

Thirty-second Sunday in Ordinary Time (Year A)

November 8, 2020

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Towards the definitive realization of God's reign

November is the last month of the liturgical year. The Word of God chosen for today's liturgy of the Mass reminds us that the whole of humanity is on its way to the definitive realization of the kingdom of God. It also insists that we must always be awake on the way to fight the forces of evil that are trying to dominate human society.

May God the Lord of the history of the universe direct all the creature made by His love towards integration. May we draw strength from that love and receive the inspiration based on the life and attitudes of Jesus as transmitted in the Gospels. Without doubt, our battle is not easy: Many will have to suffer misunderstanding and persecution, even to the point of death, like Jesus and so many martyrs who gave their lives for the triumph of the good in the world.

Events beyond human control

Matthew's gospel we hear today, along with chapter 24, is part of Jesus' discourses on the end-time or eschatology. The end-time means the end of history, and the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem is its symbol. The end-time will see destruction that we humans cannot control. Many of the destructive situations could be caused by our unpreparedness or our desire to dominate nature created by God. Unexpected and terrible events can happen.

Throughout the centuries many events have occurred on this planet such as wars, plagues, droughts, earthquakes and tsunamis, and nuclear accidents that have killed not only millions of human beings but other creatures. But the same creative force of God has protected our earth, make it habitable, and fill it with life again.

Commentary on today's Gospel: Matthew 25:1-13

We have heard today's Gospel from the beginning of chapter 25 of Matthew's. Jesus speaks

about the end-time throughout the whole chapter 25 along with chapter 24. It means the end of history, and the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem is its symbol.

Let me introduce a book written by a Spanish priest, Fr. José A. Pagola: *Jesús, aproximación histórica* (*Jesus, Historical Approach*), whose Japanese translation is available from Don Bosco Sha Salesian Press (パゴラ・エロルサ・ホセ・アントニオ著、「イエス あなたはいったい何者ですか」、2015年刊). The readers of this book of well over 500 pages, will renew their image of Jesus as much more human and profoundly divine as well. As they go on reading, Jesus converts them into his disciples and ends up making them desire to proclaim Jesus and his Gospel to people who do not know him yet.

The questions that the first Christians asked

The first generation of Christians lived convinced that Jesus, the risen Lord, would soon return filled with life. But this was not the case. As they were forced to wait longer, they gradually began to ask the following questions:

How should we keep alive the spirit of the beginnings?

How should we live awake until the Lord comes?

How should we nourish faith without letting it fade?

The story from Jesus about what happened at a wedding in Matthew 25:1-13 helped them answer the questions.

The bridesmaids and their oils

Ten virgins, the bridesmaids, light their lamps and prepare to receive the bridegroom. When the bridegroom arrives at sunset, they are to take him to the bride, and they will accompany both of them in the procession that will take them to the house of the bridegroom, where the wedding feast will be celebrated.

The Gospel highlights one thing: Of the virgins five are wise and careful enough to bring flasks of oil with them to keep their lamps burning. But the other five are so foolish and careless that they forget to bring enough oil. The bridegroom is late and does not arrive until midnight. When the call to receive him is heard, the wise virgins feed the flame of their lamps with their oil and accompany the bridegroom until he enters the wedding feast with them. The foolish ones know only how to lament: "our lamps are going out". Busy with

acquiring oil, they arrive at the banquet too late: The door has been closed!

Meaning of the oil

Many commentators try to find a secret meaning to the symbol of oil. Is Jesus talking about spiritual fervor, love, or baptismal grace?

Perhaps it is easier to remember his great desire: "I have come to set the earth on fire, and how I wish it were already blazing!" (Luke 12:49) Only living encounters with the living Jesus can ignite our faith.

Isn't it foolish to pretend to keep a worn-out faith without rekindling it with the fire of Jesus? Isn't it a contradiction to believe that we are Christians without knowing his plan or feeling attracted to his way of life?

We urgently need a renewal in our relationship with Jesus. We need to take care of everything that helps us to center our life on the person of Jesus. Let us not waste our energy on what distracts or diverts us from his Gospel.

Let us keep the fire of our faith burning by ruminating on the Word of God and receiving Jesus in Communion every Sunday. No one else can transform our community but Jesus.

Prayer

For all those who live installed in the superfluous of life, so that they discover the beautiful task that we all have to transform the world into a society of solidarity, following the teachings of Jesus. Let us pray.

God, our Father, help us know how to live with all responsibility and hope in the face of the events that affect us today, as Jesus taught us, so that discouragement, sadness and despair may be removed from us and we can work with patience for the construction of your Kingdom.

Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Note: All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the New

American Bible, Revised Edition (NABRE).