



# ONE MISSION, TWO PARISHES

Saint Timothy's & Saint Luke the Evangelist  
Catholic Parishes, Forest Hill & Blackburn South

Parish Office for both Parishes: 17 Stevens Road Forest Hill Vic 3133

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**WEEKLY BULLETIN: SUNDAY 12 NOVEMBER 2023**

**THIRTY-SECOND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME - YEAR A**

**BEING THE GOOD NEWS ... BY PROMOTING GOD'S HOSPITALITY**



**Readings this week: Wis 6:12 – 16; Ps 62; 1 Thess 4:13 – 18; Mt 25:1 - 13.**

## **Gospel Reflection ~ Greg Sunter**

The three gospel accounts from the final three weeks leading up to the season of Advent all come from Chapter 25 of the Gospel of Matthew. They can be seen together as an extended treatise on living life in response to Jesus' message and preparing for the end of time. This week's gospel starts out as a Kingdom parable and becomes a bit more of a metaphor for living a Christian life.

The gospel parable relates to ten bridesmaids – five foolish and five wise – who are participating in a wedding ritual that involves meeting the bridegroom and escorting him the last part of his way to the wedding reception. The foolish bridesmaids have not brought sufficient reserves of oil for their lamps and have to leave at the critical time to try to obtain more. When they eventually arrive at the reception hall they are turned away because they have shamed themselves as well as the bride and groom by not fulfilling their duty.

Some of the original audience of Matthew's gospel, along with many of the early Christian followers, had an expectation that Jesus was going to return and usher in the end of the world in their lifetime. The message of this gospel is captured in Jesus' final words, 'So stay awake, because you do not know either the day or the hour.' The timing of Jesus' coming cannot be predicted and so all Christian believers, like the bridesmaids, need to continue to act with hope and expectation; being prepared for the fact that it may be further off than anticipated. Many early Christians were living their lives as though the world would end at any time. The gospel warns them, and us, to continue to follow the example of Jesus and not to become complacent – expecting that everything is about to come to an end.

**Historical Context – Where was the bride?** It may seem a little odd that the bridegroom was travelling to the wedding hall by himself. What appears to have been the custom is that the bridesmaids escorted the bride to the hall whilst the groom remained behind to settle matters with the bride's family. Whilst the bride price, or dowry, would have been agreed well before the wedding, the family would emphasise and even haggle over the value of gifts to further reinforce the great value of the bride and the wise choice that the groom and his family had made.

**From the perspective of... a bridesmaid:** My friend, Miriam, was married yesterday. She is 14, two years older than me, and has married a fine man. As we waited to receive her husband, some of the girls ran out of oil. They asked me for some of my oil but I knew that if I gave them my spare oil we might all run out before he arrived and then there would be no one to welcome him and light his way. What shame that would be! Miriam and her husband were so angry they didn't allow the girls into the hall. No one will ask them to be bridesmaids again!

**Living the Gospel – Living in hope:** A feature of Christian faith is an approach to life that views the future with hope. In our world today many people look to the future with distrust and even fear. As Christians, we look forward with hope. When change occurs, some allow that change to happen *to* them whilst others engage in the change process and approach it with hope and expectation. Today's gospel reminds us to be ready for what the future holds; to look with hope towards what lies ahead, but to ensure that we've prepared ourselves properly. The future can only be viewed with expectant hope if we've done the proper preparation!

## BEING THE GOOD NEWS

Whitehorse Deanery  
Eastern Region  
Archdiocese of Melbourne

Rev Father Gerard

Parish Priest

Sonya O'Farrell

**Part-time Parish Secretary**

Wednesdays,

Thursdays & Fridays

10.00am – 2.00pm

SUNDAY MASS

ST: & SL: Saturday Vigil @ 6.00pm

Sunday ST: @ 9.00am Australian  
Vietnamese – 5.00pm

& SL: @ 8.30am & 10.30am

**WEEKDAY MASS & SL: ROSARY**

ST: Weds. & Thurs. @ 9.15am

Fri. @ 10.00am

1st Wednesday of the month  
@ 10.00am Mass of Anointing.

