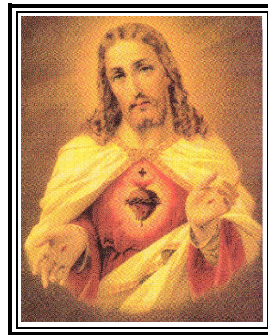


WISE AND FOOLISH VIRGINS EXPLAINED

EXTRACT FROM VOLUME 2 OF **THE POEM OF THE MAN-GOD**

BY MARIA VALTORTA



206. The Parable of the Ten Virgins and the Parable of the Royal Wedding.

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Jesus is speaking in the presence of Johanan's peasants, of Isaac and many disciples, of the women amongst whom there is the Blessed Virgin Mary and Martha, and of many people from Bethany. All the apostles are present. The boy, sitting in front of Jesus, does not miss one word. I think Jesus has just begun to speak because people are still arriving...

Jesus says: «... it is because of this sensation of fear that I realise is so sharp in you, that today I wish to tell you a sweet parable. Sweet for the men of good will, bitter for the others. But the latter can remove the bitterness. Let them become men of good will, and the reproach, provoked in their consciences by the parable, will no longer exist.

The Kingdom of Heaven is the house of the nuptials of God with souls. The moment a soul enters it, is the day of the nuptials.

Now listen. It is a custom with us that virgins escort the bridegroom when he arrives, to take him with lights and songs to the nuptial house together with his sweet bride. When the procession leaves the house of the bride, who wearing a veil and deeply moved turns her steps to the place where she will be queen, that is, to a house which is not hers, but will become hers the moment she becomes one body with her husband, the procession of the virgins, who are generally friends of the bride, runs to meet the happy couple, forming a circle of lights around them.

Now it happened that in a town there was a wedding. While the bride and bridegroom were making merry with relatives and friends in the house of the bride, ten virgins went to their

place, that is, to the hall in the groom's house, to be ready to go out and meet him when the sound of cymbals and songs warned them that the young couple had left the bride's house to come to the groom's. But the feast in the house of the nuptials was protracted and night fell. As you know, the virgins always keep their lamps lit, so that they do not waste time at the right moment. Now, of these ten virgins, five were wise and five were foolish, and all their lamps were lit and shining. The wise ones, full of wisdom, had provided themselves with small flasks full of oil, to fill up their lamps in the event they should have to wait longer than expected, whereas the foolish ones had only filled their little lamps.

One hour went by after the other. Cheerful conversation, tales and jokes made their waiting pleasant. But later they did not know what to say or what to do, and weary and tired, the ten girls sat down more comfortably and slowly fell asleep with their lamps lit and close to them. At midnight a cry was heard: "The bridegroom is coming, go and meet him!". The ten girls got up on hearing the order, took their veils and garlands, adorned themselves and ran to the shelf where the lamps were. The light of five of them was already fading... The wicks, no longer sustained with oil, which was finished, were smoky, their light was becoming fainter and fainter and they would go out at the least whiff of air, whereas the flames of the other five lamps, which had been refilled by the wise virgins before they fell asleep, were still bright and became even brighter when more oil was added to the lamps.

"Oh!" begged the foolish girls "give us some of your oil, otherwise our lamps will go out as soon as we move them. Yours are already so beautiful!... But the wise virgins replied: "The wind is blowing in the night outside and heavy drops of dew are falling. There is never enough oil to give a flame strong enough to withstand the wind and dampness. If we give you some, also our lights will begin to fade away. And the procession of the virgins would be really a sad one without the flickering flames of lamps! Go, run to the nearest vendor, beg, knock, make him get up to give you some oil". And the foolish girls, panting, creasing their veils, staining their dresses, losing their garlands while pushing one another and running, followed the advice of their companions.

But while they were on their way to buy some oil, the bride and the bridegroom appeared at the end of the street. The five virgins with their lamps lit, ran to meet them and the young couple entered the house in the midst of them for the final ceremony, when the virgins at the end would escort the bride to the nuptial room. The door was closed behind them and those who were outside were left out. And that was the case of the five foolish bridesmaids, who at last arrived with the oil, but found the door closed and in vain they knocked, hurting their hands and moaning: "Lord, lord, open the door for us! We were in the wedding procession. We are the propitiatory virgins, chosen to bring honour and good luck to your wedding". But the bridegroom, leaving for a moment the closest guests whose leave he was taking while the bride was entering the nuptial room, from the upper part of the house said to them: "I tell you that I do not know you. I do not know who you are. I did not see you rejoicing around my beloved bride. You are usurpers. You are therefore left out of the nuptial house". And the five foolish girls, weeping, went away along the dark streets, with their useless lamps, their creased dresses and torn veils, while their garlands were practically destroyed or lost.

And now listen to the meaning of the parable. I told you at the beginning that the Kingdom of Heaven is the house of the nuptials of God with souls. All the faithful are called to the celestial

wedding because God loves all His children. Sooner or later everybody arrives at the moment of the nuptials and it is a great fortune to arrive.

