

Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time – Year C 12th August 2007

Gospel (Luke 12:32-48)

Jesus said to his disciples, "Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions, and give alms. Make purses for yourselves that do not wear out, an unfailing treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

"Be dressed for action and have your lamps lit; be like those who are waiting for their master to return from the wedding banquet, so that they may open the door for him as soon as he comes and knocks. Blessed are those slaves whom the master finds alert when he comes; truly I tell you, he will fasten his belt and have them sit down to eat, and he will come and serve them. If he comes during the middle of the night, or near dawn, and finds them so, blessed are those slaves.

"But know this: if the owner of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have let his house be broken into. You also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an unexpected hour."

Peter said, "Lord, are you telling this parable for us or for everyone?" And the Lord said, "Who then is the faithful and prudent manager whom his master will put in charge of his slaves, to give them their allowance of food at the proper time? Blessed is that slave whom his master will find at work when he arrives. Truly I tell you, he will put that one in charge of all his possessions. But if that slave says to himself, 'My master is delayed in coming,' and if he begins to beat the other slaves, men and women, and to eat and drink and get drunk, the master of that slave will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour that he does not know, and will cut him in pieces, and put him with the unfaithful. That slave who knew what his master wanted, but did not prepare himself or do what was wanted, will receive a severe beating. But the one who did not know and did what deserved a beating will receive a light beating. "From everyone to whom much has been given, much will be required; and from the one to whom much has been entrusted, even more will be demanded."

Scripture Reflection

Last week, we read Jesus' warning about basing our lives on the accumulation of wealth or possessions. In this week's reading, Jesus continues on this theme by instructing us to build up treasures – not earthly wealth however, but rather treasures in heaven – and to be always ready to welcome him again.

To "gird your loins" means to prepare yourself for something requiring readiness, strength, or endurance. The Christian life journey isn't something that happens one day and it's over. The journey lasts your whole life. It requires daily preparation and effort, and perseverance.

God's call on our lives is a personal call. The Father wants us to follow Him with all our hearts. God knows that where our heart is, there is our treasure also – or to put it another way, where our hearts are is where our energy, interest and attention will be.

Jesus asks each of us, are you ready? Are you ready to give your whole life to me? Are you ready for me to speak to you in prayer, to take you to the next level of your faith journey? Jesus often works in our lives in ways we don't expect. That's why he tells us that we must be ready for him. In the Scripture passage, he uses a parable of servants waiting for their master's return. When it seems like the master is taking his time or maybe isn't coming back anymore, some servants grow lazy about waiting, their behaviour slips down a couple of notches and they are not ready when the master returns. Some other servants, however, have remained vigilant and when the master returns he finds them still focussed on their duties. It is to these people that the master gives greater responsibility.

Jesus knew that we don't always feel like waiting for him and doing what's right - we grow bored, lose focus, and our minds and interests wander. That's why Jesus encourages and exhorts us to stay focused, to be ready every day and to focus on Him for strength, endurance and faithfulness. He doesn't want us to wait for Him with fear and anxiety but rather, to await his return in expectation and hope.

What does it mean for us today to be 'ready for the Lord'? We need to live our faith at all times, not just when we feel like it, or when we think we might be judged by it. Not just on Sundays at Mass, but throughout the whole week; not just when people are watching, but also when we are alone. Jesus' reply to Peter in this passage also tells us the message of his parable is for everyone. It's not enough to rely on others being ready or telling us when to act – we all need to be ready and active with the gifts we have been given. Each of us needs to nurture a heart that is open and to maintain space each day for God to speak to us and lead us further on our journey.



Pilgrimage: a journey of learning

Pilgrimage is a time of learning. At times of both walking and resting it will always be necessary to hear Jesus' words.

A fundamental experience of the pilgrim then is that of listening. The proclamation, reading and meditation of the gospel must accompany the steps of all pilgrims.

How will I hear Jesus' words and learn of Jesus' way, the way to the Cross, yet, a way of enlightenment?

There must be time to stop on any pilgrimage and sit at the master's feet and be given the guidance of God's gracious words.

Pope Quote

"The light which Jesus speaks of in the Gospel is the light of faith, God's free gift, which enlightens the heart and clarifies the mind. 'It is the God who said, "Let light shine out of darkness", who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God on the face of Christ' (2 Cor 4:6). That is why the words of Jesus explaining his identity and his mission are so important: 'I am the light of the world; whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life' (Jn 8:12).

Our personal encounter with Christ bathes life in new light, sets us on the right path, and sends us out to be his witnesses. This new way of looking at the world and at people, which comes to us from him, leads us more deeply into the mystery of faith, which is not just a collection of theoretical assertions to be accepted and approved by the mind, but an experience to be had, a truth to be lived, the salt and light of all reality (cf. *Veritatis Splendor*, 88)."

Pope John Paul II, World Youth Day 2002 Message, July 25, 2001

WYD Action

Food is an easily obtainable resource for us in Australia, but it is not the case in some countries around the world. Organise a food drive in your community to collect food cans and other long life products. These can be sent to local food shelters, aboriginal communities or, if enough is collected, they can be sent overseas to countries and villages experiencing severe food shortages.

WYD Cross and Icon

In 2003, Pope John Paul II gave young people a second symbol of faith to be carried in the world, accompanying the WYD Cross - the Icon of Our Lady, 'Salus Populi Romani', a contemporary copy of a sacred and ancient icon housed in the first and greatest basilica to Mary the Mother of God in the West, St Mary Major.

Today I also entrust to you... the Icon of Mary. From now on it will accompany the World Youth Days, together with the Cross. Behold, your Mother! It will be a sign of Mary's motherly presence close to young people who are called, like the Apostle John, to welcome her into their lives.

Rome, 18th World Youth Day, 2003
Taken from the WYD 2008 website: www.wyd2008.org

Ritual and Prayer

Preparation

Establish a prayer focus incorporating:
coloured material
an open bible
an oil burning lamp

Ritual

Invite the group to gather around the prayer focus.
Read the scripture to the group gathered.
Invite the group to spend time in reflection.
Invite members to respond with one word or phrase which describes the feelings of:
– what it feels like to arrive home to an empty house.
– what it feels like to arrive home to the lights burning and people waiting to greet you, welcoming you in.
Once completed, the group prays the final prayer together.

Prayer

God of light and life,

Help us to be alert, to remain watchful and to prepare for your arrival.

May we ready ourselves to open the door for you.

Enlighten our hearts with your word.

Energise our lives with the compassion that Jesus showed us.

Help us to live a life that is open to you.

May our hearts be pure.

As we approach WYD may we prepare our hearts to be open to your leading. May we be prepared to open our homes in a spirit of hospitality. May we be willing to share ourselves with others and to receive the gift of their friendship.

May we know the light of your love burning within us as we wait in anticipation.

We ask this through Jesus Christ.

Amen

Sacred Places

Take time out from your busy life to make a sacred space where you can reflect on your life each week. This place is your sacred place where you can come and not be disturbed while you reflect on your life in the presence of God.

- What has been revealed during this time of reflection?
- When have I experienced the light of God?
- How am I the light for those around me?
- How can I be ready for an encounter with God?
- How will I respond to God's call this week?