

[Readings: Wisdom 6:12-16; Ps. 63; 1 Thess.4:13-18; Matt. 25:1-13]

Boy, do the Readings today hit home, right? Especially today's Gospel: "Therefore, stay awake, for you know not the day nor the hour."

Fr. Jim Bjorum. His death. Sr. Pat Whalen. Her stroke.

Today's readings speak of wisdom, the end times and to be prepared.

When I am ready to leave my man-cave for another day of ministry and service, I still ask the Holy Spirit to give me the wisdom to make the right decisions, to say the right words and to act as Jesus would have me act. I still ask for "an understanding heart" when confronted with the day's challenges. Wisdom is "waiting by the gate," ready to be "readily perceived by those who love her," and hastens to those who seek and desire her. If you ask God for it, and are silent enough to hear it, God will give you the wisdom you need!

Wisdom is presented as a lady in the Hebrew tradition. In books like Proverbs, Sirach, and the Wisdom of Solomon, she makes her rounds, inviting all who are alert to join her at her table and learn from her good counsel. Wisdom doesn't only speak; she acts. She creates, saves, and directs human history.

During the month of November, Catholics turn their thoughts and reflections to the Four Last Things: Death, Judgment, Heaven and Hell. St. Paul adds his "Nick"el's Worth about the Second Coming of Jesus Christ in today's Second Reading. Are we ready for that day? What will that look like? Because as Jesus tells us in today's Gospel: we do not know the day or the hour.

Trying to figure out all of this, and trying to cope with all of life's trials with the endurance of faith, we have a powerful advocate in Mary, the Mother of Jesus and Seat of Wisdom. Of all Mary's many titles, I have some favorites. One of them is Mary, Untier of Knots. Because that's usually what I need her for. A mom to get me out of jams. After all, she's like the wise virgins ready with oil for their lamps for the unexpected arrival of the bridegroom, while I'm like the ones running last minute to get some.

I turn to Mary, Untier of Knots for physical, mental, emotional and spiritual healing. I pray that I may be utterly released and unburdened.

In that moment, I like to thank Mary for helping me to work through the knots I create in my life and for always giving me the sweet relief of her unbounded love for untying the knots given to me by others or just by life itself.

St. Bonaventure once wrote: "When Mary holds you up, you do not fall; when she protects you, you need not fear; when she leads you, you do not tire; and when she is favorable to you, you arrive at the harbor of safety.

*This week's reflection questions:*

What are YOUR most reliable sources of wisdom? Do you seek out these resources (human and otherwise) as often as you should? What lessons have you learned? What piece of wisdom can you count on no matter what happens?

As you wait for the coming of the Lord, in what ways do you see the Lord is already near and feel the Lord's presence?

What are the cares that are uppermost in your mind right now?

When I was a child, our parish priest used to say, "Don't wait till you die to go to Heaven." This is the spirit of end-times that won't occur only at the end of the line. Purgation, preparing our souls for Heaven, is something we consciously choose now, just as we might also choose the way of justice, peace, joy, gratefulness, humility, and love.

We don't have to worry about the so-called Rapture, salvation and damnation, Heaven and Hell, and what's going to happen after we die. What rightfully concerns us is the choices we're making in the present hour, the oil we have in our lamps today, and whether we seek and carry the Bridegroom in our hearts. If we are in Christ TODAY, we are in Christ forever. AMEN!