



We are approaching the end of the Church's liturgical year and the Sunday readings begin to think about the second coming of Christ. The parable in today's Gospel extract is one which is traditionally understood in this way.

The theme is that of the coming of the kingdom, which is presented as the arrival of the bridal couple from the house of the bride's father, and the beginning of the wedding feast. The wedding banquet is a frequent symbol for the kingdom of God. The moral is that of being prepared: one group of female attendants have intelligently planned for the possible need for more oil for their lamps; the others, described as "foolish", have clearly thought only in the short term; even when the bridegroom's arrival is delayed, they do not take the opportunity to remedy their situation, but simply doze off. On appealing to the better nature of their companions to share their resources, the others point out that if they do, there will be no lighted lamps at all. As a result, they are locked out of the celebrations.

The groom's reply may well indicate that the bridesmaids may be part of the bride's household, but unknown to him. So the reader is being warned to be ready for the coming of the Son of Man, and presented with models for people who are prepared and who are not. We are being urged not to take anything for granted, that it is our responsibility to be awake when the Lord arrives. ■

## REFLECT

There are texts in the Bible which look to the second coming and the end of the world. The early writings of St Paul suggest that he and the earliest Christians thought that this was imminent. However, it became clear that this was not going to happen anytime soon, and that the disciples of Jesus had to get on with living their lives just like everybody else. There are certain Christian groups who see in natural disasters indications of the end of the world, but this is to misunderstand the nature of apocalyptic writing, such as the book of Revelation, and to interpret it literally.

The warnings in our Gospel extracts on these Sundays at the end of this cycle of readings is to shake us out of any possible state of complacency into which we may have fallen. This is due not to any ill will on our part, but rather because the rhythm of daily life, our worries and concerns about our family, work and so on, can lure us into thinking about what is going on at the present time and our awareness of God in our lives can become somewhat dulled. The scriptures may not be telling us that the end of the world is near: but perhaps they are reminding us that the Lord comes to us in all sorts of ways which we might not realise, because, as far as our spiritual awareness is concerned, we have dozed off. ■

## SAY

Stay awake, because you do not know either the day or the hour.  
(Matthew 25:13)

## DO

When your alarm goes off in the morning, think of the shout, "The bridegroom is coming!"



## LEARN

The custom of the time was that the bridegroom would go to the bride's father's house to bring her to his own home.

Apocalyptic literature, such as the books of Daniel and Revelation, was written to encourage communities under persecution to stand firm, that the Lord would come to vindicate them.

In the Hebrew Bible, God was sometimes identified as the bridegroom of Israel: in Matthew's writing, the figure of the bridegroom applied to the Son of Man, who is Jesus.

**ENTRANCE ANTIPHON**

Let my prayer come into your presence.  
Incline your ear to my cry for help, O Lord.

**GLORIA**

Glory to God in the highest,  
and on earth peace to people of good will.

We praise you,  
we bless you,  
we adore you,  
we glorify you,  
we give you thanks for your great glory,  
Lord God, heavenly King,  
O God, almighty Father.

Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son,  
Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father,  
you take away the sins of the world,  
have mercy on us;  
you take away the sins of the world,  
receive our prayer;  
you are seated at the right hand of the Father,  
have mercy on us.

For you alone are the Holy One,  
you alone are the Lord,  
you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,  
with the Holy Spirit,  
in the glory of God the Father.  
Amen.

**COLLECT**

Almighty and merciful God,  
graciously keep from us all adversity,  
so that, unhindered in mind and body alike,  
we may pursue in freedom of heart  
the things that are yours.  
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,  
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of  
the Holy Spirit,  
one God, for ever and ever.  
Amen.

**FIRST READING**

Wisdom 6:12-16

A reading from the book of Wisdom.  
Wisdom is bright, and does not grow dim.  
By those who love her she is readily seen,  
and found by those who look for her.  
Quick to anticipate those who desire her, she  
makes herself known to them.  
Watch for her early and you will have no  
trouble;  
you will find her sitting at your gates.  
Even to think about her is understanding fully  
grown;  
be on the alert for her and anxiety will quickly  
leave you.  
She herself walks about looking for those  
who are worthy of her  
and graciously shows herself to them as they  
go,  
in every thought of theirs coming to meet  
them.  
The word of the Lord.  
Thanks be to God.

**PSALM**

Psalm 62

Response:  
For you my soul is thirsting, O God, my God.

