



PARISH OF ST. AGATHA
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POPE: A LIFE OF LOVE PREPARES US FOR THE FINAL ENCOUNTER WITH THE LORD

Pope Francis told Christians that the good works of every day, inspired by the love of Christ, allow us to await with serenity the feast of life beyond death. The Pope reflected on the Gospel reading of the day (Mt 25:1-13), the parable of the ten virgins. He recalled that in Jesus' time, weddings were celebrated at night and therefore lit up with torches. In the parable, some of the bridesmaids, the "foolish" ones forget to bring extra oil for their lamps, whereas the "wise" ones do. When the foolish bridesmaids realise they do not have enough oil for their lamps they go and buy more, but return too late and are turned away from the wedding. With this parable, the Pope explained, "Jesus wants to tell us that we must be prepared for His coming". Not only the final coming, stressed the Pope, but also our daily Christian commitment in view of that encounter, "for which the *lamp of faith* is not enough; we also need the *oil of charity* and good works."

FAITH WORKS THROUGH LOVE

Pope Francis said that the faith that truly unites us to Jesus is, "faith working through love". This is what the wise virgins represent: "the spare oil they took with them along with their lamps, indicates the good deeds carried out in cooperation with grace". If we want to be ready for the final encounter with the Lord, we must cooperate with Him now and perform good deeds inspired by His love. Pope Francis noted that, unfortunately, "we forget the purpose of our life", which is the "definitive appointment with God", and that we therefore lose the sense of expectation. This attitude, he said, precludes any view of the hereafter: "people do everything as if they will never depart for the other life". It is for this reason, he continued, that "people care only about possessing, of going about, establishing themselves...", and explained that "if we allow ourselves to be guided by what seems most attractive to us, by the search for our interests, our life becomes sterile; we do not accumulate any reserve of oil for our lamp, and it will be extinguished before the Lord's coming."

CORRESPOND TO GOD'S GRACE BY DOING GOOD

On the other hand, concluded the Pope, if we are vigilant and correspond to God's grace by doing good, "the Lord will be able to come even while we are sleeping", as the bridesmaids were, and this will not worry us, because we have the reserve of oil accumulated through our daily good works. (Vatican News).

NOVEMBER ALTAR LIST OF THE DEAD

PRIVATE DAILY MASS IS CELEBRATED, BY FR BRENDAN, FOR THOSE ON THE NOVEMBER LIST OF THE DEAD, RIGHT UP TO CHRISTMAS. ENVELOPES ARE AVAILABLE IN THE CHURCH TO WRITE THE NAMES OF LOVED ONES WHO WILL BE REMEMBERED. MAY THE SOULS OF THE FAITHFUL DEPARTED REST IN PEACE. AMEN.

JESUS SAID: I DON'T KNOW YOU, AS THEY CRIED OUTSIDE THE DOOR

In the Gospel today (Matt 25:1-13), Jesus tells us about ten virgins, who went to meet the bridegroom with lamps. Five wise virgins had their lamps full of oil, while five foolish virgins allowed the oil to run-out. The Lamp symbolises the Church and the Oil symbolises Faith and Grace, soaked in works of Love and Mercy. *Many Catholics have a lamp of profession on their lips, but not in their hearts.* The Bridegroom is Christ and the Church is His Bride. We are all classified as a Bride, because we are all Her (Church) Members. We wait for Him, our Bridegroom, to come and take us to the Wedding Banquet in Heaven. We must always be prepared. Jesus is the Eternal Light, who illumined our hearts and souls with the flame of Faith in Baptism. Sin extinguishes this flame.

PROFESS OUR FAITH AND MEAN IT

To have full Faith, is to accept and retain the full Teachings of the Church, as taught by Christ. Virginity symbolises the Christians desire to be always in a state of Grace, to be pure in mind, heart and body, which is a requirement to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. The First Reading of the Book of Wisdom today (6:12-16), teaches us that *Divine Wisdom is bright, and does not grow dim.* To hold a lamp dim and empty of oil, is to claim to be a Catholic, but actually living in a deep dark denial of God and His Commandments. For example, for a Catholic to vote in favour of a government referendum, which is totally against the teachings of the Church, would be to hold an empty lamp and be classified by Jesus, as a *foolish virgin, or a hypocrite*, not worthy of Heaven. If our hearts are *full of grace*, like Our Lady, then we will never accept alternative teachings or worldly philosophy that contradict Jesus. Devotion to Mary, such as praying the Rosary every day, magnifies the Light, keeping the fire of Faith burning brightly, which in turn, acts as a spiritual sanctuary light, acknowledging the Presence of Jesus, living in the tabernacle of our hearts.

GROW IN FAITH, LOVE AND MERCY

We are commanded by Christ to observe the Faith scrupulously, so that the Devil cannot rob us of God's Grace, Wisdom and Light. Satan will lead us into the darkness of an unspiritual and wasteful way of thinking. Do not be fooled by our own dark intellect or by any heretic, who is a person or persons, holding strong opinions that are at odds with the teachings of the Church. To fall for this devilish deceitfulness, will deprive the Catholic, of the Grace and Light, to see the Bridegroom, when He comes. Like the foolish virgins, the unprepared souls, will hear others cry out with Joy: *The Bridegroom is here! Go out and meet Him.* Let us be ready! The *trimming of the lamp*, is when we *waken-up* after *falling into the drowsiness of sin*, and wisely realise that preparation entails entering into the Sacrament of Confession, to repent for our sins. This results in the filling of *the flask* (the heart) with enlightened Grace. In the same way, as a gardener trims a rose bush, to give it new life, so does God of Mercy, trim our souls of all sins, reigniting the flame of faith to burn brighter.

TO REJECT THE CHURCH TEACHINGS IS TO REJECT HEAVEN

The foolish virgins went back to the source of the oil, which is the Church, but they left it too late - to repent for their sins because they had left the world. God gave them a lifetime to be fed by the Sacraments of the Church and they ignored it. *The Grace and Faith which the sensible virgins possessed, could not be transferred, because they bought the oil with their lives.* This is the cost of discipleship. There are some things which we have to bring to the Lord on our own. We cannot take a holy life, which someone else has lived, and present it to God as our own. It has to be totally ours, marked by the works of Faith and Charity. We cannot *give* away our holiness.

NEVER TAKE A DAY-OFF FROM JESUS

The most chilling words in the whole Gospel are when the unrepentant virgins knocked on the Door of Heaven and Jesus said: *I do not know you.* Jesus is making it very clear that, while on earth, if we break-off our Relationship, our Holy Communion (Covenant) with Him, through a disobedient, merciless, loveless, and sinful lifestyle, then the *Door of Heaven* will be closed to us. The Devil has deceived the world into believing, that the only necessary requirement to enter Heaven is just to die. St. Paul tells us today (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18), that to end up in Heaven, we have to *have lived and died in Jesus, in order for God to bring us with Him to Heaven.* We must be guided by the Light of the Holy Trinity. St. Padre Pio said; *remember you never know when your last moments on earth will be, so when you do something, do it as if it was the last thing you will ever do.* We must never take a day-off from Jesus, as that could be the day, He comes for us! God bless, Fr. Brendan.