

Reflecting
on the 32nd Sunday in Ordinary Time



Archdiocese of
Liverpool

Prepare to be attentive to *The God Who Speaks in this story.*



- Light a candle or tea light if possible.
- Perhaps place a flower from the garden or a plant next to the light.

Let us begin our time of prayer for the Thirty Second Sunday in Ordinary Time:

Breathe deeply and allow yourself to become still.

Let the music help you to relax. Ask for God's grace and light to fill your heart and your mind as you open to the Word.



*As the deer longs for running streams,
so I long, so I long, so I long for you.*

A-thirst my soul for you the God who is my life!
When shall I see, when shall I see,
see the face of God?

*As the deer longs for running streams,
so I long, so I long, so I long for you.*

Echoes meet as deep is calling unto deep,
over my head, all your mighty waters,
sweeping over me.

*As the deer longs for running streams,
so I long, so I long, so I long for you.*

Continually the foe delights in taunting me:
"Where is God, where is your God?"
Where, O where, are you?

*As the deer longs for running streams,
so I long, so I long, so I long for you.*



Spend some time just looking at the three images.

- Where is your eye drawn to?
- What feelings are you experiencing?
- What are you noticing?





Pray the Responsorial Psalm for today.



Oh God, I seek You. My soul thirsts for You. Your love is finer than life.

As a dry and weary desert land, so my soul is thirsting for my God, and my flesh is faint for the God I seek, for Your love is more to me than life.

Oh God, I seek You. My soul thirsts for You. Your love is finer than life.

I think of You when at night I rest. I reflect upon Your steadfast love. I will cling to You, Oh Lord my God. In the shadow of Your wings I sing.

Oh God, I seek You. My soul thirsts for You. Your love is finer than life.

I will bless Your name all the days I live. I raise my hands and call on You. My joyful lips shall sing your praise. You alone have filled my hungry soul.

Oh God, I seek You. My soul thirsts for You. Your love is finer than life.

Now, either read slowly to yourself this story from the Gospel according to Matthew or better still, read it aloud, again slowly.

From the Gospel according to Matthew 25:1-13



‘Then 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 wise. When the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them; but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps. As the bridegroom was delayed, all of them became drowsy and slept. But at midnight there was a shout, “Look! Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.” Then all those bridesmaids got up and trimmed their lamps. The foolish said to the wise, “Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.” But the wise replied, “No! there will not be enough for you and for us; you had better go to the dealers and buy some for yourselves.” And while they went to buy it, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went with him into the wedding banquet; and the door was shut. Later the other bridesmaids came also, saying, “Lord, lord, open to us.” But he replied, “Truly I tell you, I do not know you.” Keep awake therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.

The Gospel of the Lord.

Spend a few moments allowing some aspect of the Gospel – a word/phrase or image – to touch you more deeply and read this part a second time, aloud if possible.

This reflection is from Fr Simon Gore, Director of Animate Youth.



I will open up with a confession: It does not take a lot for me to get annoyed. Small random things can get me muttering to myself. The list of things that regularly annoy me is far too long to list here, but one that is a bit relevant to today's Gospel is that I am a terrible sleeper. It takes me ages to get to sleep. I toss and turn and then get annoyed when I can't get to sleep. This might happen when I am travelling and I look around and see people fast asleep on the plane, or coach, or train seat next to me. I know they will be ready and fresh for the next day, whilst I will be stumbling around looking for another caffeine hit to get me through the day! This gets me even more annoyed! Eventually though, although it will always take me a long time, sleep will come. It is inevitable. We all need sleep and we all do sleep.

So, when we look at the Gospel reading today it pays to remind ourselves of the fact that sleep is a natural part of life. Yes, we all need sleep, and if we wait long enough, we will fall asleep. This is what happens to the bridesmaids in the story today. They waited and time passed, and nature took its course and they fell asleep. And all the bridesmaids fall asleep. So the Gospel cannot be reprimanding them for doing what is natural. The wise, as well as the foolish, all fell asleep. Therefore, the issue Jesus is driving at cannot be the natural falling asleep of the bridesmaids. Rather, the issue is the contrast Jesus draws between the wise and

the foolish, and how they deal with falling asleep. It is how ready and prepared they are for the time when they have to wake from their slumbers. What separates the wise from the foolish is that the wise know they might fall asleep and are prepared for that eventuality and have a back-up supply of oil. The foolish are completely unprepared when their initial supply of oil runs out. To me, this makes a lot of sense.

Last week we had the Feast of All Saints, and I reflected that even the great saints were not perfect during their time on earth. None of us are without sin. In the same way we might think that there are times when we all fall asleep in our faith. We have known joy, we have known celebration, we have known 'the wedding'; but life cannot always be lived on the mountain top. The bridegroom does not appear as we might want him to appear. God does not do what we want, when we might want it to happen. Life takes its toll on us. Events happen and our faith life might grow drowsy. Maybe even our faith falls into a deep sleep! There are probably times for all of us when our faith life falls into, at least, a little snooze. There may be no reason for that. It may just happen without us even realising. This is much like our suddenly feeling shattered mid-way through an afternoon and dropping off. Similarly, for no reason at all we might just drift or drop off a little in our faith. We stop praying as regularly. Maybe our prayers become a little more perfunctory. There are any number of ways in which our faith can just slip into a little nap.

