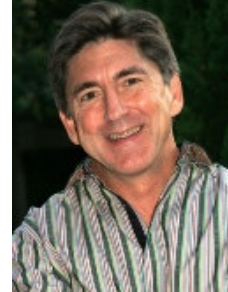




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## ***Foolish and Wise Bridesmaids***

***Dr. Marcellino D'Ambrosio***



*"The religion thing can wait. After all, I believe in God and am basically a good person. I really **did** intend to go to church this morning, but last night's dancing took a lot more out of me than I thought and I had one drink too many. I'll catch it next week. I'll pray later."*

**Foolishness** is a matter of priorities. The foolish person majors in the minors, investing money and time in things that really don't pay very well. **Wisdom** is a matter of putting first things first, not last. **Prudence**, which is the practical side of wisdom, is about making a plan to pursue and attain the things that matter most (Wisdom 6:12-16), the things that really last.

*"God is love. If I come up short, he'll cover my tab. I'm too busy to get ready now."*

Not sweating it when it comes to being prepared for our final exam is not necessarily faith. If we neglect to do make the required preparations, it is not a result of **faith** but rather of the sin of **presumption**. When we trust Him to forgive our bungled attempts to obey Him, God is pleased. When we blow off preparation because we expect Him to dismiss our ticket, God is not amused.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. Forgetting about the Lord is the epitome of stupidity. So is forgetting that we are not the Lord that we are not immortal, that though God is timeless, we are not. Our nations, companies, and even our bodies, are quite mortal indeed. They will not last forever but will either come to a sudden end, or die a slow death of gradual disintegration. It's hard to believe, but time will some day run out – for America, for me, **even for Starbucks.**



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Jesus said many times that though this world and its affairs seem so real, so urgent, society will one day vanish and all its pressing business will be consigned to oblivion. He will return to claim his bride. We'll either be caught with oil in our lamp--prepared and eager--or it will be like the rude surprise of guests who come early for dinner when the house is still a mess. Only this guest will be coming not to eat, but to inspect and to judge.

We've all had the bad dream of being back in school again and finding out that we are momentarily due to take an important exam for which we are totally unprepared. Well, maybe this dream, like the parable of the foolish bridesmaids, is meant to be a warning to us. For though we may not be the generation to witness the end of **the** world (1 Thes 5:13-18), each one of us will experience the end of **our own private** world. He will come, perhaps suddenly, for each of us, at a time of His choosing, not ours.

Many have speculated about when he will come. They've pored over the book of Revelation and other passages of Scripture such as Paul's description of being caught up in the air in *1 Thes 4*. Will there be a secret **rapture** before he comes? Will it happen before the great tribulation, or after? Is what happening currently in the Middle East foretold in the Bible and therefore a sign that the end is near?



Preoccupation with such things is simply a pious form of snoozing on the job. The end is, in fact near. Our role is not to **calculate** the day, but **prepare** for the day. If we live always ready, with extra oil for our lamps, never so absorbed that we are not at least watching out for Him with our peripheral vision, we'll never be caught off guard. We can still enjoy this life while using it as a springboard into the next.

*This was originally published in Our Sunday Visitor as a reflection upon the readings for the 32nd Sunday in Ordinary Time, liturgical cycle A (Wisdom 6:12-16), Psalm 63, 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; Matthew 25:1-13).*

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