SL: Tues. @ 5.00pm

Weds. Thurs., & Fri. @ 9.30am

Sat. @ 9.00am

**RECONCILIATION**

SL: Saturday 9.30am – 10.00am &  
5.30pm – 5.50pm

SL: EXPOSITION & BENEDICTION

The Blessed Sacrament is exposed  
for Adoration Wednesday

Start: 7.00pm | End: 8.00pm

**MACS Catholic Primary School**  
21 Stevens Road, Vermont, 3133 Vic  
Tel: (03) 9878 4188

Ms. Anne Maree Jones **Principal**

Email: [principal@sttims.catholic.edu.au](mailto:principal@sttims.catholic.edu.au)

Website: <https://sttims.catholic.edu.au/>

**MACS Catholic Primary School**

46 Orchard Grove,

Blackburn South Vic 3130

Tel: (03) 9877 4023

Mrs. Clare Ryan **Principal**

Email: [principal@slblackburnstn.catholic.edu.au](mailto:principal@slblackburnstn.catholic.edu.au)

Website: [slblackburnstn.catholic.edu.au](https://slblackburnstn.catholic.edu.au)

**Prayer to Saint Timothy**

O God, who adorned Saint Timothy  
with apostolic virtues, grant,  
through his intercession that, living  
justly and devoutly in this present  
age, we may merit to reach our  
heavenly homeland. Through our  
Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who  
lives and reigns with you in the  
unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for  
ever and ever. Amen.

*Patron Saint of stomach and  
intestinal disorders.*

**Prayer to Saint Luke the Evangelist**

O St. Luke, you were chosen to  
reveal in preaching and writing  
God's love for the poor. Moved by  
the heavenly Spirit of Love, you  
detailed the life of Jesus, showing  
His divinity and His genuine  
compassion for all human beings.  
Help those who already glory in  
God's name to persevere in one  
heart and one mind and inspire all  
people that they may hear the Good  
News of Salvation. Amen

*Patron Saint of artists, physicians,  
surgeons, students and butchers.*

**WE REMEMBER IN PRAYER** this weekend all who are sick, John Fulton, Caratha McKerrow, Tony Keaney, Kathryn Holmes, Therese O'Donoghue, Stewart Davis, Trevor Stowe, Jerry Donoghue, Veronica and all those Parishioners unable to be among us this weekend. For all who have died recently especially Lenard Trenkner, for the casualties of war in Ukraine, Israel and Gaza and for those whose anniversaries occur about this time especially Michael Barritt, Raymond Joseph, Mary Meade, Vin Smith, Mary Miller, Moya Atkins, Benvenuto Ustaris, Peter Kelly, Christianus Peters, Colin Connelly, Mary Howard, Michael Haining, Carl Fergusson, Dulce Kelly, Teresa Shiels and Edgar and Bertie Fernandes. May they rest in peace.

**LITURGICAL CALENDAR THIS WEEK:** **Ordinary Time ~ Wednesday:** St Albert the Great, bishop, doctor; **Thursday:** St Margaret of Scotland or St Gertrude, virgin; **Friday:** St Elizabeth of Hungary, religious; **Saturday:** Dedication of the Basilicas of Sts Peter and Paul, apostles or Saturday Mass of the Virgin Mary.

**SL CHRISTMAS CARDS & 2024 COLUMBAN CALENDARS** are now available from the Counter in our Church Foyer/Narthex. Your donation towards their cost can be left in the St V de P Poor Box adjacent to where they are available.

**ST CHRISTMAS CARDS & 2024 COLUMBAN CALENDARS** are now on sale from the Piety Stall. St. Vincent de Paul Society cards are \$3.00 for a pack of 5, Magellan Cards are \$7.00 for a pack of 10 and the 2024 Columban calendars are \$ 9.00 each.

