

November 12, 2017 – 32<sup>nd</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle A

A pastor noticed that one of his elderly parishioners wasn't there for three months. He says, wow, I better go talk to her and say, "Look, you need to look at the end of life, you need to be prepared for the next life." So, he called and made an appointment and he went over there and they had some tea and cookies and finally, he looked at her and said, "you know, Elsie, you really need to start working on the hereafter, and thinking about it." She says, "Oh pastor, I do that all the time. I go to the kitchen and say, what did I come here after? then I go into the living room and say, what did I come here after?' Pastor, I just think about it all day long."

Our first reading is from the book of wisdom. Wisdom is an interesting concept in the Jewish mind and the Semitic mind versus the western mind. We think wisdom comes from living a long life, learning things, experiencing things that nobody else has. In the Middle East, wisdom is a part of God. It is the female part of God. That's why "she" is right here, stated right here, she, female part of God. In almost all of the middle eastern traditions, before Islam, they had a "Book of Wisdom." The ancient Egyptians had a "Book of Wisdom." If you read it, go to the library and check it out, it looks almost like ours because, how long were the Israelites in Egypt? 430 years, they picked this up, so then they wrote part of that, into what we have here. But, wisdom is a way of life. It's not about learning from experience, yes that's a minor part, but it's a way of life. It's wanting to be like God. Wanting God to come into us and show us how to live. This book was written so that we could follow that and so that the ancient Israelites could do the same. Now we come to the gospel. Jesus says this parable, and this parable has been discussed for two millennia among theologians and scripture scholars. Some of it is easy to understand. It's only recently, the last couple hundred years, remember when your two thousand years old, two hundred is nothing, they have finally decided on the whole meaning of everything.

So, about weddings. Weddings at the time of Jesus, were focused on the bridegroom. The bride was just a part of it. Now, the bride is everything and the groom is just a part of it. We've come completely full circle. The bridegroom is everything, everything went according to him and they usually took place at night. Why? Because Israel is a desert, it's hotter than here. Nobody wants a June or July wedding in Arizona. You learn that as a priest. Nobody wants that and if they do you say, "are you crazy?" So, they had them at night when it's cooler. But, sometimes the bridegroom would delay his coming to shock the bridesmaids because they would get tired and fall asleep and he wanted to scare them. It went like this; the bridegroom is over at his house, his parents' house and he's getting all his fancy doodads on, and he's putting on some kind of cologne that they have back then. His best man is there, his groomsmen are there, and they might sit down and play a card game or do something else, to wait until night. And then, at nightfall, they would go across town to the bride's parent's house and they would pick up the bride. The bridesmaids would light their lamps and they would guide the way for everybody back to the groom's house. Then the wedding would take place at night and continue for a whole week. That's a whole lot of partying. But you have to realize, in most villages, there would be a wedding once every five or six years. So, you had to party. You had to kill the fattened calf, you had to have all this wine available. We see how people get drunk at just a six-hour reception, can you imagine a weeks' worth of wine. This is how the weddings would go in the time of Jesus. So, when Jesus said the bridegroom is delayed, they knew, oh yah, okay, he's probably going to play a trick on these girls or whatever. There may be any number of reasons he's delayed. We have ten girls. Five are smart enough to bring extra oil in case he's late. Five did not do that. Now, the bridegroom goes into the banquet, locks the door, doesn't know those other five. Let's break this apart. The bridegroom is Jesus Christ, the bride is the

Church, the bridesmaids are you and I. Guys, it's okay, we can pretend. The lamps are our own personalities, our own person. Jesus said, "do not put your lamp under a bushel basket, let it shine for all to see." It's the light of Christianity, the light of the world, Jesus Christ, came into the world and now infuses us, is now part of us. So, the lamp is us. Now, what is the oil? The oil; and this is the part that only in the last couple hundred years, has been agreed upon. The oil is a combination of factors; moral rectitude, living a moral life, obedience to Jesus Christ, the ten commandments, the Church. Following the laws of the land except when they are illegal or immoral. And wisdom, praying to God who sends the Holy Spirit to infuse us with wisdom. So, all of these things are in the oil. All of these things contribute to a good solid Christian life. That is why the ones who have extra oil cannot give it to those who do not. They can't give a part of themselves to someone else. It would be like, "I'm on my death bed, could you give me part of your life that you lived that was good." Not going to happen. Or, "oh, wait, I think I've got the flu, I think I'm going to go get a flu shot." Too late. Five minutes before the driving test, you get in the car and look at it for the first time. Are you going to pass? No. It just doesn't infuse itself like that. When people say, "those bridesmaids, they're selfish." That's not the meaning, that's not true oil. It's their whole lives spent waiting for the bridegroom, listening to the precepts of God, living a moral life, being charitable, compassionate, kind. All of those things that form a Christian are in that oil and is the oil. So, when the bridegroom comes, those five are ready, their lamps are lit, the light of Christianity is showing. The other five, they don't have it. They go out and try to get it at the very last minute and they miss the boat. The bridegroom takes those five in and everybody else to the banquet which is heaven, and shuts the door. Those who did not live a moral life, those who did not follow the commandments, those who did not truly become Christian or live a Christian life, they're not going to the banquet. Jesus says that. The doors are locked and the bridegroom comes and says, "I don't know you, go away." Then he ends it with a very important thing. "You do not know the day or the hour, be prepared." Last night we had an attorney, a friend of mine, Robert Michael Way, he uses all three names, unlike the rap stars now, that use one. He came in and he said, "how many have a will?" Out of the crowd, two people had a will, me and somebody else. They weren't prepared. That is preparation, what, for this world. Are you going to leave your stuff to the government? Or are you going to leave your stuff to your family? Or, some charity like, Saint Michael the Archangel Parish? Be prepared. Just saying. We prepare ourselves that way, we also prepare ourselves spiritually. We make sure that we have been living a Christian life. We've been going to confession, we've been going to communion, we've been partaking of charity in any way we can. We always follow the ten commandments. We listen to the guidelines of the Church, Catechism of the Catholic Church, canon law of the Catholic Church. All these things come together and help us become truly Christian so that we can go into the banquet with Jesus and we can say, as the Father waits on the table, "yes Lord, I would like a meat lover's pizza."

God bless you.