- O God, you are my God, for you I long;  
for you my soul is thirsting.  
My body pines for you  
like a dry, weary land without water. (R.)
- So I gaze on you in the sanctuary  
to see your strength and your glory.

For your love is better than life,  
my lips will speak your praise. (R.)

- So I will bless you all my life,  
in your name I will lift up my hands.  
My soul shall be filled as with a banquet,  
my mouth shall praise you with joy. (R.)
- On my bed I remember you.  
On you I muse through the night  
for you have been my help;  
in the shadows of your wings I rejoice. (R.)

**SECOND READING** 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

(For shorter form, read between > <)

A reading from the first letter of St Paul to the  
Thessalonians.

>We want you to be quite certain, brothers,  
about those who have died, to make sure that  
you do not grieve about them, like the other  
people who have no hope. We believe that  
Jesus died and rose again, and that it will be  
the same for those who have died in Jesus:  
God will bring them with him.< We can tell  
you this from the Lord's own teaching, that  
any of us who are left alive until the Lord's  
coming will not have any advantage over  
those who have died. At the trumpet of God,  
the voice of the archangel will call out the  
command and the Lord himself will come  
down from heaven; those who have died in  
Christ will be the first to rise, and then those  
of us who are still alive will be taken up in the  
clouds, together with them, to meet the Lord  
in the air. So we shall stay with the Lord for  
ever. With such thoughts as these you should  
comfort one another.

>The word of the Lord.<

Thanks be to God.

**GOSPEL ACCLAMATION**

Alleluia, alleluia!  
Stay awake and stand ready,  
because you do not know the hour  
when the Son of Man is coming.  
Alleluia!

**GOSPEL**

Matthew 25:1-13

A reading from the holy Gospel according to  
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 sensible: the foolish  
ones did take their lamps, but they brought  
no oil, whereas the sensible ones took flasks  
of oil as well as their lamps. The bridegroom  
was late, and they all grew drowsy and fell  
asleep. But at midnight there was a cry, 'The  
bridegroom is here! Go out and meet him.'  
At this, all those bridesmaids woke up and  
trimmed their lamps, and the foolish ones  
said to the sensible ones, 'Give us some of  
your oil: our lamps are going out.' But they  
replied, 'There may not be enough for us and  
for you; you had better go to those who sell it  
and buy some for yourselves.' They had gone  
off to buy it when the bridegroom arrived.  
Those who were ready went in with him to  
the wedding hall and the door was closed.  
The other bridesmaids arrived later. 'Lord,  
Lord,' they said 'open the door for us.' But  
he replied, 'I tell you solemnly, I do not know  
you.' So stay awake, because you do not  
know either the day or the hour."

The Gospel of the Lord.  
Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

**PROFESSION OF FAITH**

I believe in one God,  
the Father almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth,  
of all things visible and invisible.  
I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ,  
the Only Begotten Son of God,  
born of the Father before all ages.  
God from God, Light from Light,  
true God from true God,  
begotten, not made, consubstantial with  
the Father;  
through him all things were made.  
For us men and for our salvation  
he came down from heaven,  
*(all bow during the next three lines)*  
and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the  
Virgin Mary,  
and became man.  
For our sake he was crucified under  
Pontius Pilate,  
he suffered death and was buried,  
and rose again on the third day  
in accordance with the Scriptures.  
He ascended into heaven  
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.  
He will come again in glory  
to judge the living and the dead  
and his kingdom will have no end.  
I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord,  
the giver of life,  
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,  
who with the Father and the Son is adored  
and glorified,  
who has spoken through the prophets.  
I believe in one, holy, catholic and  
apostolic Church.  
I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness  
of sins  
and I look forward to the resurrection of the  
dead  
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

**PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS**

Look with favour, we pray, O Lord,  
upon the sacrificial gifts offered here,  
that, celebrating in mystery the Passion of  
your Son,  
we may honour it with loving devotion.  
Through Christ our Lord.  
Amen.

**COMMUNION ANTIPHON**

The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I  
shall want.  
Fresh and green are the pastures where he  
gives me repose,  
near restful waters he leads me.

**PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION**

Nourished by this sacred gift, O Lord,  
we give you thanks and beseech your mercy,  
that, by the pouring forth of your Spirit,  
the grace of integrity may endure  
in those your heavenly power has entered.  
Through Christ our Lord.  
Amen.

