

## God Wants to Give Us His Gifts, but He Needs Us to Do Our Part 32<sup>nd</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time (A-2011)

Wisdom is personified in today's First Reading, which is one way that the Old Testament has of speaking about God: personified Wisdom.

In this reading, Wisdom is given two key characteristics.

- First she is someone **eager** to bring her gifts to us.
- But second, at the same time, Wisdom depends on our being eager to **receive** them.
- This is because our relationship with God is a kind of **friendship**; it is based on freedom and love.
- He won't **force** himself on us; he respects us too much.
- He wants our love and our friendship, not our slavery.
- So he **invites**, but has to leave it up to us to respond.
- "Wisdom hastens to make herself known..." the First Reading tells us, but "whoever watches for her... shall not be disappointed".
- The **right attitude** of our hearts in relation to God, then, is **active searching**, which results from cultivating a deep **desire** for God.
- This is what today's Psalm is all about: "My soul is **thirsting** for you."

And this ties in to today's Gospel passage.

- The **foolish virgins** didn't prepare themselves adequately for the wedding feast.
- They didn't take it **seriously**.
- They were **careless and superficial** in their relationship with the bridegroom, not eager, intelligent and active in their pursuit of wisdom.
- It's as if they **called** themselves Christians and it appeared on the **outside** that they were, but it was **just** appearances.

Their lamps were **empty**; they did not lead deep lives of prayer; they did not love Jesus Christ in their hearts; they did not **truly seek** the Lord.

### **St. Joan of Arc's Turning Point**

We are all familiar with the story of **St. Joan of Arc**.

- God allowed her to hear the voices of some saints and angels, who guided her to save France from destruction at the hands of the English during the **100-Years' War**.

- You probably remember that she was an **unlikely choice**, being only a teenaged peasant girl who couldn't even read or write.
- You may even recall that she was **unfairly tried and condemned to death** by burning at the stake after being captured by the Burgundians.
- But did you know that she had been hearing those voices for almost **three years** before she got up enough **courage** to do what God was asking her?
- She tried to **ignore** them, to **silence** them, to **avoid** them...
- Only when she decided to **trust God** and listen to them was his miraculous plan able to be carried out, one step at a time.

You and I may not be given the same **caliber** of mission that God gave St. Joan of Arc.

And he may not show us his will in the same **dramatic** fashion that he did to her.

But even so, unless we decide to trust him and listen to him, to **do our part**, we'll never get a chance to taste the **sweet fruits of his Wisdom** and experience the **joys of his Marriage Feast**.

And he won't have the chance to do wonderful things through our cooperation.

### **Maximizing Our Christian Potential**

Imagine if you had the **talent and health** to be an **all-star quarterback**.

- Would you be satisfied with coaching from the **couch** each week?
- Of course not.
- You would go and make a **difference**.
- You would do what you could to **fulfill your potential**.

Well, quarterbacks come and go, even good ones, even great ones.

But faithful **Christians last forever** – they are called **saints**.

And when God created each one of us, he gave us the "talent," the **potential to become** a saint.

- And in this Mass he gives us the **nourishment** we need to **fulfill** that potential, to reach the heights of holiness right in the midst of our normal activities, whatever they may be.
- So are we going to fritter all that away like **spiritual couch potatoes** as the **world around us**, and our family members, and our colleagues and

friends, suffer because God's love and wisdom hasn't **penetrated** their lives?

- What a waste, what foolishness!
- Why not **shoot for the stars**, why not shoot for **wisdom**, why not start putting in place a spiritual **work-out program** that can make us into what God created us to be: a **bright, sturdy** lighthouse in this dark world of shipwrecked souls.
- *[Here you can mention a program or invite them to start by coming to confession and getting some spiritual coaching this week].*

During this Mass, as Christ **renews his commitment to us**, let's renew **our** commitment to **him**, to being his messengers and companions.

In the end, **keeping that lamp full** is all that matters.