

Great Tuesday

Sister Barbara Jean Mihalchick

"The reign of God can be likened to ten bridesmaids who took their torches and went out to welcome the bridegroom. Five of the virgins were foolish while the other five were wise."

Matthew 25:1-2

Well, can you tell yet? Are you a wise or a foolish virgin (follower) of Christ? This intriguing parable of the Ten Virgins seems almost a "light spot" during the solemnity of Passion Week. Yet, it is meant to speak to us in our very depths if we seriously reflect upon it.

The virgins referred to in the parable were well respected; they were chosen specially by the bride to welcome the bridegroom and to share in the feast with his party. They went with the bridegroom in anticipation of feasting. You too were chosen specially by God and were given the privilege of joining with the Bridegroom—His Son Jesus—in the sacred Mystery of Baptism. And through this baptism, you likewise are called to join Him at His feast.

Do you respond to His invitation or even seek it? Do you at times concentrate on the gratitude you owe Him for His goodness? Do you savor your union with Him? Do you rejoice in moments of knowing and discerning His presence? Or, like the foolish virgins, have you run out of oil by the time you go to seek Him? Do the discouragements and distractions of this world's cares often become the center of your thoughts? When they do, you probably tend to condemn yourself and experience fear. These are not the ways of the Bridegroom. His ways lead us to repentance, not self-condemnation; to humble confidence, not fear.

The paradox is that we are drawn to honest repentance by fixing our sights upon the wedding feast of the Bridegroom, expecting His blessings, His mercy, His union with us, and His unending love! It is precisely when we come to believe in this personal abounding love that we can ask to be stripped of the disfigurement of sin. It is only in the power of knowing that He loves us completely at this very moment and not when we obtain more oil, that we can ask to participate in His sufferings, and we can pray: "Clothe me in the glorious robe of Your beauty... permit me to feast with joy in Your Kingdom." (*Matins for Great Tuesday: Aposticha, Doxastikon*)

SCRIPTURE READINGS: **Ezechial 1:21 - 2:1**

Exodus 2:5-10

Job 1:13-22