

Read

Wisdom 6:12-16

Psalm 63:2, 3-4,
5-6, 7-8

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18
or 4:13-14

Matthew 25:1-13

LIVING THE WORD

Thirty-Second Sunday in Ordinary Time

November 12, 2023



REFLECTION

At first you might feel like today's Gospel reading is strange. What do ten virgins (or bridesmaids) waiting for a bridegroom have to do with the kingdom of God? At that time, the groom's friends would wait in the street for him to come back to his home to meet his bride for a large celebration. If they were ready and waiting, they would be invited into the celebration. If they were unprepared, the guards at the doors would turn them away, assuming the bridegroom didn't know them. In the story, the wedding attendants who were lazy and foolish were unprepared and therefore turned away.

The celebration represents the kingdom of God. When Christ comes again at the end of time, we will want to join him and enter the kingdom of heaven. In order to do so, we must always be prepared since we don't know when Christ will come. Waiting and being ready for Christ takes spiritual preparation. Can you imagine showing up to run a marathon without having any practice, or the right gear, or a group of supportive friends cheering you on? Anything we want to do well we must practice and prepare for. The same applies to our spiritual lives.



QUESTIONS

- ❖ What do today's readings teach you about the Christian life?
- ❖ If you were a spiritual coach for another person, what "drills" would you have them do?
- ❖ How can you encourage yourself and others as you wait for the coming of Christ?



ACTION

Think of the last activity you participated in where you had to prepare ahead of time. Maybe you had to train for a sports event, practice your lines for a play, or practice an instrument for a concert. Make a list of all the ways you prepared for that event. Now make a similar list, but for your faith life. What training or daily habits could you do to help keep your faith life strong? Is there someone in your life you might ask to be your coach in your journey of faith?



Check out "A Teen's Game Plan for Life" by Lou Holtz



November 12, 2023

THIRTY-SECOND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

LECTIONARY #154A

Wisdom 6:12-16

Psalms 63:2, 3-4, 5-6, 7-8

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 or 4:13-14

Matthew 25:1-13

Prepare for the Word

The following elements may be used by the catechist, teacher, or youth minister to prepare to facilitate today's session with teens. You may integrate this information into the reflection and discussion on today's readings.

Leader's Context

Jesus tells the disciples a parable to teach them about being ready for the kingdom of God. He tells the story of the ten virgins, five who were prepared for the wedding feast that was about to start and five who were not. The groom was delayed in arriving and some of the virgins ran out of oil. In the end, they were left out of the banquet because they were unprepared. Jesus says that we are to be ready for when the Lord calls us. We are not to delay in preparing ourselves for the kingdom of heaven. Now is the time to pray and lead active lives of faith.

Q FOCUS: *We need to prepare ourselves for the kingdom of heaven now, not later.*

Liturgical Calendar Connection

On November 15, the Catholic Church celebrates St. Albert the Great. He was born in 1206 in Germany. He entered the Dominican order and studied theology. His work also led him to study the philosophy of Aristotle. This set the stage for the later work of St. Thomas Aquinas, one of Albert's students. During St. Albert's life, he was known as a great mediator and writer. He wrote many publications on geography, the sciences, and other topics. Because of his great contribution to theology, he is considered a Doctor of the Church. St. Albert the Great is the patron saint of scientists, philosophers, and teachers.

Church Teaching Connection

"The Bridegroom is the Lord, and the time of waiting for his arrival is the time he gives to us. . . . It is a time to live in accordance with God, because we do not know either the day or the hour of Christ's return. What he asks of us is to be ready for the encounter . . . with Jesus, which means being able to see the signs of his presence, keeping our faith alive with prayer, with the sacraments, and taking care not to fall asleep so as to not forget about God" (Pope Francis, General Audience, April 24, 2013).

Hear the Word

Use this resource, a Lectionary, or a Bible to proclaim the reading. The book should be held reverently or placed on a lectern. If possible, light a candle that is placed near where the Gospel will be proclaimed. Gesture for teens to stand.

Gospel Acclamation

Use the same musical setting that is used in your parish or at school Masses. Teens may help with music and proclaim the Gospel.

Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel

Matthew 25:1-13

Reader: A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew.

All: Glory to you, O Lord.

All make the sign of the cross on their forehead, lips, and heart.

Jesus told his disciples this parable: "The kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish and five were wise. The foolish ones, when taking their lamps, brought no oil with them, but the wise brought flasks of oil with their lamps. Since the bridegroom was long delayed, they all became drowsy and fell asleep. At midnight, there was a cry, 'Behold, the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!' Then all those virgins got up and trimmed their lamps. The foolish ones said to the wise, 'Give us

some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' But the wise ones replied, 'No, for there may not be enough for us and you. Go instead to the merchants and buy some for yourselves.' While they went off to buy it, the bridegroom came and those who were ready went into the wedding feast with him. Then the door was locked. Afterwards the other virgins came and said, 'Lord, Lord, open the door for us!' But he said in reply, 'Amen, I say to you, I do not know you.' Therefore, stay awake, for you know neither the day nor the hour."

