

32nd Sunday of the Year

As the world's attention was focused on the Presidential Election in the States, the people of Nicaragua were struggling to survive the effects of hurricane Eta which was wreaking havoc as it tore off roofs, blew out windows and wrecked sanitation. As the situation in the election became more polarised, the poor of Nicaragua came together in a collective effort to repair and replace whatever had been destroyed, and to provide food and clothing. In the light of the first reading today we might ask where was wisdom at work - 'she', wisdom is personified as a woman, 'herself walks about looking for those who are worthy of her.'

There is a world of difference between knowledge and wisdom. We can be armed with all the facts of a particular subject but not necessarily act wisely. The wise person usually has a broad perspective, is insightful, creative and reflective, able to see the bigger picture, wanting to live in harmony with others. In today's gospel Jesus tells another parable of the kingdom comparing wisdom and foolishness. The context is a wedding, the 10 bridesmaids are with the bride waiting for the arrival of the groom so that they can escort the couple to the wedding hall. The bridegroom was late, so late that they all fell asleep, and when they woke up to be told the bridegroom was on his way there was an oil crisis. Five, deemed to be wise had brought extra oil but five, described as foolish, had failed to bring any extra oil, and as there wasn't sufficient to share they went off to buy some more, missing the procession to the wedding hall. On arriving at the hall, the door was bolted, they were refused entry and left to ponder the moral of the story to 'stay awake, because you do not know the day or the hour.'

The main teaching of the parable is to be ready, in the case of the bridesmaids, for the arrival of the bridegroom. Addressed to us, our readiness is about the arrival, not of a bridegroom, but of Christ, when we meet him in other people, but especially when we meet him in death. The death of someone we love can be devastating. St Paul knew this when he wrote the passage we have just heard. Notice he doesn't tell people not to grieve at the death of a loved one, that would be unnatural, what he does say is do not grieve 'like the people who have no hope.' Then he tells us what the basis for this hope is, namely our belief, 'that Jesus died and rose again, and that it will be the same for those who have died in Jesus, God will bring them with him.' The resurrection of Jesus is at the heart of our faith and here Paul reminds them, and us, that death is not the end after which there is nothing, rather death is a passing from this life to eternal life, though how this will be experienced Paul does not say.

On this Remembrance Sunday we remember all those who have given the ultimate sacrifice of their lives during the 2 world wars and since. We also remember those whose lives have been cut short through violence, accident, natural disaster and the current pandemic having little or no time to prepare. This is a salutary reminder that if we do what we have to do wisely, conscientiously and with integrity, we have no reason to fear the unexpected coming of Christ, believing that we will see God face to face.

Bidding Prayers for the 32nd Sunday

Celebrant:

O God, you are my God for you I long. With these words of the psalmist in our minds and hearts we turn to God in prayer.

Reader:

For the Church throughout the world - that the Church will respond with generosity and compassion to those most in need.

Lord in your mercy

For those who have given their lives in the defence of others - that their example will inspire peacemakers today, especially in those countries where there is unrest and violence.

Lord in your mercy

For leaders and Governments - that they will root out injustice and corruption in their own countries and strive for good relations with all people.

Lord in your mercy

For ourselves - that we will always remember those victims of the world wars and other conflicts, and be thankful for their sacrifices so that we may live at peace.

Lord in your mercy

For those who have died, all victims of violence, accident, natural disaster and the pandemic, and Winifred Ash, Mary Smith, Margaret Dalby, Mary Neale, Joseph Carr and Edith Hunt whose anniversaries occur this week - that they and all who have died may rest in peace and rise in glory.

Lord hear us

Either aloud or in silence we pray for our own special intentions...pause...then

Lord in your mercy

We ask the prayers of Mary as we say, Hail Mary...

Celebrant:

Mya the Lord support us all the day long till the shades lengthen and the evening comes, and the busy world is hushed and the fever of life is over and our work is done. Then in his mercy may he give us a safe lodging and a holy rest, and peace at the last. Amen