And I think the Gospel might be reminding us that this is not unnatural. We cannot live in the highs of the wedding feast every day. The distinction between the wise and foolish is not their sleep. They all fell asleep.

The distinction is what happened after the sleep. Those who were wise had enough oil put aside to reignite their lamps when they were called upon. Their relationship with the groom was so strong that they were prepared. They had been preparing in the background. They knew they had been given a privileged position and they took it seriously.

They fell asleep, as we all do; but when they woke, as we all do, they were ready and able to welcome the groom. The relationship with the groom is not harmed by falling asleep. When they awaken, they are able to carry on as before. The groom is so pleased with this and invites them into his home. The relationship grows even stronger. There is no lingering animosity between groom and bridesmaid. The foolish, on the other hand, have no such store behind them. They awaken from their slumber but are doomed to walk in the darkness. They have not spent time preparing for the inevitable fall into sleep. They have not taken their position seriously. It is almost as if they think it is just simply theirs by right. Consequently, when the time comes, the groom does not recognise them. Maybe they are not as close to him as they thought! Perhaps they once were friends, but that relationship has weakened over time. I think we all know guests at weddings who fall into that category. Take the example of our best mates from school days that we have let drift away, by not keeping in touch. Maybe they have been the same with us. But the groom has made one more effort and asked them to be a part of his life again. He has given them a special invitation to be close to him. Sadly, the foolish bridesmaids do not take the invitation seriously. They do not really care for him. They are happy to accept the good things that come their way; the invitation to the wedding and the position of pre-eminence as the one of the bridesmaids.

But that relationship is superficial. They take what they want and what makes them happy. Yet there is no depth there. They do not care enough about the groom to ensure a longer lasting relationship. The groom can understand and forgive them all for falling asleep. However, the wise were wise because they cherished and loved the groom. The foolish, on the other hand remained foolish because they choose to care more for themselves than for the groom.

Take a few moments to receive and reflect on this poem as quoted from an Advent Source Book, published by Liturgy Training Publications, edited by Thomas J O’Gorman.



Love Precedes Them

Face to face with our limits,
Blinking before the frightful
Stare of our frailty,
Promise rises
Like a posse of clever maids
Who do not fear the dark
Because their readiness
Lights the search.
Their oil
Becomes the measure of their love,
Their ability to wait ?
An indication of their
Capacity to trust and take a chance.
Without the caution or predictability
Of knowing day or hour,
They fall back on that only
Of which they can be sure:
Love precedes them;
Before it
No door will ever close.

As a result of your reflection, offer some prayers of intercession for the people and situations in our world today that seem to you to be most in need.

Let's begin with the prayer Archbishop Malcolm has asked us to pray at this time and then you may like to include one or more of prayers that follow and/or add your own:



God Our Father,
each person is precious to You.
You are the Giver of life.
Have mercy on us and protect us at this time,
as the coronavirus threatens health and life.
You are an ever-present Helper in time of trouble.
Watch over those who are suffering,
give strength to those who are aiding the sick
and give courage to all in this time of anxiety.
We ask this of you in the name of your Son.
Jesus Christ.
Amen.

We pray for all involved in leadership roles in our world today ... may they be gifted with wisdom and perseverance.

We pray for Synod Members across our Archdiocese ... may their role in discerning what God is asking of us at this time bear fruit in the months to come.

We pray for all who are experiencing food poverty and hardship as a result of current lockdowns and tiered restrictions ... may our communities respond with generous hearts and practical help.

We pray for those caring for the terminally ill and for all who are close to death ... may they be blessed with peace and acceptance.

We pray now in the words Jesus gave us:

Our Father,
who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.

To end your time of reflection, *Take my life and let it be.*



Take my life and let it be
Consecrated, Lord, to Thee.

Take my moments and my days,
Let them flow in ceaseless praise.

Take my hands and let them move
At the impulse of Thy love.

Take my feet and let them be
Swift and purposeful for Thee.

Take my voice and let me sing,
Always, only for my King.

Take my intellect and use
every power as thou shalt choose.

Take my will and make it Thine,
It shall be no longer mine.

Take my heart, it is Thine own,
It shall be Thy royal throne.

Acknowledgements

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Images on page 3: First century Jewish oil lamp; High Decani icon showing the bridal chamber as paradise; Christ and the Wise Virgins (1280-1300) Cathedral of Our Lady of Strasbourg.

Responsorial Psalm: Marty Haugen 1983, GIA Publications.

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Take my life and let it be: Nottingham (First tune) Wenzel Muller (1747-1835).
Words by Frances R. Havergal (1836-79).

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