

HEAVEN IS AS SIMPLE AS AN EXTRA OIL (2017)

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The readings for this Sunday are: [Wisdom 6:12-16](#); [1 Thessalonians 4:13-18](#); and [Matthew 25:1-13](#).

Dear Friends,

Happy Sunday. I hope you all had a great week. Better days are always ahead. As we gradually approach the end of the present liturgical calendar, I would suggest we start setting our goals for the next liturgical calendar. What do you think you want to add to your spiritual activities? What are some activities you want to emphasize? What spiritual books do you want to read? What remarkable holy sites or places do you want to visit? One great advantage of starting our liturgical calendar before the civil calendar is that it helps us to plan ahead even before the civil calendar sets in. Take advantage of that.

I remarked some few weeks ago that we human beings like to complicate a lot of things in life. Yes, we really do love to do that. I think it has to do with people not valuing things that are simple in life. When we think about “making heaven on earth” how complicated have we really made things? You just need to see what some religious leaders make Christians go through round the world to understand how complicated making heaven has become. Yet what is Jesus telling us in today’s gospel? Making heaven is not complicated at all. It is as simple as getting enough oil for the lamp to last for the night. Something as simple as an oil. Let us think about that for a moment and let that sink in. Many in several parts of the world always have an extra battery for their cellphones or take their chargers along with them. You will not want to be stranded and not have anyone to call. It is the sensible and right thing to do to make sure your phone does not run out of power. Usually, we fill up our water bottles not because we are thirsty but because we may soon be thirsty, and it is the clever thing to do. How often do we travel sometimes and pack all we need and then forget our toothbrush? Yet missing something as little as that can make a trip turn into a disaster. Jesus wants us to think about heaven in that way or manner. It is not complicated, it is all about doing the sensible thing. The problem with simple sensible things like I said is that they often seem insignificant. Yet Theresa of Calcutta will say “little things are little things but faithfulness to little things is something great.” Making heaven may be as simple as getting early to work, it can be as simple as being kind to your fellow workers, as simple as paying more attention to our family, saying thank you to someone who deserves it, saying sorry to someone you wronged, stop speaking ill of someone or cutting down on the time we use online and instead taking up a spiritual duty. Heaven is as simple as recognizing and believing that God forgives you each time you come to the confessional. Let us improve our spiritual lives by paying more attention to those simple little things we can do to draw us closer to God. One of the most comforting things for us as Christians is that we have a God who is pleased with our little contributions to life. How often do we miss the simplest things of life? How is it easy to miss the simple things of life?

The second way the wise virgins displayed their wisdom in today’s gospel is in showing that there is a limit to the help they could offer to everyone. Some of us sometimes think we can save the whole world. This parable reminds us that we should be careful of giving out help that will drag us down spiritually. If you know helping someone will endanger your spiritual life, direct them to those who can be of better help. It is always simple wisdom to recognize the limits of the help we

can render in life. The problem sometimes is that we think we are not charitable if we do not help every single person. That is dangerous thinking. Do what you can as best as you can and always let people know that there is a limit to your help. Unlimited help, ultimately takes the sense of responsibility from others and makes them irresponsible.

One particular aspect of this story that we often do not pay attention to is the fact that the bridegroom arrived late. And it is at this point that the foolishness of the other five virgins becomes undeniable (the Greek word used for *foolish* (μωραὶ) in this story is where our English word *moron* comes from). At the beginning of the story, we knew some had extra oils and others did not. Why did the five without oil not utilize the opportunity of the long delay of the arrival of the bridegroom to get the oil? They did not. Instead, they decided to sleep with those who had extra oil. That others are sleeping does not mean you have to sleep, but they did not realize that. Anyone could have forgotten the extra oil, but the fact that the five decided to sleep when they could have gotten the oil shows that they are truly foolish. That sleep cost them dearly. All of them went to sleep, but some were well prepared before the sleeping. This story therefore invites us to see every single day we live as a new opportunity from God. Every single day is a moment of Grace. We wake up and go to bed; and wake up again, and it becomes a routine. We should always remember that this is not a routine that will last forever. As long as we live, we all live in the realm of Grace, let us not waste that. Since every New day that we have represents the delay of the bridegroom, this means that for anyone of us who is without oil, we can still get it. This can be as simple as making an examination of conscience before we sleep every day. That becomes our daily oil. The point of the delay is that we always have the time until the time is up. *Carpe diem*: Seize the day. Making heaven is as simple as seeing every day as an opportunity to do something simple for God.

Let us pray:

Almighty Ever-Living God, teach me how simple it is to please you in the little things of life through Christ our Lord.