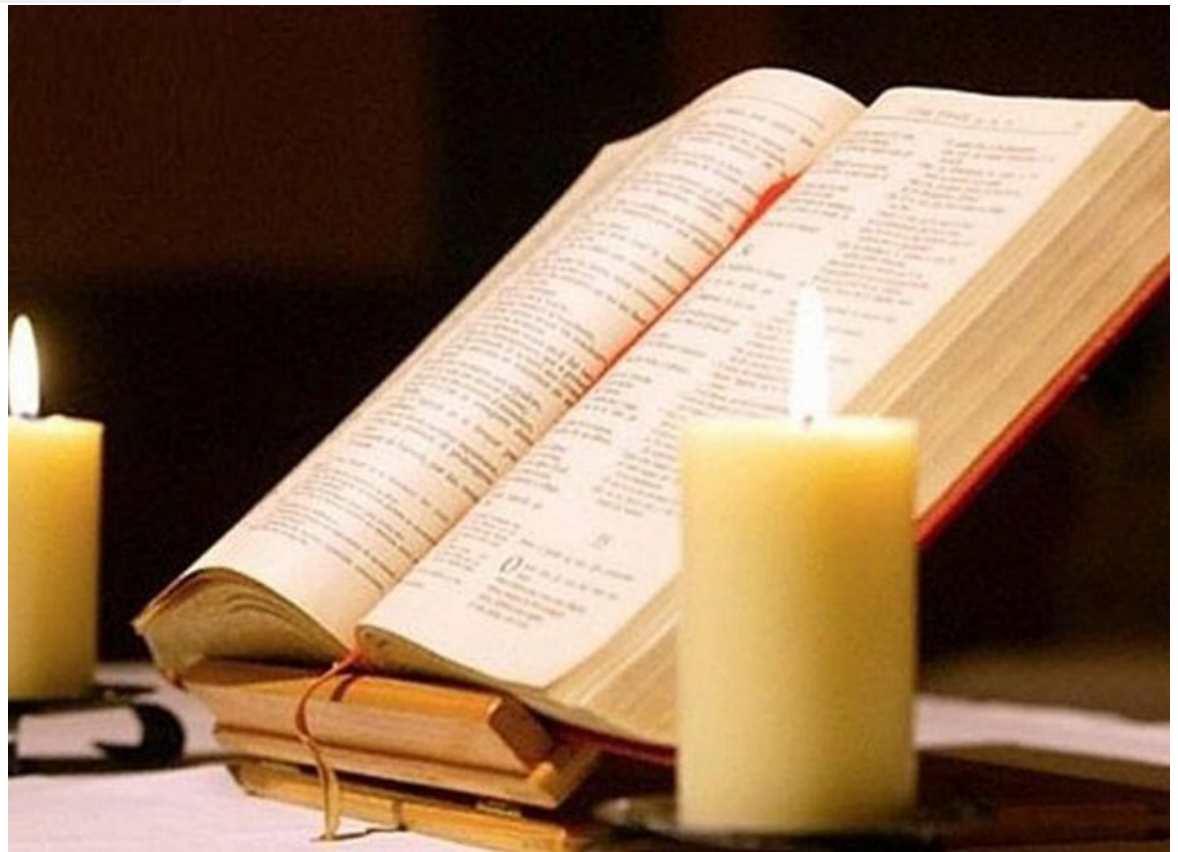


GOSPEL PEARLS

Pleasing God or men?

GOSPEL PEARLS

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"At that time the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish and five were wise. The foolish ones took their lamps but did not take any oil with them. The wise ones, however, took oil in jars along with their lamps. The bridegroom was a long time in coming, and they all became drowsy and fell asleep. "At midnight the cry rang out: 'Here's the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!' "Then all the virgins woke up and trimmed their lamps. The foolish ones said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil; our lamps are going out.' "No,' they replied, 'there may not be enough for

both us and you. Instead, go to those who sell oil and buy some for yourselves.' "But while they were on their way to buy the oil, the bridegroom arrived. The virgins who were ready went in with him to the wedding banquet. And the door was shut. "Later the others also came. 'Lord, Lord,' they said, 'open the door for us!' "But he replied, 'Truly I tell you, I don't know you.' "Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour." (Matthew 25: 1-13)

In the parable of the ten virgins, the bride is missing and the bridegroom is delayed. The bridegroom is Jesus and the ten virgins are the souls of those who seem to embrace the Gospel. The sleep that overcomes the virgins is earthly death. Midnight, when the bridegroom arrives, is the hour of the universal judgment. The wise virgins desire to please God while the foolish ones seek the admiration of men. This is why they don't have oil: they have already used it to fuel the lamps, that is, their own hearts' desires. In practice, these virgins had preferred vainglory to cultivating faith in God. What about you? Do you prefer pleasing others or God? Is your heart warmed by human compliments or by your faith, which is a flame that we must always nourish with prayer, the sacraments, and trust in Providence?