

Homily: 32nd Sunday: Cycle A: 2023: Wis 6:12-16; Ps 63; 1Thes 4:13-18; Mt 25: 1-13

“On Death: Keep your Eyes open, for You know neither the Day nor the Hour”

1. *The Church encourages us to prepare ourselves for the hour of our death. In the ancient litany of the saints, for instance, she has us pray: ‘From a sudden and unforeseen death, deliver us, O Lord’; also we ask the Mother of God to intercede for us ‘at the hour of death’ in the Hail Mary; and we entrust ourselves to St. Joseph, the patron of a happy death (Catechism of the Catholic Church par 1014; two quotes below from as well).*

*“Every action of yours, every thought, should be those of one who expects to die before the day is out. Death would have no great terrors for you if you had a quiet conscience.... **Then why not keep clear of sin instead of running away from death? If you aren’t fit to face death today, it’s very unlikely you will be tomorrow...**”* (The Imitation of Christ, 1, 23, 1).

*“Praised be you, my Lord, for our sister, bodily Death, from whom no living man can escape. Woe on those who will die in **mortal sin**! Blessed are they who will be found in your most holy will, for the second death will not harm them”* (St. Francis of Assisi, Canticle of the Creatures).

The ultimate question is: would you or I be ready to see the Lord today? What is the message of the parable of the ten virgins? We need to be ready for the end of life, always!

2. **Do we believe in life everlasting? Are Heaven, Hell, and Purgatory real, or is this it?** The Church reminds us over and over that this earthly life is not the end all and be all. In light of that reality, do we remember to pray for the souls of those who have died, on a daily basis? Are we teaching our children to do so? This is a supreme act of charity, one of *the great Spiritual Works of Mercy* of the Church. Remember that the souls of those who are in Purgatory, being purified of their sins before they can see God face to face, depend on the prayers of those of us still living on earth. A good spiritual habit to develop is to **offer the last decade of our Rosary**, which I hope we all try to pray daily, *for the dying throughout the world that they will accept the grace of final repentance and be protected from the evil one at the last moments of their earthly life.* **Also remember to**

offer your Holy Communion for them at Mass on a frequent basis: *for the dying and souls in Purgatory*, for a particular person or in all the souls in Purgatory in general; other times we may offer our Communion and Mass intention for someone who is still on earth but in need of healing and/or conversion. It also helps to entrust all our Communions to Our Lady too, so she may spiritually apply them to those who need it most. This is part of the beautiful spiritual concept of *the Total Consecration to Jesus through Mary* taught by St. Louis de Montfort and popularized by Pope St. John Paul II (*If you are interested in finding out more about this, or to actually do the Consecration, please get in touch with me*). Truly we need to think of the dying and those who have died, on a daily basis, because our natural tendency as time passes by, even with our departed loved ones, is sometimes: the *out of sight, out of mind dynamic* – or the assumption that they are already in Heaven – when the reality is they may not be, and are still in need our prayers. Daily prayer for them counters this all too human tendency.

3. The reality of our Catholic Faith: Do we really believe and trust in what St. Paul says to us today in the 2nd reading? “*For if we believe that Jesus died and rose, God will bring forth with Him from the dead those also who have fallen asleep believing in Him. Otherwise, you might yield to grief like those who have no hope.*” **What a chilling thought!** Familiarity can truly breed contempt; those of us who come to Mass regularly need to always be on guard against this tendency. **Satan, who Jesus calls the father of lies from the beginning, wants us to believe there is nothing more - but that is his ULTIMATE LIE!** Don’t give into the temptation to despair and lack of belief, but instead in the face of suffering and death say, *Jesus I trust in You!* - the foundational phrase of the whole Divine Mercy Devotion Jesus revealed to St. Faustina. Make a spiritual resolution to read St. Faustina’s Diary of Divine Mercy. The Divine Mercy Chaplet, which we all should pray, at least once daily as it only takes 5 minutes, is a saving prayer of God’s Mercy for ourselves and for our loved ones whom we remember at Mass. It is also something we always should pray with the dying, if the opportunity presents itself. Jesus told St. Faustina; it is the last hope for some souls’ salvation. What a spiritual gift that we can help the Lord in the most important reality in life, salvation, by simply praying the Chaplet for the dying. God bless you and all the faithful departed.