

My dear people of God, the main lesson of today's parable has to do with the need **to be on the alert**. This alertness or vigilance should be continuous and unflagging, because heaven's door will be opened for those who are ready. Therefore, watch for you know neither the day nor the hour (Mt.25:13). There are three phrases in the today's Gospel which present us with a very simple image of the most critical moment in all human destiny. Those three phrases are: ...**"no, for there may not be enough for us and you....I do not know you ...and the door was closed"**. The image is simple enough - a closed door. Since the bridesmaids who came later could not get in we can assume also that the door was locked, or perhaps it had no handle on the outside. That door is the most important door in the whole of existence; it is the door to the wedding banquet, to the Kingdom of God - the door to heaven. But this image of a door is also the image of a decisive moment: ***Those who were ready went in with him to the wedding hall and the door was closed.***

The five foolish virgins were desperate. They had not exercised **foresight** and as a consequence they wanted the five-wise virgins to do a desperate thing. Being wise, however, they did not. They did the prudent thing. **There might not be enough for us**. If they had shared the oil, they might have ended up with no light at all for many hours. It would be foolish to share the oil and burn through the limited supply twice as quickly. I want to point out that it is quite possible for one to lose one's soul, something that's not much talked about and ignored these days. To put it another way, it's quite possible to neglect our relationship with God and let that relationship die out. Just as the light on an oil lamp can sputter and die out for lack of attention, so too can the fire, the warmth, and the vibrancy of our relationship with God can sputter and die out for lack of **Wisdom, prudence, and foresight** that are needed to keep our relationship with God.

Dear friends, the burning oil lamps that they carry into the wedding feast symbolically portray **Christian wisdom, the crown of the other gifts of the Holy Spirit and of the infused moral virtues**. Of course there is really only one Holy Spirit, just as the oil in the lamps and the oil in the flasks was the same oil. It is not the Holy Spirit who is different; the difference is in the containers: our souls. Now all the girls had lamps, but only some had flasks. Every Christian is glad to have the power of the lamp, **but not everyone wants to do the work required to fill up the flask**. Some Christians go so far as to consider the lamps to be the real Holy Spirit. They gather on Sunday and speak in tongues and play music that sets their hearts on fire; they like to see miracles and healings and spectacular conversions. These are gifts from God; I do not denigrate any of this, but if this is all Christianity is for them, they are like the foolish girls: lamps but no flasks.

The foolish girls went to town to buy some oil, and when they came back, presumably with well-lit lamps, they knock on the door respectfully. "Lord, Lord", they say, "Open for us." He does not refuse to open, but simply admits that **he does not know them**. There is a parallel here between this parable and the end of the Sermon on the Mount, there Jesus says, **"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the Kingdom of Heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father in heaven Mt.7:21.**

Finally, dear friends, the whole purpose of the parable is to get us thinking about the choices we make during our life which prepare us for that moment when the door closes - choices which will make sure that we are on the right side of the door. Surely one of the lessons of this Gospel is that once the door is shut, it won't be opened again, for anyone. This call for Wisdom, which is the gift of the Holy Spirit, energetically roaming the streets searching for those who are searching for her {Wis.6:12}. Those who want Wisdom: love her, look for her, desire her ... are on the alert for her. It's pretty obvious that these people really do value wisdom 'understand' God, ourselves, others, and the world. Wisdom helps us to make the right choices. Wisdom ensures that we are on the right side of the door when it shuts. Wisdom is something we 'choose' like the five bridesmaids did. Having chosen it, wisdom becomes second nature to us. We can also reject it like the other five bridesmaids did. May God endow us with the spirit of wisdom to make right decision and prepare ourselves every day for the kingdom of heaven. Amen!