**CARITAS AUSTRALIA'S GAZA CRISIS APPEAL** An estimated 1 million people have been displaced in Gaza with immediate food, shelter, health, and psychosocial needs. You can donate online [www.caritas.org.au/gaza](http://www.caritas.org.au/gaza) or phone 1800 024 413

**ADVENT WORKSHOP WITH FR ELIO CAPRA** Do you struggle to read scripture? Using art, Fr Elio will lead us to discover a fresh perspective on the familiar Advent and Nativity Gospel stories. Monday November 20th, 7pm Coghlan Centre St John the Evangelist Parish 494 Whitehorse Rd, Mitcham. Bookings Online: <https://www.trybooking.com/CMODP> Parish office: 9401 6366 or mitcham@cam.org.au You are invited!

**A SANCTUARY REMEMBRANCE BOOK** is now available for any Parishioner to record a loved one's name, family member, Parishioner or someone you would like included in this month's Masses for the Faithful Departed.

**NOVEMBER OFFERING ENVELOPES** are available on the table in the foyer/narthex to remember those who have gone before us this month of November.

**MELBOURNE CATHOLICS:** Two joyful anniversaries | John Haldane on education and identity | Proclaim 2023 to inspire and equip for mission: Click [here](#)

**HEART OF LIFE NEWS:** [Click here](#)

**AUSSIE BREAD TAGS FOR WHEELCHAIRS:** A Parishioner has suggested we collect [plastic](#) bread tags. The tags are recycled locally, raising funds to buy [wheelchairs](#) for disadvantaged people, mainly in South Africa. Your contribution can be left in the Recycle Box in our Church foyer/narthex please.

**A VOCATION VIEW:** We usually put a great amount of preparation into big events like weddings, anniversaries, and parties of all kinds. We should prepare much more for the final banquet in the Kingdom of Heaven!

**STEWARDSHIP CORNER:** "Therefore, stay awake, for you know neither the day nor the hour." Matthew 25:13 Many of us have put off doing something because we think we are too busy. We've all said, "I'll do it later when I have time." Unfortunately, too many of us apply this attitude to our Faith. Jesus' call is urgent, in the here and now, in your current circumstances. How is God calling you to use your gifts today? Don't delay. None of us is guaranteed tomorrow.

(ST: Weekly First Collection Presbytery Envelopes: \$132; Thanksgiving Stewardship Envelopes this week: \$290; Vietnamese Donation: \$175.30; SL: Last week's Church Stewardship Envelopes: \$345; Last week's Presbytery Stewardship Envelopes: \$301).

**WE ACKNOWLEDGE THE TRADITIONAL CUSTODIANS** who have walked upon and cared for this land for thousands of years. We acknowledge the continued deep spiritual attachment and relationship of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to this country and commit ourselves to the ongoing journey of Reconciliation.

## WEEKEND PARISH MINISTRY ROSTER

### MINISTERS OF THE WORD

**SATURDAY**      **6:00 PM SL**  
**6:00 PM ST**  
**SUNDAY**      **8:30 AM SL**  
**9:00 AM ST**  
**10:30 AM SL**  
**5.00PM ST**

### 11 AND 12 NOVEMBER

Mia Perang  
Peggy D'Cruz  
Kana Chelliah  
Alfred Lee & Trevis Yee  
Bernie Brennan  
Mai Le & Thuy Nguyen

### 18 AND 19 NOVEMBER

Godfrey Thong  
Hubert Lobo  
Ian Holmes  
Stephen Fan & Mai Le  
Margaret Gearon  
Youth Group

### EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS OF THE EUCHARIST

**SATURDAY**      **6:00 PM SL**  
**6:00 PM ST**  
**SUNDAY**      **8:30 AM SL**  
**9:00 AM ST**  
**10:30 AM SL**  
**5.00PM ST**