But listen further. You know how girls consider an honour and fortune to be invited as bridesmaids of the bride. Let us see whom the various people represent and you will understand better. The Bridegroom is God. The bride is the soul of a just person who, after the period of engagement in the house of the Father, that is under the protection of and in obedience to God's doctrine, living according to justice, is taken to the house of the Bridegroom for the wedding. The virgin-maids are the souls of the faithful, who following the example set by the bride - the fact that she was chosen by the Bridegroom because of her virtues means that she was a living example of holiness - endeavour to achieve the same honour by sanctifying themselves. They are in a white, clean, fresh dress, with white veils, crowned with flowers. They are holding lighted lamps in their hands. The lamps are very clean, and the wicks are nourished with the purest oil so that they may not be malodorous.

In a white dress. Justice steadily practised gives a white dress and the day will soon come when it will be most white, without even the most remote remembrance of stain, it will be of supernatural, angelical whiteness.

In a clean dress. One must keep the dress always clean through humility. It is so easy to dim the purity of the heart. And those whose hearts are not pure cannot see God. Humility is like water that washes. A humble man soon notices that he has darkened his robe, because his eyes are not dimmed by the fumes of pride and thus he runs to his Lord and says: "I have stained the purity of my heart. I weep at Your feet to be cleansed. Oh! my Sun, purify my heart through Your benign forgiveness and Your paternal love!"

In a fresh dress. Oh! the freshness of a heart! Children have it by gift of God. The just have it by gift of God and through their own will. Saints have it by gift of God and through their will elevated to heroism. But will a sinner, whose soul is torn, burnt, poisoned and disgraced, never be able to have a fresh robe? Oh! of course he will. He begins to have it the moment he looks at himself with disgust. He increases its freshness when he decides to change life. He brings it to perfection when through penance he washes, detoxicates, cures and recomposes his poor soul. And with the help of God, Who does not refuse assistance to anyone who asks Him for a holy help, and through his own will elevated to super-heroism because it is not necessary for him to protect what he has, but to rebuild what he destroyed and thus he must work twice, three times, seven times as much - and with untiring penance, relentless against his sinful ego, he will take his soul back to the freshness of a child's soul. A new freshness, made precious by experience which makes him the master of other people who were once like him, that is, sinners.

With white veils. Humility! I said: "When you pray or do penance, do not let the world see you". In the Wisdom Books it is written: "It is right to keep the secret of the King". Humility is the candid veil worn to defend the good we do and the good God grants us. We must not be proud of the privileged love granted to us by God, nor seek foolish human glory. The gift would be taken away at once. But from the depth of our hearts we must sing to our God: "My soul proclaims Your greatness, o Lord... because You have looked upon Your lowly handmaid". »

Jesus makes a short pause and casts a glance at His Mother, Who blushes under Her veil and

bends forward as if She wanted to tidy the hair of the boy sitting at Her feet, but in actual fact to conceal her deep-felt remembrance...

« Crowned with flowers. A soul must weave its daily garland of virtuous deeds, because nothing withered or slovenly looking is to appear in the presence of the Most High. I said daily. Because a soul does not know when God-Bridegroom may appear and say: "Come". Therefore you must never tire renewing the garland. Be not afraid. Flowers wither. But the flowers of virtuous wreaths do not wither. God's angel, whom every man has at his side, picks up these daily wreaths and takes them to Heaven. And they will be there the throne for the new blessed soul when it enters the nuptial house as the bride.

They have lighted lamps. They have them to honour the Bridegroom and to see the way. How refulgent faith is, and what a kind friend it is! It gives a flame as bright as a star, a flame that smiles because it is sure in its certainty, a flame that brightens also the instrument supporting it. Also the flesh of man nourished with faith seems to become brighter and more spiritual, even in this world, free from premature withering. Because he who believes holds on to God's words and commandments in order to possess God, his ultimate aim, and therefore he shuns corruption, is not perturbed or afraid, feels no remorse, is not compelled to make an effort to remember lies or to conceal evil deeds and remains young and handsome by means of the beautiful incorruptibility of saints: flesh and blood, mind and heart free from lust to contain the oil of faith, to give light without smoke. A constant will to feed that light for ever. Everyday life, with its disappointments, ascertainments, contacts, temptations, disagreements, tends to diminish faith. No! It must not happen. Go every day to the source of the sweet, sapiential oil of God. A lamp with little oil can be put out by the least puff of wind or by the heavy dew of the night. The night... The hour of darkness, of sin, of temptation comes for everybody. It is night for the soul. But if the soul is filled to the brim with faith, its flame cannot be put out by the wind of the world or by the fog of sensuality.

And finally vigilance, vigilance, vigilance. He who is unwarily trustful and says: "Oh! God will come on time, while my light is still on", and makes up his mind to go to sleep instead of keeping awake, and goes to sleep without providing what is necessary to get up and be ready at the first call, and he who waits until the last moment to procure the oil of faith or the strong wick of good will, runs the risk of being left out when the Bridegroom arrives. Be vigilant, therefore with prudence, perseverance, purity, confidence, so that you may be always ready for God's call, because you really do not know when He will come.

My dear disciples, I do not want you to be afraid of God, on the contrary I want you to have faith in His goodness. Both you who will remain here, and you who will be going away, must consider that, if you do what the wise virgins did, you will be invited not only to escort the Bridegroom, but like the virgin Esther, who became queen in the place of Vashti, you will be chosen and elected to be brides, as the Bridegroom "found more approval and favour with you than with anybody else". I bless you, who are about to go away. Take My words with you for yourselves and for your companions. May the peace of the Lord be always with you. »

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