**19th Sunday C**

A pastor had a bad night and in the morning he got onto the pulpit and started his homily by saying, “I say everyone in this parish will go to hell!” There was a man sitting at the back of the pew, who was laughing away. So the priest repeated louder, “I say everyone in this parish will go to hell!” the guy at the back of the church still continued to laugh away. So the pastor walked up to him and asked, “Why are you laughing?” He replied, “Father, it is because I am not from this parish.”

Our life here on earth is preparation for the next. When we live in the light of eternity our life’s values will change. Think of heaven daily and live a committed life because you are made to live forever.

In the parable of the vigilant servants, when the master returned from the wedding, those servants who were prepared for his return were in for a big surprise.  Instead of ordering them to feed him, prepare his bath or whatever else he might want, the story says, that he will seat them at table and begin to wait on them.  Ordinarily no master of an eastern household would ever wait on his servants.  He would expect them to wait on him, no matter how tired they were or how hard they had worked. When the master was satisfied, then they sit down and eat.

This was a whole new concept for his listeners to grasp, but it introduced the Christian concept of values.  Christ is showing that he will come and be of service and wait on his followers.  Remember, he told his disciples, “I have not come to be served, but to serve,” and at the Last Supper he washed the feet of the Apostles. Jesus also said, “I call you my friends. I do not call you servants.” He would make his life a life of service to them – preaching to them, curing them of sickness and helping them in every way, even to the point of giving his life for them. All this is to show us that in his second coming, Jesus will have us seated and serve us a sumptuous dinner; a dinner that consists of his own body and blood but in fullness and as he really is.

This parable focuses on the unpredictable return of Jesus and our need to be prepared for his return. How should we be prepared? Normally when we think of being ready, we usually think of being prepared for the worst that could happen: **locks on the door in case of thieves; life jackets in the event of a boat accident; securing enough food and water at the wake of a natural disaster; etc.**  But, in the parable, it is a case of getting ready for the best.  It was a wedding festival with friends, music, dancing, and good food.  **The Kingdom of God is like a wedding feast – only better.**  It is a joyous occasion filled with all good things where Jesus wants us to join him in the celebration.

Isn’t it interesting that most of us believe in preparation for many uncertainties, but not with the most important event of our lives?  We carry a spare tire in our car as preparation for a flat tire.  We have insurance in preparation for a theft, fire trucks in preparation for a fire, etc.

Preparation in our society is a sign of wisdom.  But think about this.  Of all the preparations that we make for the things I just mentioned, not a single one is a certainty – yet we feel compelled to prepare ourselves for them.

The return of Jesus **is a certainty**.  Heaven is a certainty. The wedding banquet in heaven is a certainty. We can never know precisely when he will return or when we will die; but our death is certain and his return is certain.  We must constantly watch, being always faithful and ready so we may be found worthy to share in the heavenly banquet he has prepared for us.