Reader: The Gospel of the Lord.

All: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Everyone may be seated.

Reflect on the Word

When beginning the reflection and discussion about today's readings, first refer to the handout for today. Ask teens what they learned about themselves and about Christian discipleship from performing the action for the week and journaling. Ask teens about the readings of the day: What struck them? What do they think the readings mean? How do the readings affect their own lives? Then begin the following reflection:

The parable Jesus tells in today's Gospel reading is meant to teach us about the kingdom of heaven. The story begins with a bridegroom coming and that there are ten virgins, referring to members of the wedding party, who are waiting for his arrival so the party can start.

► **Have you been invited to an event or anticipated someone's arrival so much that all you can do is think about how to get ready for it? What did you do to help with the preparations?**

There is a lot of planning involved when we have to make preparations for such a time. In the parable, five of the ten virgins knew the importance of preparation while the other five were less well-prepared. Anticipating that the night might be a long one, five of the virgins brought flasks full of extra oil for their

lamps. They were ready in case the groom was delayed in arriving, which ended up happening. The other five virgins, however, did not think that far ahead and thus, were not prepared. As they waited and waited, those virgins ran out of oil for their lamps. This meant that they needed to run into the town to find more oil. Because of that, they missed the groom's arrival and were left out of the celebration.

► **Describe a time when you were unprepared. Was it because you didn't plan ahead or was it because you didn't know what to expect? How did being unprepared make you feel?**

► **Describe a time when you were prepared. How did you know what to prepare for? How did being prepared make you feel?**

Jesus ends this parable by telling the disciples that we don't know when the Lord is coming at the end of time to bring about the kingdom of heaven. This sense of the "unknown hour" also applies to our lives; we don't know when or how God will act in them and we don't know when we will die. When we put off our faith and procrastinate about deepening our relationship with Jesus, it can keep us from being fully present in our faith lives. When we do this, we are like the five virgins who did not plan ahead and were not ready when the groom came.

Thinking about your own faith life, reflect on what parts of it you push to the side and think you'll get to later. For example, do you make time for Jesus in your day, or do you just see him on Sunday at Mass? How can you prepare for heaven? Jesus is not giving us stumbling blocks in today's Gospel. He is telling us that to be welcomed into the kingdom of heaven, we must be prepared. We can prepare by receiving the sacraments, by going to Mass, by sharing the Gospel with others, by praying throughout our day, and so much more.

Wrapping It Up

Consider these points to conclude the discussion and reflection. Integrate the thoughts and ideas that surfaced during the discussion as well as the "Church Teaching Connection" on page 66.

We must prepare our hearts for the kingdom of heaven.

Jesus wants us to be ready when he calls us.

Our faith is an active faith as we are called to love abundantly, serve one another, and talk to God in prayer.

Act on the Word

Are You Ready?

For this activity, you will need paper and pens.

Gather the group in a large circle and play the following game. Share with the teens that this is a game that requires great attention to detail. The leader starts the game by saying, "I'm going to an island on vacation. On this vacation, I am going to take a red pillow." The teens then take turns going around the circle, asking if they can also go on vacation and take something. They will each ask, "Can I go on vacation with you and take ____." They can fill in the blank with their item.

The leader will only approve their selection if it matches the key detail in the item the leader first proposed. In the case of the example above, the key detail from the leader is that the item is red. So, if the teen asks if he can take a book along, the leader would say no. But if he asks if he can take a red book along, the leader would say yes. The goal is to have everyone figure out the specific detail, which the leader will know once they all ask to bring a correct item. At that point, the game is over. Other variations

can include the leader putting a number in the sentence, putting "an extra" in the sentence, adding a sigh before saying what she will bring, coughing before she says what she will bring, or any other detail like that.

After you have spent enough time with the game, possibly playing several rounds, have the young people brainstorm specific and practical things they can do throughout their day to help them prepare for the kingdom of God. Just like the game, the details matter when we look at our faith life. All of our choices have the potential to draw us closer to God or to pull us farther away from him. Encourage them to add a few of the ideas to their phones or write them down so they can include them in their week ahead.

Closing Prayer

*We place our trust in you, O God,
as we prepare to meet your Son, Jesus Christ,
when he returns in glory.*

*Grant us the courage to be strong in
our waiting,
and deepen our faith as we live each day
in hope.*

*Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever.
Amen.*

For Next Sunday

To help teens prepare for next Sunday's Mass, print, email, or share on a blog or social media the handout found on the next page. The JPG and PDF files are available at www.ltp.org/lwgr. Encourage teens to attend Mass with family or friends.