### 11 AND 12 NOVEMBER

Melina Barcellona  
Susan Chen  
Beryl Chelliah  
Chin L Tay  
Marg Yore  
Hoang Nguyen

### 18 AND 19 NOVEMBER

Olive Hammill  
Owen Greal  
Beryl Chelliah  
Pat Kawalevski  
Marg Yore  
Youth Group

### SLIDE OPERATORS

**SATURDAY**      **6:00 PM SL**  
**6:00 PM ST**  
**SUNDAY**      **8:30 AM SL**  
**9:00 AM ST**  
**10:30 AM SL**  
**5.00PM ST**

### 11 AND 12 NOVEMBER

Nigel Tauro  
Michelle Chen  
Rosemary Donaldson  
Lee Min Yee  
Manny Gonzalez  
Toan Tran

### 18 AND 19 NOVEMBER

Nikhita Paul  
Michelle Chen  
Antony Fernandez  
Lee Min Yee  
Manny Gonzalez  
Theresa Nguyen

### SL WELCOMERS 11/12 NOV

**6:00 PM** John Ryan  
**8:30 AM** Joe Brogno

**10:30 AM** Margaret Gearon  
*HOSPITALITY*  
*THE BASIC LITURGICAL MINISTRY*

### SL WELCOMERS 18/19 NOV

**6:00 PM** Edna Lee  
**9:30 AM** Marie Pekish  
**10:30 AM** Volunteer

### SL CHURCH CLEANING

18<sup>th</sup> Nov. – Maree's Team  
Maree Moss, Allen Leung,  
Serena Ng & Lynda Kilroe-Smith

### ST CHURCH CLEANING

25<sup>th</sup> Nov. @ 10am  
Hoang Nguyen, Anico Yee,  
Dzung Vu & Trong Nguyen

### SL CHURCH FLOWERS

11<sup>th</sup> Nov – Joan McHugh  
18<sup>th</sup> Nov – Marie Parker

### ST CHURCH FLOWERS

Parishioners  
**ST COUNTERS**  
This week Team 4:  
Mary Choy & Eileen Tam  
Next week Team 5:  
Anico Yee & Pabs Gonzales

**FUNERAL FOR LENARD TRENKNER:** A funeral will be held on Friday 17<sup>th</sup> November at 11am for Lenard Edward Trenkner. There will still be a 9.30am Mass on this day.

**ON THE JOURNEY THIS WEEK:** On the Journey this week: Fr John Corrigan says we need to resemble the wise bridesmaids and remain vigilant, Mother Hilda says St Gertrude's story is a great example if we feel life is one big mess. Fr Tony Percy uses the first reading from the Book of Wisdom to give his definition of wisdom, Byron & Francine Pirola on changing attitudes and behaviours in a marriage, and Fr Mike Delaney wonders how much other people's comments influence our opinion of those we meet. Plus, more great music!

**WHITEHORSE COUNCIL POSITIVE AGEING SURVEY:** Whitehorse City Council is expanding its Positive Ageing service and wants your input. Have your say by clicking this [link](#) or email [positiveageing@whitehorse.vic.gov.au](mailto:positiveageing@whitehorse.vic.gov.au) for a hard copy.

**MAGELLAN MEDIA:** [Remembrance Day](#) - the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month

### 2023 ADVENT PREPARATION RESOURCES:

- **The Sign: Daily Advent and Christmas Reflections 2023** - a captivating 80-page book containing spiritually rich, yet accessible, daily reflections from the beginning of Advent (3 December 2023) through to the Baptism of the Lord (8 January 2024). Order [here](#).
- **With Expectant Hearts** is a new 22-day reflection resource that can be used during Advent to help you sit with God and to trust Him to lead you forward. Each day's reflection is inspired by a short text of Scripture from the day's Gospel reading and concludes with a prayer and a thought or two to take away. Each week is introduced with a detailed look at the different parts of the Madonna of a Rose painting by Raphael, focusing on each member of the Holy Family and John the Baptist. Order [here](#)

**SAFETY STATEMENT:** We are committed to a safe and nurturing culture for all children and vulnerable persons in our Church. Saint Luke the Evangelist Parish Blackburn South holds the care, safety, wellbeing of children and vulnerable persons as central and fundamental responsibilities of the Church. This commitment is drawn from and inherent to the teaching and mission of Jesus Christ, with love, justice and the sanctity of each human person at the heart of the Gospel.

