

My Dear Brothers and Sisters,

The Scriptures this weekend evoke in me a great longing for God! I pray they do for you as well. I'll just share some of my reflections.

In the first reading, the author is speaking about Wisdom, and how she is ready, waiting, prepared to anticipate our desire. We have many desires, but the desire for wisdom is deep-seated... maybe deeper than we often feel. If we truly seek wisdom and truth, she will be there to satiate our desire.

The Responsorial Psalm today is from Psalm 63. Clergy and religious solemnly promise to pray for the Church, specifically through the "Divine Office" which is comprised mostly of the Psalms. Psalm 63 is used at morning prayer in week 1 (of a 4 week cycle), and for morning prayer on all Feast Days and Solemnities. This should tell us that the Church has a special place in her heart for this Psalm. The response is:

My soul is thirsting for you, O Lord my God.

My soul is thirsting! Whether we recognize it or not, at the heart of all of our desires, at the heart of all of our longing is a longing for God. When we recognize it, we can direct ourselves toward God to have our thirst quenched. Otherwise, we will keep looking and longing, and filling with things that will not satisfy.

My soul is thirsting! I'm thinking about in the heat of summer when I go out for a walk with my parents... when we get home, I will sometimes drink a whole glass of water (probably too quickly), and then fill up again to nurse a second one! *My soul is thirsting.* O Lord, help me to recognize how every thirst within me can only be satisfied by the water of your love!

The second reading reminds us that we are destined for heaven – to be with our Lord forever! We were made for something greater than this earthly stuff; we were made for eternity, we were made for God. Oh, to look truly beyond the natural and to see the supernatural for which we thirst!

In the Gospel, Jesus tells another parable of the Kingdom. We hear much about waiting virgins (wise and foolish ones), as well as the bridegroom. Throughout the parable, what is noticeably absent is any mention of the bride. The Church (that's us, remember) is the Bride of Christ. My constant reminders that the summary of the Bible that "God wants to marry us" should come to mind. I use this image not because I think it is cute, but because the love between husband and wife – the passionate love, the intimate love, the tender love, the enduring love, the self-sacrificing love – is the nearest thing we experience on this earth to the love God has for us. True, it is still an analogy, but not because God's love is less, but because marriage will never reach the heights of passion and intimacy and tenderness and endurance and self-sacrificing that God's love does for us!

The Divine Bridegroom is coming to welcome His Bride into His home. He longs to bring us to Himself. He is thirsting for us far more than we thirst for Him. What is needed is that we live our lives in such a way that we are ready to enter into the fullness of the love of God when He comes for us. If we are foolish and think (like the foolish virgins) that we can just use other people's readiness, we will be locked out. As the saying goes, "God has no grandchildren." We cannot think that we will get to heaven based on the merits of our parents (or grandparents) and how close they were to God. We must prepare ourselves for the coming of God in our lives. This coming is not fearful – since the Bridegroom comes not to place fear into His Bride, but one of warm and tender love . . . if we are ready to welcome Him.

Like all of the virgins in the parable, we may not know when the Bridegroom is coming, and may fall asleep waiting. If, however, we have lived our lives for Him (filling up our lamps with oil, as it were), when the cry comes, "**Behold, the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!**" (Matthew 25:6), we will not run away trying to make up for lost time, nor will we sheepishly come to meet Him. No, we will run to Him, knowing that He truly is the fulfillment of our desires, the water which quenches our thirst, eternal life we have been waiting for all our lives!