

# Are We Awake?

## *This Week's Readings at Mass*

- Wisdom 6:12-16 • Wisdom for those who seek
- 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 • Resurrection of the dead
- Matthew 25:1-13 • Parable of the ten virgins

The wedding customs of Jesus' time may be unfamiliar to us, but the point of the parable today isn't the details about how wedding ceremonies worked. The parable focuses on Jesus' teaching to remain alert and vigilant as we await the full coming of the Kingdom of Heaven.

There is debate about whether this parable points to our need to be watchful for Jesus' second coming at the end of time or is making another point. We know from other New Testament writings that St. Paul, Jesus' other apostles, and the whole early Christian community expected Jesus to return in their lifetime. The second reading today gives us Paul's version of how he imagined this happening. "The Lord himself, with a word of command, with the voice of an archangel and with the trumpet of God, will come down from heaven..." (Thess. 4:16). The early Christians understood this parable as the need for vigilance for the end of the world,

Perhaps that isn't the meaning of it for us today, however. Assuming Jesus doesn't return in our lifetimes, what might he be urging us to prepare for? What are we called to stay awake to? Many of Jesus' teachings focused on the Kingdom of God, which he repeatedly said "is at hand." Perhaps that is the invitation to us—to be alert to how the Kingdom of God is breaking into our world today, right where we find ourselves. As we near the end of a



tumultuous 2023, we may be challenged to see how God is active in the world right now. Yet Jesus, too, lived in a world racked by racial and economic injustice, military domination, and sickness and suffering, yet he still saw ways God was active and working. Can we?

## Questions of the Week

- 1 Do you ever find yourself wondering about how and when the world will end? If so, does thinking about it change the way you live?
- 2 Despite all the bad news in our world this year, how do you see the Kingdom of God breaking in

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