*by Promoting God's Hospitality*

### Parish Groups & Contacts

Lectors, Registrars, Collectors,  
Extraordinary Ministers of the Eucharist,  
Slide Projector Operator & Rosters

**ST:** Corrie Quimbo 9412 8499

**SL:** Margaret Gearon 0409 807 135

### Baptism Preparation

**ST:** Mary Italiano 9412 8499

### Vietnamese Community

Hoang Nguyen 0422 400 116

Andy Tran 0422 382 109

### Vietnamese Youth

John Dinh 0448 977 037

### Parish Collection Preparers

**ST:** Barry Silvester &

Michael Kawalevski

### Stewardship Counters

**SL:** Dale Dixon - 0433 885 087

Steve Kilroe-Smith - 0404 864 232

### Parish Pastoral Council

*As we are one Mission now, it has been suggested that we require only one Chair?*

### Parishes Safeguarding Committee

Theresa Nguyen, Mary Italiano,  
Darren McLean - 0417 774 504

Janette Clark - 9877 2292

Fr Gerard - 9877 2292

### Parish History

**SL:** Margaret Gearon - 0409 807 135

**Whitehorse Deanery** - Fr Gerard

### Finance Committee

Bernard Negline

Parish Accountant

### SL: Hall Hire

Sonya O'Farrell @ the  
Parish Office - 9877 2292

### Church Sacristan

**ST:** Margaret King & Hoang Nguyen

**SL:** Greg Grant - 0401 644 474

### Church Housekeeping

**ST:** Margaret King 9412 8499

### Church Cleaning & Flowers

**SL:** Megan McLean - 0419 347 693

### Church Linen

**SL:** Beryl Kanagalinggam

### Parish Garden Maintenance

**ST:** Des Connors, Leo Watson,  
Anico Yee & Vietnamese Community

**SL:** Darren McLean - 0417 774 504

### Holy Communion to the

*housebound* - Fr Gerard

### Emmaus College School Advisory

**Council Parish Rep.:**

**SL:** Bernard O'Malley

### Parish Choirs

**ST:** Mary Italiano & Theresa Nguyen

**SL:** Lina & Maria Mafi

0411 136 043

### Parish & School Fete Committee

**SL:** Mrs. Clare Ryan - 9877 4023

### School Advisory Council

**ST:** Ms. Anne Maree Jones 9878 4188

**SL:** Mrs. Clare Ryan - 9877 4023

### School Parents' Association

**ST:** Ms. Anne Maree Jones 9878 4188

**SL:** Mrs. Clare Ryan - 9877 4023

### St Vincent de Paul Conference

For Assistance: 1800 305 330

*(Freecall: Monday to Friday 10am-3pm)*

### Parish Contacts:

**ST:** John McCoy

**SL:** Tony Lobo &

Steve Kilroe-Smith



**Raise your voices ... Entrance Antiphon:** Let my prayer come into your presence. Incline your ear to my cry for help, O Lord.

**Response to the Psalm:** My soul is thirsting for you, O Lord my God.

**Gospel Acclamation:** Alleluia, alleluia! Be watchful and ready: you know not when the Son of Man is coming. Alleluia!

**Eucharistic Acclamation:** We proclaim your Death, O Lord, and profess your Resurrection until you come again.

**Communion Antiphon:** The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want. Fresh and green are the pastures where he gives me repose, near restful waters he leads me.

