There are some things that you cannot do for me. If I want to take up a new exercise regimen because I want the positive health benefits, I have to exercise. You can't do it for me. If I want to change my diet to a healthier cuisine, I have to make those choices. I have to eat the healthy food. You can't do it for me. There are some things that we just have to do on our own.

Today we have another parable, and like all of the parables of Jesus, this one should raise questions for us. There are things about this parable that we wonder about.

Why virgins? What's the significance of the 10 virgins? And why is it that the wise ones won't give any oil to the foolish ones? Jesus calls us to share. Why is it that midnight is when the bridegroom appears? It's intended to make us think. It's intended to make us ponder. The parables, there is what is said on the surface, and then there's what's underneath of it.

So each of us has to have our own oil, our own spiritual preparedness for God's kingdom. And we can certainly pray for one another, but I have an obligation to prepare my soul with God's grace, and so do you. We cannot do it for each other. We each have to make choices that will lead us closer to the kingdom of God, and we each have a limited amount of time to do so.

Wisdom. Wisdom is one of those beautiful concepts in sacred scripture, and it's one of those things we need to make our lamps ready.

Because each of us was forgiven of original sin, it was washed away in our baptism. Each of us have an innocence about us. Why virgins? Virgins are innocent. Virgins are pure. Virgins are steadfast. They are directed in their focus. And what Jesus is telling us is that none of us are innocent, in that we are all sinners. St. Paul reminds us of that. But every time we receive the sacrament of confession, Jesus restores that lost innocence to us. He recreates us.

The less we rely on ourselves and the more we rely on Jesus, the better prepared we are. Because even though original sin was washed away at baptism, we live with the effects of it. We call it concupiscence. And so we choose things that we think are good for us in the moment, but they're not. We choose to do things that we know are wrong because in the moment, they look so good.

We need God's wisdom, wisdom which is given us through Jesus Christ. St. Paul tells us in the letter to the Colossians, "In Christ are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge."

And so the more we are able to allow Jesus to teach us wisdom, the better off we are. It's not something we can learn like algebra or physics or economics. We can read about wisdom, but we have to experience it in order for it to sink deep roots in our hearts. And that's why we need the Lord. That's why we rely on Jesus, the bridegroom.

Jesus is the bridegroom. So often in the New Testament, heaven is depicted as a wedding banquet, and we are invited to the wedding banquet. But we are invited as the bride. The church is the bride of Christ. You've heard me say that before. But each of us individually, our souls are

called to be united to God for all of eternity in the wedding banquet of the Lamb.

It's interesting, those of you that have studied romance languages, Latin or Italian or French or Portuguese, Spanish, you know that nouns have a gender. They are either male or they are female or they are neuter. I don't know why that is, but they are. We just have to accept it. And so the word soul in romance languages is female.

Why is it female? Why is the soul female? Because our souls are intended for union with Jesus at the wedding.

Why midnight? Why does the bridegroom come at midnight? Midnight is the end of the day. It represents the end of this age. My friends, we are pilgrims on a journey, and at some point, our world will end. It will be transformed, as it were, into the new age to come.

And so wisdom teaches us that we should not be overly attached to things, especially things of this world, because the world is passing away. So we beg the Lord Jesus to show us wisdom.

How do we do that? It is by our daily acts of preparation. By what we're doing right now, the Eucharist, the other sacraments. By reminding ourselves through prayer, daily prayer. It doesn't have to be complicated. Simple prayer. "Lord, teach me wisdom today. Lord, my vision is clouded."

It's interesting, this word wisdom, its roots in old English relate to knowledge. So there is a certain knowledge that comes with wisdom, and if we go further back yet, the Western languages and some of the Eastern

languages are called the Indo-European family of languages, and there are these roots that linguists have been able to trace.

So if we look back with wisdom, it is not only related to knowledge, but also to sight. To be able to see with the eyes of wisdom means that we have a vision from God to see clearly, because the things of this world can cloud our vision.

So we ask the Lord for clarity of vision. We ask the Lord, "This looks like it might be good for me," but wisdom would say to me, "Don't go there. Don't try that. It, at the moment, seems like it's going to be really enjoyable, but in the end, it's not going to give you life, true life."

And so, my dear friends, as we continue towards the end of our calendar year, we are also continuing more quickly towards the end of our liturgical year. The Sunday after Thanksgiving is the first Sunday of Advent, and it's the beginning, the first Sunday of Advent, of our new liturgical year. And so the readings, they're preparing us.

We don't like to think about death. We don't like to talk about death, but there are theologians who, throughout the ages, have reminded us the importance of reflecting on the end. That's wisdom.

So that our lamps are kept burning brightly, so that we are able to honestly look at our lives and ask ourselves, "If the Lord was coming this evening, would I be ready?

What is it in my life that I know God is inviting me to change? Where is it in my relationships where I need some work? What is it about my priorities that I'm feeling God wants to challenge a bit?"

None of us are perfect. It's not about working so hard to try to get all worried about everything in my life. It's about continually seeking wisdom, because the Lord will gradually help us change for the better if we open our hearts to receive his wisdom. The wisdom that is resplendent and unfading. She is readily perceived by those who love her.

Lord Jesus, open our hearts, teach us wisdom, give us life.