Gospel text

**Matthew 25: 1-13**

1 The world of God could look like this story of the ten unmarried young girls who, after taking their lamps, went out to meet the new husband. 2 Five of them were dazed, the other five were farsighted. 3 The dazed took their lamps, but did not take a supply of oil with them. 4 The farsighted took oil in vials with their lamps. 5 As the new husband was late in coming, they all dozed off and fell asleep. 6 In the middle of the night a cry is heard, "Here is the new husband, go out to meet him." 7 Then all these young girls awoke and began to prepare their lamps. 8 Now the dazed said to the farsighted, "Give us your oil, because our lamps are about to go out." 9. But the farsighted answered them, "We are afraid that the oil will not be enough both for us and for you, so it would be better for you to go to the people who sell it and get it yourself". 10 While they were gone to get it, the new husband arrives, and those who were ready entered with him into the wedding hall, and the door was locked. 11 Finally, the other young girls come back and ask, "Sir, sir, open the door for us!". 12 But he said to them, "Truly, I assure you, I do not know you at all". 13. So be careful, for you know neither the date nor the time.

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Gospel commentary - Homily

**To be or not to be at the appointment**

There is a disused mine near Sudbury in northern Ontario (Canada) that has been converted to a neutrino sensor. A neutrino is an invisible particle emitted by the sun, so small that it is able to pass through all matter. Also, the only way to verify its existence, was to build underground, at the bottom of this mine, a huge sphere filled with heavy water with photoelectric sensors, allowing to capture the slightest spark produced by a neutrino on contact heavy water.

The image of this facility owned by the National Council for Scientific Research evokes for me what constitutes our lives. Every hour, every second, we are bombarded with faces, voices, words, music, inner thoughts and even silence. And suddenly, there is this spark that makes us react, that mobilizes us, that creates the beginning of a relationship, that modifies a perception. Why this spark only, when we have been constantly bombed? It is as if, this time, we were ready for this appointment.

Because it is indeed an appointment in this parable of the ten young girls, five of whom were farsighted, and five were dazed. For the latter, it was a missed date with the new husband. They did not have what it took to be there, in this case, oil for their lamp. In our lives, identifying the oil for our lamp, i.e. what allows us to see clearly, to be receptive, to be open for an encounter, is a little more complex.

The Gospels are full of examples of rendezvous. Let's first talk about successful rendezvous. There is that of Jesus and John the Baptist. What would have happened if Jesus had not been receptive at that time to what was said about his cousin, if he had not been ready at that time to leave his village de Nazareth, his family, his work to go and hear him near the Jordan? The same can be said of the rendezvous of Peter, Andrew, James and John with Jesus. The list can be extended with others like Zacchaeus or the Samaritan. Unfortunately, there are missed rendezvous. And these missed rendezvous only emphasize the prerequisites for a real rendezvous. Why these missed rendezvous with the rich young man, with Pilate, with most of the Pharisees, with the high priests?

I find it important to clear up a misunderstanding here. We often hear people say, "What had to happen has happened". We want to express in this sentence a kind of fatality, the idea that our destiny is mapped out in advance and that, in fact, there is no real accident as there is no real freedom. All of this goes squarely against all of Jesus' teaching. When he says: "Be vigilant", he is targeting our freedom. Yes, important rendezvous or appointments can be missed, and this can be fatal to us. When someone neglected the warnings about the harmful effects of cigarettes and ended up with lung cancer, can we speak of fate?

So how is one vigilant or farsighted? How are we ready for a rendezvous or an appointment? There is nothing magical here: I am ready for the big appointments, because I knew how to live multiple small appointments. There is a man who probably missed several small dates proposed by his emotional life, by questions from colleagues and friends about his sexuality, which would have favored this great encounter with oneself, before it happened this disastrous police intervention and the charge of possession of child pornography.

I deeply believe that the degree of alertness is proportional to the intensity of desire and love. A few years ago, when our daughters were teenagers, we had to stay up all night, watching for the slightest sign: one of them had not returned to sleep at home. When you look at Jesus, when you see how much he was moved by the slightest sheaf of wheat, at the slightest bird, at the slightest sign of life, how can you be surprised that he was able to read the slightest sign of distress on a face, like of a neutrino sensor.

What happens if an appointment has been missed? Of course, some realities will not exist, like the dazed young girls who will not enter the wedding hall, but it seems that the imagination and love of God is infinite to the point of proposing other appointments, which made Saint-Augustin say, whose first part of his life was not exemplary: "So late I loved you!"

-André Gilbert, Gatineau, August 2002