**SL: 60TH ANNIVERSARY WINES FOR OUR PARISH:** Please contact the Parish Office at your convenience. Bottle \$15, 2 Bottles \$25, 6 Bottles \$75, 12 Bottles \$140; (Will mix, red/white).

**SL: MARGARET GEARON'S HISTORY OF THE PARISH & SCHOOL PART II** is now available for @ \$15 each.



Help Jesus tell the story of the girls with oil lamps. Add words and pictures to the story.

Ten girls went to a \_\_\_\_\_ and waited for the groom.

Five were foolish. They took their lamps but no extra \_\_\_\_.

Five were \_\_\_\_\_. They took extra oil for their lamps.

The \_\_\_\_\_ was late. The foolish girls asked for some oil, but the wise girls did not have enough to share.

While the \_\_\_\_\_ girls were buying more oil, the groom arrived. Everyone went inside and closed the doors.

The foolish girls returned. They shouted, "Open the \_\_\_\_\_!", but they were not allowed inside.

What words would you use to describe the wise girls and the foolish girls?

The wise girls

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The foolish girls


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Help Jesus tell the story of the girls with oil lamps. Add words and pictures to the story.

Ten girls went to a \_\_\_\_\_ and waited for the groom.

Five were foolish. They took their lamps but no extra \_\_\_\_.

Five were \_\_\_\_\_. They took extra oil for their lamps.

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What words would you use to describe the wise girls and the foolish girls?

### The wise girls

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### The foolish girls

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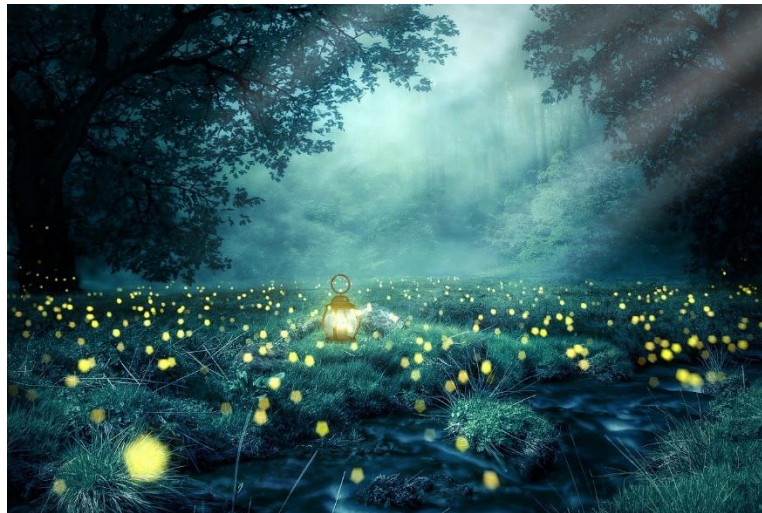
# SUNDAY READINGS

## READ AT HOME

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

Year A

12 November 2023



### Collect

Almighty and merciful God,  
graciously keep from us all adversity,  
so that, unhindered in mind and body alike,  
we may pursue in freedom of heart  
the things that are yours.  
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,  
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, for ever and ever.  
**Amen.**

### Readings and Commentaries

“So stay awake, because you do not know either the day or the hour”. For all the explosive growth in humanity’s knowledge of the cosmos, Jesus’ simple words are as true as ever. Scientists theorise about the universe expanding beyond control or alternatively collapsing into itself. But however plausible these hypotheses are from a scientific point of view, their astronomical time scale leaves the day and hour beyond our ken. The possibility of a human-induced catastrophe that brings life on earth to an end is much more plausible and proximate, but still uncertain.

Pope Francis urges us to hold together our belief in a glorious destiny for creation and our knowledge of the threats to its existence. He devotes three paragraphs of *Laudato si’* (199-201) to dialogue between religion and science. In his conclusion, he writes: “Even now we are journeying toward the sabbath of eternity, the new Jerusalem, towards our common home in heaven . . . In the meantime, we come together to take charge of this home that has been entrusted to us . . . Let us sing as we go. May our struggles and our concern for this planet never take away the joy of hope” (243-44).

