

16. December 2025
THE ADVENT JOURNEY
Day 17: “Oil for the Lamps”

In the last meditation, we spoke about vigilance as a basic attitude of the faithful who await the Lord's Return: a vigilance that awakens us from our general slumber and keeps us attentive to His imminent Coming, as well as to the signs that will precede it.

How does this drowsiness come about, and what can we do to overcome it? How can we live fully focused on the Lord who is returning? How can we maintain an attitude of vigilance even when the Lord seems to delay His Coming?

In chapter 25 of the Gospel according to St. Matthew, the Lord points out two elements that encourage our vigilance.

First, He tells us the parable of the ten virgins waiting for the arrival of the bridegroom (Mt 25:1-13). In reality, only five of them are sufficiently prepared to endure a long wait. When the bridegroom finally arrives, the five wise virgins have enough oil for their lamps, while the other five have brought no reserve.

Now, what does this oil consist of? The answer seems obvious if we read what follows the parable of the virgins. The Lord speaks to us of the good works we must do and the use we must make of the talents God has entrusted to us for His Kingdom.

Through good works, we accumulate treasures in heaven (cf. Mt 6:20), in addition to earning the gratitude and friendship of others. The more we allow ourselves to be moved toward goodness, the more our hearts awaken to love. In fact, this is the expectant attitude of the bride. Her love for the Bridegroom keeps her awake, and she keeps enough oil to be ready for His arrival at the decisive moment.

The active love spoken of here, like all true love, tends to grow. It makes us more fervent, because every good deed we do—which comes from the One who is good (cf. Mk 10:18)—shapes our soul so that it becomes natural to do good.

The opposite happens when we waste the opportunities we have to exercise love for our neighbor. The more often we let them pass us by, the lazier we become and the harder it is for us to do good. In this case, love does not grow, but diminishes and can even grow cold.

Later in this same chapter of the Gospel of St. Matthew, the Lord reveals another dimension to us. Active charity is a service to Jesus Himself, who is present in the poor and needy: *“Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me”* (Mt 25:40).

Even when it comes to using the talents entrusted to us for the Kingdom of God, it is ultimately a matter of growing in love. Love is creative! It discovers new ways to serve the Lord and others again and again, and it is precisely the unfolding of love that increases it, as the Lord makes clear in the parable of the talents:

“He who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five talents more, saying, ‘Master, you delivered to me five talents; here I have made five talents more.’ His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a little, I will set you over much; enter into the joy of your master’” (Mt 25:20-21). And He concludes the parable with these words: *“For to every one who has will more be given, and he will have abundance”* (Mt 25:29).

If we continue to ask ourselves how we can store enough oil for our lamps, we will always come to the same conclusion: it is a matter of growing in love, both by welcoming the divine love of Our Lord through contemplation and by applying it concretely in the various tasks entrusted to us in our earthly life. Love must never grow cold; it is our principle of life! *“At the evening of our life, we will be judged on love,”* St. John of the Cross tells us. And St. Augustine exclaims, *“Love and do what you will.”*

Indeed, love is the supreme gift, as St. Paul proclaims in his “Hymn to Charity” (1 Cor 13). Love is nourished both by “receiving” and by “giving.” Love is the motivation for which God created us, redeemed us, and will bring us to perfection. Therefore, we must constantly seek it and be guided by this criterion: What does love tell me to do? What does love want from me? Charity must exercise its gentle

dominion over us like a queen. Of course, it must be true love! Only to this can St. Augustine's maxim be applied: *"Love and do what you will."*

The love poured into our hearts is the Holy Spirit (cf. Rom 5:5)—the love between the Father and the Son. Therefore, we can conclude that the more we follow the voice of the Holy Spirit and surrender the reins of our lives to Him, the more oil we will have. In this way, love will grow in us, and we will be prepared to be vigilant and go out to meet the Lord who is coming.

Meditation on the reading of the day: <https://en.elijamission.net/2021/12/14/>