

## Homily 32nd Sunday in Ordinary Time 2023

My first experience of death was when I was 8 years old. I returned from school to find only my eldest sister at home. This was unusual as Mum was always there. My sister broke the news that Uncle Edward, Dad's eldest brother who had been with us the previous evening jovially playing the piano and singing 'Believe me if all those endearing young charms....', had unexpectedly died of a massive heart attack on his return home. On hearing this dreadful news I felt empty and bewildered and I retired to my bedroom hollow and crushed by the nagging thought that one day, no matter how long I lived, I too would die.

Today's First Reading from Wisdom states, "...be on the alert for God's wisdom and anxiety will quickly leave you..." In another passage from the same Book it is written, "The souls of the virtuous are in the hands of God, no torment shall ever touch them. In the eyes of the unwise, they did appear to die, their going looked like a disaster, their leaving us, like annihilation; but they are in peace. When the time comes for his visitation, they will shine out; as sparks run through the stubble, so will they. They shall judge nations, rule over peoples, and the Lord will be their king for ever. They who trust in him will understand the truth, those who are faithful will live with him in love; for grace and mercy await those he has chosen." So WHY does death so haunt us?

Perhaps it's because we don't REALLY "believe in the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come.." We say this every Sunday in The Creed, but do we REALLY believe it? St Paul in today's Second Reading to The Thessalonians reassured us, "We want you to be quite certain, brothers and sisters about those who have died, to make sure that you do not grieve about them, like the other people who have no hope. We believe that Jesus died and rose again, and that it will be the same for those who have died in Jesus: God will bring them with him. We can tell you this from the Lord's own teaching.... those who have died in Christ will be the first to rise, and then those of us who are still alive will be taken up in the clouds, together with them; to meet the Lord in the air. So we shall stay with the Lord for ever. With such thoughts as these you should comfort one another. What JOY- FILLED GLORIOUS HOPE God's Wisdom bestows on us, his children!

In today's Gospel, the Parable of The Wise and Foolish Virgins, Jesus counsels us to be ready and MORE for his Coming. The foolish virgins brought the bare minimum oil and were caught out when The Bridegroom's arrival was delayed. The wise virgins brought plenty and MORE oil lest they be caught without, We, in our discipleship, must not simply do the bare minimum but we must be generous and overflowing in our love of our sisters and brothers in Christ, particularly the most vulnerable.

My uncle Edward could not have imagined how prophetic were the words of the song written by the Irish poet Thomas Moore:

**Believe me, if all those endearing young charms,  
Which I gaze on so fondly to-day,  
Were to change by to-morrow, and fleet in my arms,  
Like fairy-gifts fading away.**

The reality of change and the fleetingness of youth is echoed in the words of Jesus at the end of the parable, "Be ready because you know not the day nor the hour of The Lord's Coming." As a seventy-year old, I no longer fear death as I did in March 1961. Strengthened by God's Word and the Wisdom of Holy Scripture. I am however, like the wise virgins, trying to be ready and MORE for Jesus' final 'visitation'.