**A reading from the book of Wisdom****6:12–16**

Wisdom is bright, and does not grow dim.  
By those who love her she is readily seen,  
and found by those who look for her.  
Quick to anticipate those who desire her,  
she makes herself known to them.  
Watch for her early and you will have no trouble;  
you will find her sitting at your gates.  
Even to think about her is understanding fully grown;  
be on the alert for her and anxiety will quickly leave you.  
She herself walks about  
looking for those who are worthy of her  
and graciously shows herself to them as they go,  
in every thought of theirs coming to meet them.

**First Reading**

The wisdom books of the Old Testament, such as Proverbs, Sirach (or Ecclesiasticus) and the Wisdom of Solomon, are the product of Israel's interface with the literature and culture of its Egyptian and Mesopotamian neighbours. They interweave Israel's faith tradition with the Greek wisdom and learning of the ancient world. The book of Wisdom may well be the most modern work in the Old Testament, probably originating in Egypt in the last decades before the birth of Christ. Its influence is evident in the gospel of John and in Paul's letter to the Colossians.

The short passage we hear today comes from a section of the book devoted to Solomon and his pursuit of wisdom. Wisdom is depicted as a woman ever on the lookout for seekers of wisdom and always ready to share her insights with them. Even to desire wisdom, the sage writes, is to find her and be blessed with her understanding. In brief, the key to the finding of wisdom is the desire to look for her. All else flows from this.

This teaching may sound simple, but it conveys a profound truth, as well as calling into question the value of knowledge not grounded in wisdom. This is a text to be delivered in a thoughtful, positive spirit, and at a moderate pace.

**Responsorial Psalm****Ps 62:2– 8**

**R.** My soul is thirsting for you O Lord my God.

O God, you are my God, for you I long;  
for you my soul is thirsting.

My body pines for you  
like a dry, weary land without water. **R.**

So I gaze on you in the sanctuary  
to see your strength and your glory.

For your love is better than life,  
my lips will speak your praise. **R.**

So I will bless you all my life,  
in your name I will lift up my hands.  
My soul shall be filled as with a banquet,  
my mouth shall praise you with joy. **R.**

On my bed I remember you.

On you I muse through the night  
for you have been my help;  
in the shadow of your wings I rejoice. **R.**

**Responsorial Psalm**

Today's responsorial psalm, save for a minor variation in the fourth stanza, is the same as that for the 22<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of the Year. On that day it appeared to contrast with the first reading; today it complements it.

The verses chosen for the responsorial psalm belie the fact that Psalm 62/63 is categorised as a lament. They convey a spirit of heartfelt longing for God, in parallel with the desire for Wisdom spoken of in the first reading. The psalmist appears peaceful, trusting and grateful. There is just the slightest hint in the first line of the final stanza that there has been trouble: "For you have been my help".

As it stands, the psalm invites us to permit ourselves, like the psalmist, to be positively captivated by God. It's meant to awaken in us a longing for God akin to a desert thirsting for water. It encourages us with the promise of a banquet and the assurance of God's saving help. Readers who make the psalmist's yearning for God their own will confer a blessing on the community.

**A reading from the second letter of  
St Paul to the Thessalonians**

**4:13–18**

We want you to be quite certain, brothers, about those who have died, to make sure that you do not grieve about them, like the other people who have no hope. We believe 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. [We can tell you this from the Lord's own teaching, that any of us who are left alive until the Lord's coming will not have any advantage over those who have died. At the trumpet of God, the voice of the archangel will call out the command and the Lord himself will come down from heaven; those who have died in Christ will be the first to rise, and then those of us who are still alive will be taken up in the clouds, together with them, to meet the Lord in the air. So we shall stay with the Lord for ever. With such thoughts as these you should comfort one another.]

