

## **Homily For Friday of the 21st Week of Ordinary Time - Year 1**

**St Peter's 8:30 AM Mass/SJCS Mass - September 1, 2023**

**1 Thess. 2:1-8** "God gives his Holy Spirit for your sanctification."

**Psalm 139** "The Lord loves those who hate evil."

**Matt 23:23-26** "Keep awake for you know neither the day nor the hour."

### **Keeping Oil In Your Lamp**

#### **Introduction**

This letter to the church at Thessalonica is very early. It is from the 50s, even before the gospels. You can imagine that Paul carries with him vividly the memory of the shame of having persecuted Christ. But he also has with him at every moment the profound wiping away of that shame by his acceptance of the mercy of God. For both of those reasons, he can speak authoritatively about the call to Christian life and virtue. All of us who worship Christ have these elements, some more dramatic than others.

#### **1 Thessalonians**

Paul speaks to the Gentiles who have been baptized. God has a call on them. It's the call to holiness. This is something that every Christian is called to, not just priests and religious. We can forget that we have this high calling. People will say that they don't know what God is calling them to, but everyone has this calling. To disregard this is to disregard God himself.

To know God is to know how to behave. Those who do not know God may also be moral people, but the standard of right behavior is not as clear and it wanders back and forth. That is why, without God, there is a tendency to lose respect for the gift of life, both preborn life and end of life. With God, however, it becomes much more clear. Now this process does not end. We were justified, or made right before God, by our faith decision and by our baptism. Paul says they are doing what is good and holy, but they must do that even more. So it happens at once but it also continues.

Our faith does not permit us to say that we are a finished work. Sanctification is the process of becoming holy, even after God has made us holy in Christ Jesus. You are holy by faith and by baptism, but you are also called further to holiness by every moral choice you make: by your decision and by the grace of God.

St. Augustine says you become what you are. This is the will of God. What God wants. In St. Paul the list of bad behaviour always includes two categories. One is sexual sins, what he calls fornication. and secondly, sins against justice i.e. how we treat others. Both matter. The psalmist says that "The Lord loves those who hate evil. He guards the lives of his faithful from the wicked. It's not enough just to avoid it. You have to hate it.

## **Matthew**

Jesus parable about the wise and foolish bridesmaids and the wedding banquet carries on this theme. In Jesus' time, wedding celebrations went on for days. Bridesmaids weren't there to make the bride look amazing. They had the role of escorting the groom to the celebration, to the bride herself. Now clearly Jesus is the bridegroom and the Church is the bride. At our death, the bridegroom will come. Our job is to be ready, not to be drowsy or to lose vigilance. It can happen sooner or later. When he comes to me at this time, I must be ready.

What does this mean and how do I keep oil in my lamp so that I will be ready to go in to the wedding feast? First it means to be a person of steady prayer. Don't let your relationship fall into disrepair or to be neglected. Second is to stay close to the sacrament of reconciliation. Seek forgiveness. Don't wait until the last minute. The third way of keeping oil in the lamp is to get rid of grudges. Failing in any of these three things causes our light to dim. This is how we keep the light burning that Christ has given to us as beloved sons and daughters.

The foolish virgins run out of oil, which represents the essence of holiness, which is love. Without love, they lose the bridegroom and they lose entry to the wedding banquet. Grace needs to be stored in the soul.

Whether at midnight, or at any other moment, a cry can ring out at our door to invite us to come out and meet our Lord. Death never makes appointments. To be on the alert does not mean to live with fear and anguish. It means to live our life as sons and daughters of God, our life of faith, hope and charity.

And this response can only be given by us; you and I. Nobody else can give it in our place. Our response before God is, therefore, personal and not transferable. We must live every second of our life with all the passion a Christian must feel for his Lord. As it is said: "Live each day of your life as if it were the first day of your existence, as if it were the only day we have, and as if it were the last day of our life."

### **Call To Conversion**

Today is called the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation. Many are anxious about what happens if the light goes out on this world. That is a legitimate concern, but it leaves out what our Lord tells us.

When our lamps are full of oil, we don't worry about when the world will end, but we do know that our world will end, our participation in this world. If you pray the rosary every day, you remind yourself 53 times each day that you are asking for Mary's intercession now and at the hour of our death. That's the light, to be with Mary and our Lord. That's the gift of God. Don't give away that gift easily. Don't let the oil which feeds your participation in the light of Christ, run out. Let us go with the bridegroom into the wedding banquet with joy.

## **Key Scripture Passages**

**Entrance Antiphon:** *The Lord became my protector. He brought me out to a place of freedom. He saved me because he delighted in me.*

**Collect:** *Grant, O Lord, that the course of our world may be directed by your peaceful rule and that your Church may rejoice in her devotion.*

**1 Thessalonians:** *Brothers and sisters, we ask and urge you in the Lord Jesus that, as you learned from us how you ought to please God (as in fact you are doing), you should do so more and more, for this is the will of God, your sanctification, that you abstain from fornication, to control your own body in holiness and honour, not with lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God, that no one wrong or exploit a brother or sister. For God did not call us to impurity but in holiness. Whoever rejects this rejects not human authority but God, who gives his Holy Spirit to you.*

**Psalm:** *The Lord is king! All the peoples behold his glory. The Lord loves those who hate evil. He guards the lives of his faithful from the wicked. Rejoice in the Lord, and give thanks to his holy name!*

**Matthew:** *Jesus told this parable to his disciples: The kingdom of heaven will be like this. Ten bridesmaids took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. The foolish took no oil but the wise took flasks of oil. As the bridegroom was delayed, all of them became drowsy and slept. But at midnight there was a shout, 'Look! here is the bridegroom! The foolish said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' But the wise replied, 'No! there will not be enough for you and for us. And while they went to buy it, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went with him into the wedding banquet, and the door was shut. Later the other bridesmaids came also saying, 'Lord, lord, open to us.' But he replied, 'Truly I tell you, I do not know you.' "Keep awake therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour."*