Reflections on the Readings for the 32nd Sunday in Ordinary Time A

Matthew 25:1-13

This chapter of St Matthew's Gospel consists of the three parables which we are given over these final Sundays in Ordinary Time. The "bookends" of his account of Jesus' Public Ministry are the Sermon on the Mount and these parables about the Kingdom. This first parable about the wise and foolish bridesmaids continues a theme that Matthew has given in the previous chapter about readiness for the unexpected timing of God's coming. Some people are indignant when they hear the wise ones refusing to share their supply of oil with the others, but that is to miss the point. This is about being prepared for the Lord's coming and no one can do that for anyone except themselves. Each of us is personally responsible for the way in which we live our lives and will be called to account "when the bridegroom comes".

Wisdom 6:12-16

This was the final book of the Old (in this case "Greek") Testament. Written in Alexandria, in Egypt, where there was a large Jewish community and an important centre of Jewish learning. It dates from just before our Christian Era was inaugurated by Jesus' birth. "Wisdom" is not only an attribute of God; it is a synonym for God. This God is active in the world, and it is vital that people be "vigilant", always on the lookout for the various ways in which God (Wisdom) is present.

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

For obvious reasons these words of St Paul about not grieving the death of a loved one are often chosen for funeral services and Requiem Masses. Notice that St Paul does NOT say "do not grieve", as such, rather he warns his audience not to grieve, "as others who have no hope." This is an important distinction. We DO grieve the loss of someone we love dearly. We miss them dreadfully. It is not, however, the kind of grief experienced by those who do not believe in anything beyond this life. Our grief is tempered by the knowledge that our loved ones are safe in God's hands – something we pray for in our Funeral Liturgies.

Prayer

Lord, as we await your coming, may we always be attentive to the different ways in which you are present to us each day of our life. Amen.