

## THIRTY-SECOND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME – 11/12/17

My dear people of God:

Please know that the Sunday after next Sunday is already “Christ the King Sunday”. After Christ the King Sunday is already the first Sunday of Advent – year B in the Liturgical Calendar.

Since we are about to close the liturgical year, allow me to guide your hearts to the theme of “the last things”.

Saint Paul in today’s second reading, in his first letter to the Thessalonians, beautifully describes the second coming of Christ, or the end of the world this way: *“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. 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.”*

If the second coming of Christ is certain, then, we must prepare ourselves for it. In fact, we should long for it. We should desire it. And by focusing on the things that pertain to God, we could ask God to help us prepare ourselves to meet Him after we leave this planet.

The words of the psalmist in today’s Responsorial Psalm, *“My soul is thirsting for you, O Lord my God.”* echo our own longing for God. These words should become the basis of our decisions in life to do His will. The mere repetition of the refrain will make us aware of our desire to be quenched of our *“thirst for the Divine”* by God’s involvement in our lives. It makes us satiated and nourished by God.

The greatest tragedy that could befall on us would be the loss of the sense of the Divine. It would be so sad when we stop aiming for the celestial things just because we have grown contented with things below. We might miss the Divine Rapture if we focus on the mundane things.

I am tempted to share with you again one of my favorite prayers, *“Disturb us, Lord”*. I quoted this prayer a while back. Let me quote it again. This prayer was attributed to Sir Francis Drake.

*Disturb us, Lord, when we are too well pleased with ourselves,  
when our dreams have come true, because we have dreamed too little,  
when we arrived safely, because we sailed too close to the shore.*

*Disturb us, Lord, when with the abundance of things we possess,  
we have lost our thirst for the waters of life;  
having fallen in love with life, we have ceased to dream of eternity,  
and in our efforts to build a new earth,  
we have allowed our vision of the new Heaven to dim.*

*Disturb us, Lord, to dare more boldly, to venture on wider seas,  
where storms will show your mastery;  
where losing sight of land, we shall find the stars.*

The Acclamation before the gospel: *“Stay awake and be ready! For you do not know on what day your Lord will come”* may sound scary, but I pray that it may come across to be more of a loving and a very reassuring reminder.

My dear people of God: preparedness and vigilance are virtues which the Lord wants us to practice; and if I may add - a prayerful vigilance – that type of preparedness which consists in focusing our efforts in pleasing the Lord.

And what can be more pleasing to the Lord than embracing in all its entirety the Wisdom of God? Today’s first reading speaks about wisdom. This beautiful piece from the Old Testament is not a literary gem, but also a tribute to the ALL-KNOWING GOD. Wisdom is a way of life. The wise make themselves always ready for the Lord because they are always united to Him.

For us to appreciate the First Reading more profoundly, allow me to ask you to substitute the word “WISDOM” with the word GOD. The first reading would read/sound this way: *“Resplendent and unfading is GOD, He is readily perceived by those who love HIM, and found by those who seek HIM. HE hastens to make HIMSELF known in anticipation of their desire; Whoever watches for HIM at dawn shall not be disappointed, for he shall find HIM sitting by his gate.*

*For taking thought of GOD is the perfection of prudence, and whoever for HIS sake keeps vigil shall quickly be free from care; because HE makes HIS own rounds,*

*seeking those worthy of HIM, and graciously appears to them in the ways, and meets them with all solicitude.*

If only we remember these edifying words from our first reading (from the Book of Wisdom), then our daily lives would always become fragrant offerings to GOD who is personified in the reading.

Now to the gospel: While we may not really want to use the term “foolish” to describe the five virgins who did not bring extra oil for their lamps, we fully understand that they did not use their God-given wisdom to prepare for any eventuality.

The first reading of today about wisdom makes more sense after hearing the gospel. The wise virgins truly deserve the name “wise” because they were prepared. They entered into the banquet hall because they had the qualifications necessary for entry.

How about us? How qualified are we? I must ask myself this question: How prepared am I? How prepared are we for death or for the second coming of the Lord?

Recently, we heard that people in the bike lane were mowed down by Sayfullo Saipov, an immigrant from Uzbekistan. Media described him as a radicalized Islam follower who used a rented Home Depot pick up truck to kill cyclists and pedestrians at a bicycle lane in Lower Manhattan. Eight people were killed; more are still in the hospitals. We are faced with the reality that some people can snap life from us at any moment. Death is certain.

And just last Sunday, we heard that Devin Patrick Kelly, a former U S Air Force serviceman, shot worshippers at a Baptist Church in Sutherland Springs, Texas. Twenty-six people are confirmed dead, and there are more in the hospital.

What do we make of these current events? What is the proper Christian attitude towards death? We know that we should not deny death, but prepare for it and be ready. As we pray for the repose of those who died, we also pray for their families who are grieving their loss. As we pray for those still recuperating in the hospitals, we also pray for their families who are inconvenienced and still confused on why this happened.

Let us keep ourselves focused on the things above. Amen