

Thirty Second Sunday of Ordinary Time  
November 12, 2017  
Fr. Rick Lorenz

## Reflection

In one month, the Jewish people will begin their celebration of Hanukkah. About 200 years before the birth of Jesus, the divided remnants of Alexander's empire held sway in Judah and Israel. Many abandoned the covenant, favouring the Greek culture that extended from the Mediterranean to India; some by eager choice, others by cruel persecution. Others resisted: "We will not obey the king's words by turning aside from our religion to the right hand or to the left (Mac 2:22)." The Maccabees won a series of battles against the Greeks, freeing the Temple from their control. They cleaned abominations from the Temple, and then purified it by burning incense and lighting lamps (Mac 4:50). All this is found in the Septuagint; what we call the Old Testament; the Breviary this week had readings from the Book of Maccabees. Hanukkah, the Festival of Lights, preserves the memory of this victorious purification. But the Talmud, the Jewish commentary on Scripture, adds something to the Septuagint: the one-day supply of oil that was on hand miraculously lasted for eight days, so now the festival lasts for eight days as well.

In today's Gospel, ten bridesmaids are waiting for the bridegroom, ten bridesmaids have their lamps in hand, all ten bridesmaids fall asleep while waiting. Five wise ones have oil, five foolish ones do not.

Wis 6:12-16  
Ps 63  
1 Thes 4:13-18  
Mt 25:1-13

When the bridegroom arrives, the wise ones refuse to share their oil: "There will not be enough for you and for us: you had better go to the dealers and buy some for yourselves." We might wonder about this. Couldn't they have shared their oil? Might the bridegroom have welcomed them anyway? Maybe the oil would have lasted, like it did in the Temple.

We can understand the bridesmaids and their lamps as representing the Church, waiting for the coming of the Lord. We're called to prepare ourselves for the second coming, growing in holiness through prayer, fasting and almsgiving; by loving God and neighbour. The wise bridesmaids are far-sighted Christians grown in wisdom, which springs from the fear of the Lord. The first reading says that "Wisdom is radiant and unfading, and she is easily discerned by those who love her, and is found by those who seek her." It is light given by God that illumines the mind and instills an attraction to the divine; the perfection of charity; wisdom is the oil held by the wise bridesmaids. The foolish bridesmaids were lax in their responsibility; they are carefree Christians who do not strive for salvation through the means given by the Church. Wisdom is the work of a lifetime that comes to those who experience the psalm, "O God, you are my God, I seek you, my soul thirsts for you, my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water."

The soul thirsts and hungers, and is easily diverted by junk food and soda pop; idolatry and sin. Much better is the bread of life come down from heaven, containing in itself all sweetness.

But couldn't those bridesmaids have shared some of their oil; can't we share some of our wisdom? The Church shares in the pain of the age; she "carries the mark of this world which will pass (671)." Not all who hear the word will respond; at least not in time for us to see; but do not lose hope. "Those who sow in tears will reap with joy (Ps 126:5)." Our faith is in Jesus and the work of the Holy Spirit, to whom we entrust the hardened hearts of those we love, "so that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope." And we can share the wisdom given to us, through the assistance of Mary. St. Louis de Montfort offered this prayer for the Third Glorious Mystery of the Most Holy Rosary, the Descent of the Holy Spirit: "We offer you, O Holy Spirit, this thirteenth decade in honour of the mystery of Pentecost. Through this mystery and the intercession of Mary, your most holy spouse, we ask for your holy wisdom that we may know, taste and practice your truth and share it with everyone." Starting on November 29, we will consecrate ourselves to Mary using "Thirty Three Days to Morning Glory." Mary will keep us in her heart, and will lend us her heart to love others more completely. Through her intercession we will share the wisdom we've received, giving oil to the foolish bridesmaids whom we adore.