The 32nd Sunday in Ordinary Time - Year A – 11/08/2026 – Msgr. Peter Quang Nguyen

First Reading – Wisdom 6:12-16: Wisdom is radiant and doesn't fade, easily found by those who seek her. She eagerly meets those who watch for her and brings freedom from worry to the worthy.

Responsorial Psalm – **Psalm 63:** I seek and thirst for God, finding greater good in His kindness than in life itself. I find satisfaction and joy in meditating on Him and calling upon His name.

Second Reading – **1 Thessalonians 4:13-18:** Don't grieve without hope for those who've died. If we believe in Jesus' resurrection, the dead will also rise. At Jesus' return, both the dead and living will meet Him.

Gospel – **Matthew 25:1-13:** Jesus shares a parable about ten virgins waiting for a bridegroom. Five are wise and bring extra oil, while five are foolish and don't. When the bridegroom arrives, only the wise ones can join him in the wedding feast, as they are prepared. The message stresses readiness and vigilance.

My Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

The Kingdom of God is likened to a wedding feast, in which only those who remain vigilant and prepared are granted the opportunity to be led by the bridegroom—Jesus Christ—to sit at the table with Him in the eternal kingdom.

The image of the five wise and five foolish maidens, all carrying lamps to meet the bridegroom—with the distinction that the wise brought extra oil while the foolish brought lamps without any—serves as a poignant representation of two ways of living out one's faith today. We may all share the same faith—believing in God and in His eventual return, much like everyone carrying a lamp—yet the difference lies in whether we truly practice that faith. Or is our belief merely lip service, while our lives remain effectively atheistic—like an empty lamp that no longer sheds light, having long since gone completely dark?

Regarding the parable itself, we know that in Jewish custom, a day begins at 6:00 PM the previous evening; the choice to hold the wedding procession at the start of the new day signifies marriage as a fresh beginning. Beyond this, however, other specific details remain unexplained by cultural historians. Yet, a parable is a narrative—often a constructed one—designed primarily to convey a deeper meaning rather than to provide an exhaustive account of every minute detail. Therefore, our focus should be on the core message Jesus intended to impart through the parable of the *"five wise and five foolish maidens":* the unexpected nature of the Lord's arrival, the necessity of being prepared, and the definitive, final judgment.

The Lord's unexpected arrival: The setting of the wedding feast at night, combined with the bridegroom's unannounced arrival, illustrates both the unpredictable nature of an individual's death and the sudden, unforeseen arrival of the end of the world. The coming of the Lord is as remarkable as the day He led Israel out of Egypt, or the night of Christ's Resurrection. God chooses the imagery of night to emphasize the sudden, unexpected nature of His arrival, while also conveying the meaning of a salvific liberation that brings light into darkness. The cry in the middle of the night**—"Behold, the bridegroom is coming!"—**evokes an eschatological call, rousing all of creation from its slumber. The bridegroom, waiting at the door (as the foolish maidens arrive late after having gone to purchase oil), declares plainly: *"I do not know you."* This reinforces the words of Jesus: *"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father"* (Matthew 7:21-23; Luke 13:24-25).

An approach to living out one's faith: The parable of the five foolish and five wise maidens illustrates two ways of living out the faith. Both groups set out to meet the bridegroom, yet some carry lamps filled with oil, while others carry lamps that are empty. We, too, may "profess a faith"—believing in the certainty of death, the end of the world, and the glorious return of Jesus—but while possessing faith (the lamp) is a necessary condition, living out that faith (the oil) is the sufficient condition for attaining salvation. To bear the name of a believer without living the life of faith is to be hollow and insubstantial; one may possess the lamp of faith, but it emits no light—it has long since gone out. Do not assume that being Catholic guarantees a place in the Kingdom of God; only those who believe and act in accordance with their faith—by fully living out their duties and practicing Christian charity—will attain eternal life.

This is a definitive judgment: the moment when God's plan reaches its fulfillment, the day each person faces the most critical question of all—whether or not they are saved.

- "Who will be taken, and who will be left behind?" At this juncture, individuals who once shared the same circumstances may face starkly different outcomes. The distinction between them will depend entirely on how prepared they were to welcome the Lord's arrival. Much like the ten virgins awaiting the bridegroom—where some entered the wedding feast while others were turned away—this illustrates a final, irrevocable separation.

- When the final day of one's life arrives unexpectedly, the opportunity for further choice vanishes; therefore, one must always be prepared. The five wise virgins could sleep with peace of mind because they had diligently prepared by ensuring they had enough oil for their lamps. Conversely, the five foolish virgins—even if they had remained awake—would still have been "asleep" in a spiritual sense, as they lacked the necessary preparation and readiness. Indeed, each person is responsible for their own soul; no one can live out the faith, believe, love, make choices, or prepare for eternity on another's behalf.

My Sisters and Brothers,

In short, today's Word of God invites us to be mindful of the moment when each of us must stand before the judgment seat of God. It is a moment of definitive and eternal separation, leaving no further opportunity to make choices regarding one's own salvation. Therefore, we must always remain vigilant and prepared; for while setbacks in our daily work or affairs can be mended and a fresh start is possible, a failure at the final hour of life leaves no chance for correction—resulting in eternal loss.

Lord Jesus, grant us the grace to be vigilant regarding the signs of the times, and to recognize Your presence in every event of our lives and in our neighbors. Help us also to be reconciled with You and with our brothers and sisters, so that on the day of final judgment, we may be rewarded by You with eternal happiness. Amen.