

32<sup>nd</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time

[Reading I: Wisdom 6:12-16](#)

[Responsorial Psalm: 63:2, 3-4, 5-6, 7-8](#)

[Reading II: 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 or 4:13-14](#)

[Gospel: Matthew 25:1-13](#)

Readings may be found on the US Bishop's website:

<https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/111223.cfm>



The Book of Wisdom was written probably about 100 years before Jesus in Greek by someone who knew the Old Testament very well. The Catholic and Orthodox Bibles include it, but those of the Reformation communities do not. It was intended to encourage others during a time of persecution by the Greeks and to show the great value of the Hebrew scriptures in the face of Greek literature. The author uses reason, prized by the Greeks, to show the value of the message of God's word.

Wisdom comes from God and is an accessible way to God. It is available to anyone who seeks wisdom. Finding wisdom requires effort and focus. Unless we genuinely desire wisdom and grow in our awareness of it, it can pass us by. Those who acquire wisdom have something that will survive the last judgment. By living wisely each day, one does not need to worry about the unexpected or even death. If one has wisdom, that one is in touch with God.

The reading states: *"For taking thought of wisdom is the perfection of prudence."* The Catechism states: *Prudence is the virtue that disposes practical reason to discern our true good in every circumstance and to guide one's choices in achieving it. 'the prudent man looks where he is going.' It is prudence that immediately guides the judgment of conscience. With the help of this virtue, we apply moral principles to particular cases without error and overcome doubts about the good to achieve and the evil to avoid."*

If one wants to make sound moral judgments and live a virtuous life, then Wisdom will provide the foundation, and prudence will help one apply wisdom to particular situations.

The Gospel passage comes from the fifth (last) sermon of Jesus in Matthew's Gospel. Our passage has skipped over chapter 24, where Jesus tells the disciples that the stones of the temple will all be toppled. They ask when this will occur and what will be a sign of the end of the world. Jesus responds with key aspects of suffering, persecution, and division but assures them that they are not the end. As to when Jesus says: *"But of that day and hour no one knows, neither the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone. ... Therefore, stay awake! For you do not know on which day your Lord will come."* (Matt 24: 36 & 42)

The passage that we have today emphasizes this message and how disciples are to act in the here and now; remembering that this is a parable and not an allegory it stresses the need for us to be watchful and prepared. It may well draw upon an actual event. The groom would go to the bride's house and negotiate the bride's price. If the daughter was particularly helpful in her family, her father would negotiate long and hard because he would be without her help. If she was the youngest and not talented, her father would take the offer to have one less mouth to feed. The negotiation in the parable went long into the night. It stresses the importance of being ready for God's coming into our life. Awareness and attention are essential qualities of a disciple. God alone knows when our personal end and the end of humanity will come. The challenge for a disciple is to be ready.

The second reading continues from the First Letter to the Thessalonians. This early community seemed to be struggling because some community members had died, and Jesus had not yet returned. It appears that the early Christian communities had a strong belief that Jesus would return while they were still alive. His return was imminent. But as years went on, some people died, and there was fear that they would not share in Jesus' reign.

Paul assures them that just as Christ died and was raised, so those who died will also be raised and be the first to greet the Lord when he returns. Paul stresses that they have fallen asleep and then paints a culturally familiar image. When the emperor would approach a city, all the residents would go out and form an honor guard along the road as a sign of respect. Since Christ will be coming from heaven (Dan 7:13 and Acts 1:11), the dead will go first to form an honor guard and then all the other disciples. It is not a literal description but the expected way to greet an important person. Some Christian fundamentalist traditions apply the term rapture to this image, looking for the disappearance of people when Jesus returns. The Catholic Church has understood it more as an image to express how the dead and living will encounter the Risen Jesus upon his return.

**Themes:**

Life after death  
Final Judgement

Communion of Saints  
Virtue of Hope

**Reflection Questions:**

How do you understand wisdom?

How do you seek to be prudent in being a disciple of Jesus?

How do you strive to be aware of God, God's teaching, or God's action in your life?

What does the end times mean to you? What imagery comes to mind with that phrase?

Have you ever been with someone in their end time? What was your experience?

**Prayer Suggestions:**

For the Church: that having taken the Word of God to heart, we may have a spirit of readiness so that we can respond to God's presence and invitations at any moment

For the gift of Wisdom: that God will give us insight and understanding through our daily experiences so that we may value and nurture those things that will sustain us into eternal life

For the grace to live in the here and now: that we may not be consumed by the endless things that need to be done tomorrow, nor trapped by the events of yesterday, and thus forget the gift of today

For all who feel trapped by fear or anxiety: that God will free their hearts and help them live in the assurance of God's abiding love

For all with a terminal illness: that those who are waiting to meet the Lord in death may have an awareness of God's presence with them now and confident hope in God's love for them