

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, 21st week in ordinary time, the Lord, in the Gospel, reminds us of the convenience of staying always awake and ready to meet him. Whether at midnight, or at any other moment, a cry can ring out at our door to invite us to come out and meet our Lord. Death never makes appointments. In fact, “you know neither the day nor the hour” (Mt 25:13).

To be on the alert does not mean to live with fear and anguish. It means to live our life as sons of God, our life of faith, hope and charity, in a responsible way. The Lord is continuously waiting for our response of faith and love, constant and patient, amid the chores and preoccupations that weave our life.

And this response can only be given by us; you and I. Nobody else can give it in our place. This is what it means —the denial of the sensible maidens to the careless ones— to share their oil for the lamps that were going out: “Go instead to the merchants and buy some for yourselves” (Mt 25:9). Our response before God is, therefore, personal and not transferable.

Let us not wait for a “tomorrow” —that may never come— to trim up the lamp of our love for the Spouse. Carpe diem! We must live every second of our life with all the passion a Christian must feel for his Lord. It is a well-known saying but we might as well refresh our memory: “Live each day of your life as if it were the first day of your existence, as if it were the only day we have, as if it were the last day of our life.” A realistic call we have to carry out for a necessary and reasonable conversion.

Let God give us the grace of his mercy that we may not have to hear in the supreme hour: “Amen, I say to you, I do not know you” (Mt 25:12), that is, “you have had no relation whatsoever with me.” Let us treat the Lord in this life in such a way that we may become his acquaintances and friends in our 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)