Homily for the 32nd Sunday in Ordinary Time – Year A

Wisdom 6:12–16; 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18; Matthew 25:1–13

As we approach the end of the Church's liturgical year, the readings invite us to reflect on the coming of the Son of Man and the end of our earthly journey. Soon, we will enter a new liturgical year with the Season of Advent, a season of waiting and preparation for the coming of Christ. Today's readings remind us that we must always be prepared, not only for the end of the world but also for the end of our own earthly lives. They invite us to examine our hearts and ask ourselves: Are we ready to meet the Lord? How are we preparing ourselves for that moment?

There is a familiar motto among Scouts, young and old: "Be Prepared." It is a simple motto, but it carries an important lesson. If you have ever put up a tent without securing the ropes properly, you will know what happens when the wind and rain arrive! If you buy a new pair of hiking boots and wear them on a long walk without breaking them in, you may end up with painful blisters. If you go camping without a torch or spare batteries, finding your way in the darkness can become quite a challenge!

We often learn through experience that it is important to anticipate our needs and prepare in advance, rather than wait until it is too late. The same principle applies to our spiritual lives. Noah did not wait for the rain to begin before building the ark. He prepared himself in advance.

Jesus gives us a similar lesson in today's Gospel through the parable of the ten virgins. Five were wise, and five were foolish. All ten were waiting for the bridegroom, but only five had brought enough oil for their lamps. When the bridegroom was delayed, they all became tired and fell asleep. But when the announcement came that he was approaching, only those who had prepared themselves were ready to welcome him. The others discovered, sadly, that it was too late to make up for what they had neglected.

We can compare this with something as ordinary as running out of petrol while driving. Today, our cars give us plenty of warnings when the fuel is running low. Yet people still sometimes ignore those warnings and find themselves stranded on the road. The problem is not that they were given no warning; it is that they failed to act on it. In the same way, God gives us many reminders throughout our lives. Through His Word, the celebration of the Eucharist, the people we meet and the experiences we go through, He continually invites us to prepare our hearts. The question is whether we pay attention to those reminders.

The first reading from the Book of Wisdom speaks about wisdom as something precious, something that should be earnestly sought. Wisdom is personified as a woman who makes herself known to those who genuinely desire her. The author encourages God's people not to look elsewhere for wisdom, because true wisdom comes from God and guides us towards a life that is pleasing to Him. It is not simply about having knowledge; it is about making the right choices and living according to God's will.

In the second reading, St Paul offers words of encouragement to the early Christians who were worried about those who had died before the Lord's second coming. They wondered whether their deceased loved ones would miss out on the promise of eternal life. Paul reassures them that those who have died in Christ will not be forgotten. Through the death and Resurrection of Jesus,

God will bring both the living and the dead into His presence. Therefore, Christians must live with hope, faith and confidence in the Lord.

The Gospel brings all these readings together. The five wise virgins remind us that spiritual preparation is a personal responsibility. Nobody can live our faith for us. Nobody can believe, pray, forgive or love on our behalf. Others can encourage us, guide us and support us, but ultimately, each one of us must develop a personal relationship with God.

There are two important lessons we can take home from today's readings.

First, we must be wise enough to remain prepared. A wise Christian is someone who recognises the presence of Jesus in the ordinary experiences of everyday life: in the people we meet, the situations we encounter and the responsibilities entrusted to us. Every day gives us opportunities to practise our faith through kindness, patience, compassion, mercy and forgiveness. We should not postpone doing good, making peace or showing love, because we never know what tomorrow may bring.

Second, we must make sure that our lamps are always filled with oil. The oil in the lamps can remind us of the spiritual qualities that keep our faith alive: compassion, mercy, patience, sympathy, understanding and forgiveness. These qualities cannot be acquired overnight. They grow gradually through prayer, reading the Word of God, participating in the Sacraments, serving others and sharing our faith with fellow Christians.

We cannot depend on Sunday Mass alone to sustain our entire spiritual life. Our relationship with God needs daily attention and commitment. Just as a lamp needs oil to keep burning, our faith needs constant nourishment to remain alive. The important thing is that we should not wait until a difficult moment arrives before turning to God. We should develop habits of prayer, love and service now. Gradually, these practices become part of our lives and give us the strength to face the challenges and uncertainties of life.

Dear brothers and sisters, the message of today's Gospel is simple but very important: Be prepared, because we do not know the day or the hour when the Lord will come. We may not know when our earthly journey will end, but we can decide how we live each day. Let us therefore keep our lamps burning brightly, filled with the oil of faith, hope and love, so that whenever the Bridegroom comes, we may be ready to welcome Him with joy.

Amen.