HOMILY for 32nd SUNDAY in ORDINARY TIME – Year A

This Sunday's Gospel & Second Reading talk about Judgment Day. Reflecting on that, I'm reminded of this cute story that I'd like to share with you.

An exasperated mother, whose son was always getting into trouble, asked him, "Son, how do you expect to get into Heaven if you keep behaving like that?

The young boy thought for a minute & said, "Well, I'll just keep slamming the front door & running in & out until St. Peter says, 'for Heaven's sake, come in or stay out!'" And then, I'll slowly come in.

Anyway, most of us Christians believe in Heaven & the eternal life. For we've learned that our souls will not die; & we all will have to be held accountable for our life on earth by our Creator. That is why we strive our hardest to follow God's Commandments in this life & prepare ourselves well for the Final Exam. Unfortunately, many people do not believe in the soul, the eternal life, or the Judgment Day. That is why people have continued to violate God's Commandments & lived as if they can do whatever they want without being held accountable for their actions. In case we have any doubt about all of that, this Second Reading has this important reminder for us, "We would have you be clear about those who sleep in death; otherwise you might yield to grief like those who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died & rose, God will bring forth with Him from the dead those also who have fallen asleep believing in Him… The Lord Himself will come down from Heaven at the sound of the Archangel [Michael]'s voice & God's trumpet; & those who have died in Christ will rise first. Then, we the living, the survivors, will be caught up with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air." So, St. Paul wants to give us a glimpse of the Judgment Day as we have just heard.

As we wait for that important day, Jesus wants to call us to prepare for it with the help of the parable of the ten virgins in this Sunday's Gospel. In the parable, we have learned that five of them were foolish & brought their lamps to welcome the groom without any oil. Meanwhile, the other five were wise & carried their lamps to greet the groom with flasks of oil. The groom delays his coming & all has begun to fall asleep. At midnight, when everyone is lest expected, the groom shows up & the ten virgins are called to meet him. Five wise virgins carry their lamps full of oil & are ready to greet the groom while five foolish ones bring their lamps without any oil. The foolish ones want to borrow some oil from the wise ones who responded, "No, there may be not enough for you & us. You had better go to the dealers &buy yourselves some." While they went off to buy it, the groom arrived, & the ones who were ready went in to the wedding with him. The parable ends with this moral less: "Keep your eyes open; for you know not the day or the hour."

Before commenting on the moral less, I'd like to discuss about the oil & why the foolish virgins could not borrow it from the wise ones. We might claim to be Christians & assume automatic access to Heaven by virtue of our own baptism & Jesus' ransom for us on the Cross. But, that would simply be the lamp without oil. We need to put oil in it with good deeds & other forms of spiritual devotions such as prayers, retreats, Mass & sacrament participation, & so on. Otherwise, the lamp that we have got on the day of our baptism would not be able to burn bright & lead us to the Gate of Heaven. However, we have to acquire the oil for our baptismal lamps on our own over our lifetime. That is why we cannot borrow good deeds & acts of devotion from other people on the Last Day to keep our baptismal lamps burning. It

does not work that way; & our lamps will not light up on the Last Day. We need to begin accumulate oil for our baptismal lamps through good deeds & acts of devotion such as prayers, Mass & sacrament participation, & so on. Otherwise, it might be too late for us to keep our lamps burning or acquire enough good deeds to help us make it to the Gate of Heaven. That is why we Catholics believe that it is not enough for us to be saved by our baptism & Jesus' ransom for us on the Cross like some Christians might think. We need to pray, go to Church, & do more good deeds to keep our baptismal lamps burning on the Last Day. Furthermore, we need to stay awake & be ready to welcome the second coming of Jesus. We cannot follow a sinful way of life & then assume that we can get into Heaven & enjoy the eternal life. For we do not know when the Lord will come & call us home.

One type of oil that would keep our baptismal lamps burning is wisdom. For wisdom will warn us to prepare for the second coming of our Lord & Judgment Day. Wisdom will remind us to fill up our baptismal lamp with a good Christian way of life & virtues & keep vigil. Wisdom will call us to pick Heaven over the earthly world, eternal life over the current life, life over death, light over darkness, right over wrong, goodness over evil, virtues over bad habits, love over hate, caring & compassion over indifference, peace over fighting, unity over division, family & community over individualism, holiness over materialism, truth over lies, integrity over corruption, & hope over despair. As you can see, wisdom is the best oil to be kept in our baptismal lamps & help them burn brightly.

That is exactly what our world is lacking now. In place of wisdom, our world is full of ignorance & foolishness. That is why we have seen all sorts of bad decisions & evil acts show up all over the world. If everyone would have just a little wisdom in their hearts & souls, they would surely make the right decisions, pick the right choices, & do the right things. Thence, we would have a much more loving & peaceful compared to the current one. Realizing the important value of wisdom in our lives & our world, today's First Reading has the following message to tell us, "Resplendent & unfading is wisdom… She hastens to make herself known in anticipation of human desire; anyone who watches for her at dawn shall not be disappointed, for the person shall find her sitting by one's gate. For taking thought of her is the perfection of prudence… Because she makes her own rounds, seeking those worthy of her, & graciously appears to them in the ways, & meets them with all solicitude."

My dear brothers & sisters, don't you wish to have a little wisdom in your hearts & souls? More importantly, wouldn't you like to have your baptismal lamps to be filled with wisdom, good deeds, & other virtues? That would surely keep our baptismal lamps burning brightly & help us prepare for Judgment Day & the second coming of Jesus. So, let us keep filling up our baptismal lamps with wisdom, virtues, & good deeds as we greet every new from our loving & compassionate God.