



Jesus told his disciples: "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."

Introductory Prayer: Lord Jesus, I believe that you are here calling me to prayer. I believe in the reality and strength of your love, poured out for me. I trust that I can enter into this love now through prayer and find all the courage I need to seek you actively. I love you, Lord. May this prayer serve as a sincere act of my love for you.

Petition: Lord, prepare my heart for Love.

1. Called to Meet the Bridegroom: God became man to encounter each one of us in a human way. Yet the encounter is not distant, brief or superficial. It is intimate; God presents himself as a "bridegroom." He is the reason for joy and celebration. The 10 bridesmaids represent the bride, sharing in her joy. Their sole mission is to greet and accompany the bridegroom into the wedding feast. No one can take their place. How seriously they take their role will determine how well they fulfill it. The Church is Christ's

bride. Like the bridesmaids, must I not have a deeper understanding of Christ and his love for the Church, if he is to be my joy and reason to celebrate?

2. Life Is a Preparation: Time is one of God's most precious gifts. Once lost, it can never be restored. We realize that the most important moment of life is in fact the moment of death. Yet, that last hour will be in some way the result and summary of all the hours we have lived until that moment. Every moment is a preparation to meet the Lord who loves us and has given his life to win our salvation. We will not be able to improvise when the moment of truth comes. Each act of faith, trust and love -- every effort to sacrifice and do God's will -- establishes a relationship with the Bridegroom. My life is a search to know and love him, to be with him. How ready, open and surrendered will my heart be? Will I still want to greet him?

3. Does He Know Me: What words could be more desperate than, "Lord, open to us"? And what more tragic than "I do not know you"? The Bridegroom certainly knows the bride, the one for whom he has given his life. But he knows us in love, what his love calls us to be. So he cannot know us only if we "fall out of love." Our disposition while we await the Bridegroom -- which sums up faith, hope and love -- is gratitude. The Lord, who loved us first, will look to find a grateful heart that has been transformed by the graces of baptism, repentance and charity. A grateful heart does not forget him. Not a day goes by without a loving remembrance and acts of thanksgiving. Little wonder he left us the Eucharist, the thanksgiving sacrament, through which to prepare for his coming.

Conversation with Christ: Dear Lord, help me to anticipate your coming by finding you in each person on my path. May I never fail to prepare my heart to love you and share the joy of your Kingdom. Reveal to me the depths and qualities of your love so that I can prepare to give you a ready, sincere and worthy response.

Resolution: I will take time to resolve or put aside the worries or hardships of the day in order to recognize and love Christ in those I love.