christian to wait, he must “act”» (Benedict XVI)

- “Christ is the center of all Christian life. The bond with him takes precedence over all other bonds, familial or social. From the very beginning of the Church there have been men and women who have renounced the great good of marriage to follow the Lamb wherever he goes... to meet the Bridegroom who is coming...” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, No. 1618)