

Homily notes: 8th November 2020 - 32nd Sunday in OT Year
A 2020 & Remembrance Sunday
(1st: Wisdom 6:12-16; 2nd: 1 Thess 4:13-18; Gospel: Mat 25:1-13)

LISTEN to recording via our homilies page

“Wisdom consists not so much in knowing what to do in the ultimate as in knowing what to do next.” Words of Herbert Hoover, who served only 1 term as President of the USA from 1929-1933.

His encouragement of big business led to a handful of companies, including Standard Oil controlling a large proportion of the country’s wealth. The Wall Street crash in October 1929 indicated the failure of this policy, and the subsequent world Great Depression revealed Hoover’s lack of political foresight. He believed the setback was only temporary, and he declared at the height of the collapse that “the fundamental business of the country is on a sound and prosperous basis”

Not surprisingly, he was decisively beaten in the 1932 election, and as the President takes office in January; 1933, an ominous date in history as one Adolf Hitler was elected chancellor of Germany, and the dreadful inflation of the 1930’s led to one reason for our remembrance today of those gave their lives in 2nd World war. The rest as they say ‘is history’ but history we ought to know and learn from and not forget. My opening words Hoover reflected years later with the voice of experience.

Wisdom is the theme of two of the readings for today. If we were to ask a thinking person of the ancient world ‘what is the aim of life?’ they would likely answer, ‘to find wisdom’ that is to find the right attitudes to life, in order to make the right decisions.’ What is special about the notion of wisdom in today’s reading is the idea that wisdom is not difficult to find.

Indeed we are not so much seeking wisdom, as that wisdom is seeking us. For us wisdom is a person, Jesus Christ. When St Paul discovered the Lord Jesus and learned his ways, he set about telling the whole world about the wisdom he had found. He even called Jesus ‘the power and the wisdom of God.’ He went on to say that God’s foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, God’s weakness is stronger than human strength. God’s ways are

very different to our ways. So we have a lot to learn about life and about death. Jesus for us is the right way of life personified, and indeed communicated to us. Wisdom is the first gift of the Holy Spirit.

In the 2nd reading St Paul tells the Thessalonians that the death and resurrection of Jesus has changed everything for us. We now possess a knowledge and an understanding of life that mean we are called differently.

The resurrection of Jesus has given us an insight into life's mystery, into what will be, beyond the grave. We live our lives now in the bright hope of immortality.

In the words of one of the Prefaces for the Dead, 'In him the hope of blessed resurrection has dawned, that those saddened by the certainty of dying might be consoled by the promise of immortality to come. Indeed for your faithful, Lord, life is changed not ended, and when this earthly dwelling turns to dust, an eternal dwelling is made ready for them in heaven.'

This knowledge that our faith brings is not simply concerned with our death and afterlife. It is faith for this world and for this life here and now, today even in the midst of lockdown and pandemic.

Jesus tells his disciples, **us**, to live wisely; to look ahead and think ahead, and in joyful hope. To be a bridesmaid and have a lamp is not enough. Reserves of oil are needed for the long wait and the unexpected, and hope.

Hope that neglected of the triad of faith, hope and love, which as I reminded last week, we need here and now, but faith and hope will fade in heaven as we are held in the love and vision of God which endures forever.

How do we get hold of the reserves of oil? How can we be wise? It is true, life itself teaches us many lessons: the old phrase 'we are/ were at the University of Life and the School of Hard Knocks!'

One is our life of personal prayer. To sit and be with the Lord and let him speak to you, esp. through the scriptures, or just being still and knowing that God is God.

We are also encouraged to join in a nationwide time of prayer at 6 p.m. each evening, time for the Angelus, and perhaps the rosary, or your own devotion. Or prayer at anytime of the day that is convenient too.

The other way our oil is topped up is by the sacraments, denied us again the next few weeks through lockdown. Both of them where wisdom can be found.

Wisdom the grace of God, meant for human hearts. Let us aspire to be wise each day. Let us ask for wisdom to understand one another, to encourage one another and to witness to the Lord, who is the power and the wisdom of God, and our only hope and sure foundation.

LISTEN to recording via our homilies page