

## THE THIRTY-SECOND SUNDAY OF THE YEAR – A

The gospel reading gives us the parable of the five wise and five foolish virgins and it teaches us that we Christians must always be ready to receive the Lord whenever he chooses to come and take us into the heavenly banquet. The first reading teaches about Wisdom herself how she can be found and what she can do for you. The second reading gives us Paul's teaching 'about those who have fallen asleep' and about 'we who are still alive for the Lord's coming.'

The **First Reading** is from the book of Wisdom. The wisdom literature in the Bible comes after the historical books and comprises the books of Job, the Psalms, the Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, the Song of Songs, the Book of Wisdom and Ecclesiasticus. Wisdom literature flourished throughout the ancient East, it treats of the meaning of life and offers a recipe for successful living. Wisdom literature in Israel came from the same soil and was absorbed in the individual and his destiny but was viewed in the clearer light of the religion of Yahweh. Real wisdom is found in the fear of God since God alone is wise. Wisdom is an outpouring of the glory of the Almighty, an image of his perfection. Wisdom is sure to bring happiness and folly, ruin. This is the doctrine on which the teaching of Wisdom is based. All this teaching was preparing for the revelation of Wisdom incarnate as Matthew says: "here is someone greater than Solomon."

The book of Wisdom itself may be divided as follows, the first section, ch.1-5, defines the function of wisdom in man's destiny; the second section, ch.6-9, treats of the origin and nature of wisdom; the last section, ch.10-19, celebrates the part played by wisdom and by God in the history of the chosen people. The authorship is attributed to Solomon, the wisest king in Israel. The author was an Alexandrian Jew who wrote towards the middle of the 1<sup>st</sup> century B.C., he commends wisdom, born of God, obtained by prayer, the mainspring of all the virtues. This life is seen as a preparation for another in which the virtuous live with God and the wicked are punished. He sees Wisdom as an attribute of God.

The reading, 6.12-16, teaches us that wisdom is more than a doctrine which kings must learn and not fall into error (v.9 before the reading begins), it is a divine truth shining out, appealing to the human soul. In the reading wisdom is personified and attainable by those who seek her. She is aware of those who seek her and those who do so intelligently 'will find her sitting at the door.' We should meditate on wisdom to get a better understanding of her and be free from care for wisdom is aware of those worthy of her and she will be with them on life's journey 'anticipating their every thought.' It is the wise virgins in today's gospel reading who, having walked through life with wisdom, gain entry to the heavenly banquet.

The **Responsorial Psalm**, Psalm 62.1-7, was applied to David when he was wandering the desert yearning for God. We in response to the reading should yearn for wisdom. The psalmist's yearnings should be taken up by us as we seek the wisdom of God in our lives. When we feel lost and know not what to do we should 'long,' 'thirst' and 'pine' for God's wisdom. We should seek God in his sanctuary and be secure in his faithful love. Day and night we must keep God in mind because he is always there to help and we can rejoice in the shadow of his wings.

The **Second Reading** comes from the first letter of St Paul to the Thessalonians. Paul founded the Church in Thessalonica on his 2<sup>nd</sup> missionary journey in the summer of the year 50. He wrote his first letter to the Thessalonians in the winter of 50/51, some of his earliest writing. In the opening chapters Paul writes very affectionately to his converts now undergoing persecution. In the latter part of the letter he gives some practical suggestions including answers to questions about what happens to people when they die and about Christ's Second Coming (the Parousia). This letter along with the second one are important because they give us Paul's teaching about the end of time and also give us Paul's thinking at this time which was, how did Christ's Resurrection from the dead and his Second Coming bring salvation to his converts whether alive or dead?

The reading, 4.13-18, addresses the Thessalonians' concern about their deceased relations and friends missing the Second Coming of the Lord. Paul assures them 'about those who have fallen asleep.' ['Sleeping' was a common euphemism in the OT and the NT; the natural concomitant was to call the resurrection (to new life or from the dead) an 'awakening.'] They must not grieve over their deceased like those who have no hope. Paul then gives the teaching about Christ dying and rising again 'and that in the same way God will bring those who have fallen asleep in Jesus.' Those who are still living 'will not have any advantage over those who have fallen asleep.' Paul then mentions 'the voice of the Archangel' and 'the trumpet of God' and everyone living and dead will 'be taken up in the clouds' (the trumpet, voice and clouds were traditional signs that accompanied manifestations of God) to meet the Lord in the air. Then comes the essential point of Paul's teaching, 'This is the way we shall be with the Lord for ever.'