*[Short Form: omit text in brackets.]*

**A reading from the holy Gospel  
according to Matthew**

**25:1–13**

Jesus told this parable to his disciples: 'The kingdom of heaven will be like this: Ten bridesmaids took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish and five were sensible: the foolish ones did take their lamps, but they brought no oil, whereas the sensible ones took flasks of oil as well as their lamps. The bridegroom was late, and they all grew drowsy and fell asleep. But at midnight there was a cry, "The bridegroom is here! Go out and meet him." At this, all those bridesmaids woke up and trimmed their lamps, and the foolish ones said to the sensible ones, "Give us some of your oil: our lamps are going out." But they replied, "There may not be enough for us and for you; you had better go to those who sell it and buy some for yourselves." They had gone off to buy it when the bridegroom arrived. Those who were ready went in with him to the wedding hall and the door was closed. The other bridesmaids arrived later. "Lord, Lord," they said, "open the door for us." But he replied, "I tell you solemnly, I do not know you." So stay awake, because you do not know either the day or the hour.'

**Second Reading**

In this fourth excerpt from 1 Thessalonians Paul addresses the key issue troubling the community. Paul himself seems to have shared the Thessalonians' expectation that Christ would return in their lifetime and raise them up to eternal glory. On the basis of this belief, they would not suffer death. What, then, was the fate of those who had already died? Were they to miss out on eternal life?

Paul insists that those who had already died would suffer no disadvantage; they would be raised, and all believers, whether living or dead, would "stay with the Lord for ever". He does not allude to the possibility that he and others might themselves die before Christ's return. Nor has any text been found that spells out "the Lord's own teaching" to which Paul refers.

The description of the parousia has imperial overtones. Christ is identified as Lord, and the trumpet sounds to herald his return as it would announce the ruler's arrival. On the other hand, the description Paul gives of the raising of the dead draws on Jewish apocalyptic imagery. The lectionary offers a shorter option of the reading that omits this spatial depiction of the gathering up of the saints.

The dilemma facing the Thessalonians is no longer ours. The challenge for contemporary believers is to maintain a lively faith in and hope for the time when "we shall stay with the Lord for ever". Well read, this teaching of Paul's will help us "comfort one another".

**Gospel**

The gospel for each of the final three Sundays of the Church's year features a parable focussed on the end-time. Today's is variously called that of the ten virgins, bridesmaids or wedding attendants. It's unique to Matthew. In brief, the ten maidens are assembled to welcome the bride and groom on their return from the wedding. Time passes, they fall asleep, and when awakened find they need to replenish their lamps. Five have wisely anticipated this eventuality, five have not. By the time the latter come back, the door is closed and they are excluded from the wedding feast. In spite of the injunction to "stay awake," given that all ten fall asleep, the real message is the need for preparedness.

The contrast between wisdom and folly is a common biblical theme. It's dealt with at length in the first nine chapters of Proverbs which eventually personify them as Dame Wisdom and Dame Folly. It also appears in the conclusion to the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 7: 24–27). Just prior to that, Jesus dismisses those who cry "Lord, Lord" and expect to be saved, just as do the five foolish women.

The parable itself makes no explicit reference to the event for which Jesus himself is on high alert, his imminent betrayal and rejection, but it's implicit in the place Matthew has given it, so close to the passion narrative. In spite of this, the parable still invites us to imagine the coming reign of God as a joyous wedding banquet, and this should not be lost sight of.



## Concluding Prayer

May the Lord bless us and keep us.

**Amen.**

May he let his face shine upon us  
and show us his mercy.

**Amen.**

May he turn his countenance towards us  
and give us his peace.

**Amen.**

And may the blessing of almighty God,  
the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit,  
come down on us and remain with us for ever.

**Amen.**

(Adapted from the Solemn Blessing for Ordinary Time I, Roman Missal p 714)





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