September 17th: Memorial of Saint Hildegard of Bingen, Virgin and doctor of the Church

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."

"Behold, the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!"

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Today as we remember Saint Hildegard of Bingen, we read the parable of the ten virgins (Mt 25:1-13) which is a good portrait of this saint and, at the same time, an eschatological announcement of the second coming of Christ.

Jesus tells us that we must always be ready, each one with his lamp lit, and the provision so that it does not go out. The lighted lamp is an image of personal faith in Jesus Christ, dead and risen, symbolized on the day of baptism by the candle lit by our godparents of the Paschal candle, which signifies the faith of the Church. Now it is we who must keep the flame of our faith burning, so that when the Lord comes, he will recognize us by faith, and we will be able to enter the heavenly banquet. For this reason, Pope Francis exhorts us not to forget the day of baptism and to celebrate its anniversary, just as we do with birth.

On the other hand, the parable makes it clear what kind of virgin St. Hildegard was: "Five of them were... prudent". Indeed, St. Hildegard was one of the virgins who, heeding the cry "Behold, the bridegroom!

Come out to meet him!", did not hesitate to be ready at all times to receive the Lord. For this reason, the Church proclaimed her a saint, for "those who were ready went into the wedding feast with him".

This German Benedictine nun of the 12th century, with her great intelligence and culture, knew not only how to keep the flame of faith always burning, but also how to become a lamp that illuminated, as abbess, her sister nuns. After 900 years, she remains today a beacon of knowledge. For this reason, Pope Benedict XVI proclaimed her "Doctor of the Church" in 2012.

During her lifetime, St. Hildegard was graced with spiritual visions and mystical experiences, which she wrote in her work "Scivias", such as this: "I also am rationality, who holds the breath of the resonant word by which the whole of creation was created; and I have breathed life into everything, so that nothing by its nature may be mortal, for I am life."

If, in life, she received the grace of an anticipated beatific vision, in death, she obtained the gift of being able to enter the wedding feast of the Lamb. Surely today she would say to us: "Therefore, stay awake, for you know neither the day nor the hour". Now it is our turn: Will we be wise or foolish virgins?