

REMEMBER - "YOU ASK" - I TUG ON MY EAR...
 "MY OHAD YOU ASKED A QUESTION"

He's Coming!

Readings Wis 6:12-16; 1 Thes 4:13-14; Mt 25:1-13

Theme What are we putting off that we should be doing—right now?

"I SAY TO YOU: 'I DO NOT KNOW YOU!'"

"IN THE NAME OF THE LORD, THE SAYS - H. SP"

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In the early days of America's history, a black slave wrote a poem that was later set to music. The poem concerns the Second Coming of Jesus. It reads:

"There's a king and a captain high,
 And he's coming by and by,
 And he'll find me hoeing cotton when he comes.
 You can hear his legions charging
 in the regions of the sky,
 And he'll find me hoeing cotton when he comes.

"There's a man they thrust aside,
 Who was tortured till he died,
 And he'll find me hoeing cotton when he comes.
 He was hated and rejected,
 He was scorned and crucified,
 And he'll find me hoeing cotton when he comes.

"When he comes! When he comes!
 He'll be crowned by saints and angels
 when he comes.
 They'll be shouting out Hosanna!
 to the man that men denied,
 And I'll kneel among my cotton
 when he comes." Author unknown

That simple but beautiful poem captures the spirit of Jesus' parable in today's gospel.

The poet says that when Jesus returns, Jesus will find him working faithfully and waiting patiently.

And that's exactly the point Jesus makes in his parable. He tells us to be faithful to his teaching and to wait patiently for his final coming.

To our 20th-century minds, today's parable of the bridesmaids sounds like a farfetched, made-up story.

Actually, it describes a situation that was commonplace in Jesus' time. It describes an ancient wedding celebration.

These celebrations went on for days and involved the whole village.

A high point came when the groom arrived at the house of the bride to claim her as his wife. He was greeted by a group of bridesmaids.

Ancient literature says that sometimes the groom delayed his coming to the bride's house—even waiting to the middle of the night. His prankish purpose was to catch the lovely bridesmaids off guard.

Jesus used this familiar image to teach the people about his final coming. It will catch some people off guard, just as the bridegroom caught some of the bridesmaids off guard.

And so we may interpret Jesus' parable this way:

The bridegroom stands for Jesus. The wedding feast stands for the eternal wedding feast of heaven when Jesus will return in glory to claim his Church as his eternal bride.

The sensible bridesmaids stand for those people who, like the poet in the poem, are prepared for Jesus' coming. The foolish bridesmaids stand for those people who are not prepared for it.

This raises an important question.

→ What constitutes being prepared?

In other words, what does the oil in the bridesmaids' lamps stand for? "YOU ASK."

We find the answer in the Sermon on the Mount. There Jesus compares the good deeds people do to oil burning brightly in a lamp. Jesus says:

"Your light must shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your heavenly Father." Matthew 5:16

And so the oil stands for good deeds.