

## Thirty-Second Sunday in Ordinary Time

November 6, 2011

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We come together today to celebrate the 32<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Ordinary Time. We are now left with only two more Sundays before we begin a new year in the Church's calendar. And as we come to the end of this year the Church brings to mind not only the end of the year but the end of our lives on this earth. And during this last month we remember all those who have gone before us in the hopes of eternal happiness in heaven. I know that many of you use the north and south doors to come and go from Mass sue to the location of your cars in the parking lot. I invite you all to take the extra steps and stop in the lobby to see our remembrance board with names of those who have past away this last year. You also have an opportunity to add any names you may wish to add to that list.

This morning in our Gospel we hear about the 10 bridesmaids, 5 who were prepared for Christ's coming and 5 who were not. The point of the parable is not about weddings, though. It is about being ready to meet Our Lord when we die.

Perhaps a better way to understand the Lord's point is if we consider playing musical chairs. You remember how to play, right? You walk around chairs, carefully moving so as to be able to sit in a chair when the music stops, hoping that you can get to a chair before a slower person. Now, as you think of this game picture Jesus there asking you, "Where are you going to be when the music stops?"

The late Steve Jobs said once, "everyone wants to go to heaven but no one wants to die to get there!"

A Gallup poll revealed that 78% of Americans anticipate going to Heaven. Yet, many of them admit they never pray nor do they study the Scriptures or even go to church.

When St. Paul discovered the Lord Jesus and learned his ways, he set about telling the whole world about the wisdom that he had found. He even called Jesus "the power and the wisdom of God". Paul went on to say that God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom. God's weakness is stronger than human strength. God's ways are very different from our ways. And so we have a lot to learn about life and about death.

Today Paul tells the Christians of Thessalonica that the death and resurrection of Jesus has changed everything for us. We now possess knowledge and an understanding of life that means we are called to live differently. The resurrection of Jesus has given us an insight into life's mystery; and into what will be, beyond the grave. We can now live our lives in the bright hope of immortality.

In the words of one of the Mass prefaces, "Lord, for you faithful people, life is changed, not ended. When the body of our earthly dwelling lies in death we gain an everlasting dwelling place in heaven."

Jesus tells us, his disciples, to live wisely, to look ahead and think ahead. Foresight is a vital part of wisdom. To be a bridesmaid and to have a lamp is not enough. Reserves of oil are needed for the long wait and for the unexpected. How tragic our lives would be if all that mattered to us was the here and now.

I liken death in the image of the man who goes fishing. He announces to his family that he's going to take the motor boat to the far side of the lake to fish. He doesn't know how long he is going to be gone. When will they see him again? He doesn't know. He loves fishing and prepares his rod and reel and his other equipment. He fills the boat with whatever he needs. His family comes out to the dock to see him off. He kisses them all and then leaves. The boat is getting smaller and smaller as it gets further away. Dad is gone, and they begin to miss him. But he has everything he needs and he is happy.

That's an analogy of the Christian belief in death. Our loved ones whom we remember this month are gone. We miss them, terrible. But they are happy.

Jesus Christ is the victor over death! We should not pretend to have a superior knowledge of life. Let us aspire to be wise every day about our mortality. Let us learn to keep our lamps of faith and hope lit and ready to welcome the bridegroom.

So we play the game of musical chairs to win, ready for the Lord when the music stops. For united with Jesus, we also will live forever and witness with St. Paul that Jesus is the power and the wisdom of God.