Jesus said to his disciples: "Gird your loins and light your lamps and be like servants who await their master's return from a wedding, ready to open immediately when he comes and knocks. Blessed are those servants whom the master finds vigilant on his arrival. Amen, I say to you, he will gird himself, have them recline at table, and proceed to wait on them. And should he come in the second or third watch and find them prepared in this way, blessed are those servants."

Introductory Prayer: Lord, you watch my every action, know my every thought, and guide my every path. I love and trust in your will. Thank you for this time of prayer. From it may I receive the spiritual energy I need to keep my eyes firmly planted on you today and to remain confident that you are always at my side.

Petition: Lord, help me always to be alert to the needs of others.

1. Watch and Pray: Being blindsided is no fun. Those unexpected surprises are particularly annoying when we feel someone should have warned us. “Please make sure you tell me about this next time” is a familiar refrain. When it comes to the questions about the afterlife, if we are blindsided we will have no one to blame but ourselves. Christ has given us more than adequate warning. Neither death nor his coming in glory to judge humanity should catch us off guard. The key to preparedness lies in his admonition to his disciples: “Watch and pray” (Matthew 26:41).

2. Master or Servant: Imagine Jesus’ joy in welcoming one of his “good and faithful servants” into heaven. He said that he will sit us down and serve us dinner. That

beautiful image reminds us that the hard work of being faithful will not lack its reward. More than anything, it points to Jesus' gratitude; the Master becomes the servant for his loyal disciples. After all that the Lord has done for us, what else would we rather do than to give Christ the joy of our faithfulness?

3. The Long Haul: Jesus talks about the master of the house possibly arriving at the "second or third watch of the night." Being faithful isn't a fling or a flash in the pan. We know that there will be "ups and downs," moments of two steps forward and one back. Through it all we are called to persevere. Going the distance is not easy, but how beautiful it is! Pope Saint John Paul II gave us an indelible example of perseverance. When we heard that he had passed away, all of us felt sadness until we considered the joy of imagining the embrace between him and the Lord he loved so much. May our own example bear witness to our desire to persevere — to stick with the commitment of fidelity until the Lord calls us home.

Conversation with Christ: Whether life is long or short, Lord, I have to be ready for whatever your providence brings. I want to persevere, but so often my love is undermined by my fears and frailty. Give me the strength I need.

Resolution: I will review my life choices to make sure that I am persevering in all that I have promised Christ.