

November 8, 2020 – 32nd Sunday in Ordinary Time

Dear Parishioners:

Jesus says, “Stay awake, for you know neither the day nor the hour.” This means that we should be always prepared to stand confidently before Him. The difference between the wise virgins and the foolish ones was whether they had oil or not, that is, whether they were prepared to light their lamps to meet the bridegroom or not. The foolish ones were foolish not because they fell asleep but because they did so without going out to the merchants and buying some oil before they went to sleep. They might have meant to sleep just a little before they get some oil. However, the bridegroom came a bit earlier than they had expected, thus, they had not enough time to buy oil and consequently could not go into the wedding feast with him. Had they purchased oil before they went to sleep, they would have belonged to the group of wise virgins.

What does the oil symbolize? It symbolizes a clean conscience placed before the Lord. The wise virgins were able to have a sound sleep since they had clean consciences. They kept the oil of clean consciences to greet the bridegroom regardless of the time of his arrival. They could do so because they were wise.

It says in the Proverbs, “The beginning of wisdom is fear of the LORD, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding” (Proverbs 9:10).

If we have fear of the Lord, we would try our best to keep clean consciences before Him. We would make efforts not to commit sins, and repent when we fail to do so because of our human weaknesses. That’s how we can always stay awake. In order for us to gladly meet the Lord and go to the wedding feast with him, we are absolutely in need of fear of the Lord. Without it, we cannot stay awake prepared. If we need reconciliation with God, with the Church, with our neighbors, and with ourselves, we must make sure we have it before we go to bed so that we can have the oil of clean consciences.

We need to follow the dictates of our consciences, but at the same time, we are obliged to properly form them. We do that not on our own but according to the revealed truths taught by the Church. Conscience means an inner feeling or voice as acting guide to the good or evil of one’s behavior. So, if we failed to

do the good or chose to do the evil that our consciences know, our conscience bothers us and we have a guilt feeling. For example, when we know that lying is bad and still tell a lie, then, we have a guilty conscience, not a clean one. Let's see what happens when we don't have well-formed consciences.

A judge called to his desk two lawyers who were debating over a case. The judge said, "You, the plaintiff's lawyer, gave me \$10,000 while you, the defendant's lawyer, gave me \$15,000. The two lawyers' faces went ashy pale with shame and fear. The judge hand an envelop to the defendant's lawyer and said, "I am returning you \$5,000. Now, I can make a promise that I will proceed fairly following my own judgement." The judge obviously did not have a properly formed conscience because he did not seem to know that bribery is an evil act. We cannot make correct moral judgments unless our consciences are properly formed.

It is a sin that one does not try one's best to form his/her conscience or refuse to form it according to the revealed divine truths. We can strive for having properly formed consciences only if we truly have fear of the Lord. With it, we can do our best not to offend God even in the slightest degree. We would not want to insult Him owing to our vincible ignorance. We heard from the today's first reading, "Resplendent and unfading is wisdom, and she is readily perceived by those who love her, and found by those who seek her. She hastens to make herself known in anticipation of their desire." First, we need to seek fear of the Lord, the beginning of wisdom. Then, we can desire other wisdom and stay awake by recognizing them. In that way, we can have a properly formed consciences that may be kept clean.

If we don't have fear of the Lord, or lack thereof, it's more likely that we live superficial or hypocritical faith lives. In other words, we may become self-righteous people. Like wise virgins, let us have the oil of clean well-formed consciences ready through the wisdom of fear of the Lord so that we may stay awake to meet Him with a lamp lit regardless when He comes.