

- The Church year, of course, mirrors the life of Jesus—beginning with Advent, His coming at Christmas, His crucifixion and resurrection at Good Friday and Easter, the period of the growth of the Church during Ordinary Time, and His second coming with that feast of Christ the King—coming up in a couple of weeks.
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- This Sunday and next Sunday we have readings that are meant to bring to the fore of our consciousness the coming of His Kingdom...the remembrance that this life is so very short, at the end of which is our final and definitive judgment...and we go to God only with the oil of charity and obedience that we have produced in our life.
- That’s the emphasis Jesus gives here in this 25th chapter of Matthew—just before His death. This is His final teaching prior to His Passion, as if to say: “All the teaching I have given you to this point leads to this reality, and is to prepare you to face it with confidence rather than with trepidation.”
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- When you’ve been at as many bedsides of the dying as I have... with their awareness of lives spent either well or poorly in regards to faith...the never-resting, increasingly urgent goad of conscience and its accompanying confidence or fear, often begging for confession of sins long past...we see how, at the end, all self-deception falls away.
- And that’s where Paul’s words in our second reading today can comfort those confident of lives well-spent:

*We do not want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters,
about those who have fallen asleep,*

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*so that you may not grieve like the rest, who have no hope.
For if we believe that Jesus died and rose,
so too will God, through Jesus,
bring with him those who have fallen asleep...
Thus we shall always be with the Lord.
(1 Thessalonians 4:13-14, 17)*

- This is the whole point of this parable of the virgins today. Only if we are faithful to Christ by following what is right and good...only if our lamps are lit by the oil of love of God and neighbor...will we enter into the greatest wedding feast. Else...left outside. Forever.
 - As unpopular as it is to remind of such things in our day, we know it to be the truth, because Christ Himself says it.
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 - Next week we have an even starker reminder as we will read Jesus stating in no uncertain terms that those who fail in charity and compassion toward the suffering neighbor are condemned...for in the end, only love of God and neighbor count.
 - As St. John writes: “...if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him?...let us not love in word or speech but in deed and in truth.” (1 John 3:17-18)
 - Yet...those who live well have much assurance and comfort in their final moments, and even look forward to their departure... being able to believe with St. Paul: “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.” (2 Timothy 4:7)
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- So...how do we prepare for that inevitable judgment?...the accounting for our lives and the gifts God has given us?
 - Yes, by those two great commandments...loving God and neighbor. And these commandments—as do all the

commandments which undergird them—fall under one word: *wisdom*. Living our life in accord w/ God’s will.

- ...for what brings us closer to God and eternal life IS wisdom; what takes us away from them IS foolishness.
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 - Those who sincerely seek true wisdom find her...as we read today from the Book of Wisdom: *“Resplendent and unfading is wisdom, ...readily perceived by those who love her, and found by those who seek her...For taking thought of wisdom is the perfection of prudence...she makes her own rounds, seeking those worthy of her...”*
 - ...wisdom being not simply knowledge; at the end, knowledge is pointless without wisdom. Wisdom utilizes knowledge, but knowledge without action in itself does not guarantee wisdom.
 - One may have lots of knowledge, but little or no wisdom if that knowledge does not advance that essential love of God and neighbor.
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- Much of wisdom, of course, comes through scripture...and one of the best ways to build the habit of reading the scriptures is by beginning with the wisdom books--Proverbs, Wisdom, Sirach especially, as they are easy to read—written in pithy doublets, imparting quick and sound wisdom.
 - Young people especially I try to steer towards them. They were what hooked me in my teenage years to read scripture—a habit and joy that has lasted these several decades.
 - So many Catholics and other Christians think to find wisdom in exotic religions without ever exploring our own. But there is no wisdom in Confucius, Buddha, Hinduism, Taoism, or anywhere

else that does not already reside within our own faith...in that unopened Bible.

- ...because as St. Paul writes: “...to those who are called...Christ [is] the power of God and the wisdom of God.” (1 Corinthians 1:24)...and the wisdom of God is, by definition, all wisdom.

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- So make the pursuit of wisdom your quest...for it is the only quest worth pursuing...and you'll begin to understand the words of the psalmist: “O God, for you I long, for you my soul is thirsting. My body pines for you, like a dry weary land without water.”
 - And as we continue to seek and practice that true wisdom, we will have that confidence of the knowledge of a life well spent...trust in God's love and mercy...and, at the end, with lamps alight enter in to that wedding feast of the Lamb—which is the embrace of God forever.

Reading 1 Wis 6:12-16

Resplendent and unfading is wisdom,
and she is readily perceived by those who love her,
and found by those who seek her.

She hastens to make herself known in anticipation of their desire;
Whoever watches for her at dawn shall not be disappointed,
for he shall find her sitting by his gate.

For taking thought of wisdom is the perfection of prudence,
and whoever for her sake keeps vigil
shall quickly be free from care;

because she makes her own rounds, seeking those worthy of her,
and graciously appears to them in the ways,
and meets them with all solicitude.

Responsorial Psalm Ps 63:2, 3-4, 5-6, 7-8

R. (2b) My soul is thirsting for you, O Lord my God.

O God, you are my God whom I seek;
for you my flesh pines and my soul thirsts
like the earth, parched, lifeless and without water.

R. My soul is thirsting for you, O Lord my God.

Thus have I gazed toward you in the sanctuary
to see your power and your glory,
For your kindness is a greater good than life;
my lips shall glorify you.

R. My soul is thirsting for you, O Lord my God.

Thus will I bless you while I live;
lifting up my hands, I will call upon your name.

As with the riches of a banquet shall my soul be satisfied,
and with exultant lips my mouth shall praise you.

R. My soul is thirsting for you, O Lord my God.

I will remember you upon my couch,
and through the night-watches I will meditate on you:
You are my help,

and in the shadow of your wings I shout for joy.

R. My soul is thirsting for you, O Lord my God.

Reading 2 1 Thes 4:13-18

We do not want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters,
about those who have fallen asleep,
so that you may not grieve like the rest, who have no hope.

For if we believe that Jesus died and rose,
so too will God, through Jesus,
bring with him those who have fallen asleep.

Indeed, we tell you this, on the word of the Lord,
that we who are alive,

who are left until the coming of the Lord,
will surely not precede those who have fallen asleep.

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For the Lord himself, with a word of command,
with the voice of an archangel and with the trumpet of God,
will come down from heaven,
and the dead in Christ will rise first.
Then we who are alive, who are left,
will be caught up together with them in the clouds
to meet the Lord in the air.
Thus we shall always be with the Lord.
Therefore, console one another with these words.

Or 1 Thes 4:13-14

We do not want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters,
about those who have fallen asleep,
so that you may not grieve like the rest, who have no hope.
For if we believe that Jesus died and rose,
so too will God, through Jesus,
bring with him those who have fallen asleep.

Gospel 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."