November 22nd: Memorial of Saint Cecilia, Virgin and Martyr

Gospel text (*Mt* 25,1-13): Jesus told this parable to his disciples, «This story throws light on what will happen in the kingdom of heaven. Ten bridesmaids went out with their lamps to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were careless while the others were sensible. The careless bridesmaids took their lamps as they were and did not bring extra oil. But those who were sensible, brought with their lamps flasks of oil. As the bridegroom delayed, they all grew drowsy and fell asleep. But at midnight, a cry rang out: 'The bridegroom is here, come out and meet him!'. All the maidens woke up at once and trimmed their lamps.

»Then the careless ones said to the sensible ones: 'Give us some oil, for our lamps are going out'. The sensible ones answered: 'There may not be enough for both you and us. You had better go to those who sell and buy for yourselves'. They were out buying oil when the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went with him to the wedding feast, and the doors were shut. Later the rest of the bridesmaids arrived and called out: 'Lord, Lord, open to us'. But he answered: 'Truly, I do not know you'. So, stay awake, for you do not know the day nor the hour».

«Those who were ready went with him to the wedding feast»

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Today we celebrate Saint Cecilia, martyr. According to the martyrology known as "Martyrologium hieronymianum", Cecilia was a Roman noblewoman converted to Christianity and martyred for her faith (between 180 and 230). His name is included among the martyrs mentioned in the Eucharistic Prayer I of the Mass.

With the parable of prudent virgins and others who were not, Jesus tells us how we can enter the Kingdom of God. Prudence is a virtue: the wise man who measures his words and acts with serenity and wisdom in his life is prudent; He knows how to anticipate the circumstances that suddenly appear. Among the gifts of the Spirit we can include that of prudence.

The prudent virgins possessed this gift of the Spirit. In their forecasting behavior they had supplied enough oil. They were not surprised without it, they were able to enter the banquet. Those who did not act with this wise prudence were excluded from the party.

Santa Cecilia is a young martyr. When ("at midnight") the Husband arrived, at the time of his martyrdom, the Lord found her prudently provided with the oil of faith and the lamp burning. Her faith, nourished by the Spirit, was not extinguished before the test. She accompanied the Husband with the burning lamp of faith. The mystic “Seraphic Doctor “ St. Bonaventure, commenting on this evangelical text, said: «I think that virgins who were not prudent lacked the Holy Spirit of God. They were missing the grace of the Holy Spirit, symbolized by oil, without which no one can be saved.

The prudent virgins, Cecilia among them, were able to keep the flame of faith lit with the grace of the Holy Spirit when the Husband came, "they entered with him to the wedding" (Mt 25:10) following his footsteps. Only with the grace of the Holy Spirit could they accompany the Husband ... they could pass through the door of death in order to participate with Him in the eternal feast of the marriage of the Lamb.