

## St Pius & St Anthony Homily 32<sup>nd</sup> Sunday Ordinary Year A1

Are we ready? Or better asked, Do we have what we need? Jesus intends this parable of the ten bridesmaids waiting for the Bridegroom to begin a lamplit parade (procession) so that the wedding festivities can begin, he intends for this parable to alert us to our need to be ready for His return by making the preparations (whatever that may be), so that we will be found ready at the gate *(since this is Veterans Day weekend, maybe it's like the army slogan 'Hurry up and wait', but the point is 'Just be ready'. And we recognize and thank our veterans who stood for us and served their nation bravely and honorably –Thank you)*. So, Jesus' parable advises us to do whatever we need to, so that we will be ready (have some back-up oil!) Some people think Jesus is saying we have to stay awake – but notice that both wise and foolish maidens all went to sleep – what makes the wise ones wise, is that they had back up – had extra oil to add to their lamps in a pinch. So maybe we shouldn't focus on sleeping or not (we have to sleep), but simply being prepared *I notice that even in Jesus' day, weddings might not be known to start on time!*

So we should prepare! We don't know what else may come up before Jesus returns. Keep the lamp on-lit, but yes, that is only half of it- we also need to keep extra oil. Like not running out of gas in our vehicles - Has that ever happened? I have to confess that even though my father told me such a thing should only happen to me once in a lifetime (I should learn - or maybe I didn't feel the pain of walking or pushing car far enough the first time), it took me studying that lesson more than once to finally get it. But maybe another example. I has this happen once, when I crawled up under house to replace a busted outdoor faucet end. Of course, it was the outlet on the opposite end of the house from the crawl space access opening. But as soon as I started loosening the threads to remove the end piece, after propping the flashlight on a joist cross brace, the light faded to black (batteries gave out). So, now I have to scoot backwards out, or turn my body around and crawl toward the light daylight opening. And I didn't really think about snakes until then! (And I didn't bring my 16 foot wasp can of spray to use in the snake's eyes when I crawl on top of one now in the dark). All because I didn't have extra batteries along with me (or another light in pocket)!

Today, I hear Jesus say that concerning the kingdom of heaven, the lesson is that it will surprises us always. Count on it, so make back up preparations. What

do they say, hope for the best but prepare for worst. It is going to rain, something will break, they won't show up or the lock will jam & the door will hang.

So, always pack some extra oil. But, one more thing about this parable. Some people are bothered by the detail in this wedding parable of the wise virgins not sharing oil. We are talking about the kingdom of heaven. We should all be in it together, right? So why not share? Jesus taught in Sermon on the Mount in Matt 5:42 "Give to the one who asks of you, and do not turn your back on one who wants to borrow" (and I say so often what St Paul taught about the members of the body of Christ 'sharing in all things with one another" -1 Cor 12:25-26 '*when one suffers all suffer, when one honored all honored*' & in Roman 12:15-16- '*weep with those who weep and rejoice with those who rejoice*')

Well, I find two answers that can pacify this troubled feeling in our consciences. The first answer comes from that realization we all have at some point in our lives: that in the end, *some things just have to be done for oneself*. No one can do it for us. The parable is talking about meeting the **bridegroom Jesus**, and entering the Kingdom of God. Recognizing & accepting Jesus is something that we each have to come to doing for ourselves (your reasons for accepting him may or may not work for me - mine may not for you -what do we say about salvation and relationship to Christ but that most of all, '*it is personal*') So to enter through the door to Kingdom of heaven, we have to step in ourselves. Someone can bring me to the gate, but I have to walk through it. Like the old saying, of 'leading a horse to water but you can't make him drink.' No one can drink for us, no one can eat our food for us. I must have my own oil to refill my lamp. We have to do that for ourselves. The same thing applies to our relationship to Christ. I must be open to Him, accept and go to Him. Your oil may not light my lamp, your reason or experience may not work for me.

And a second reason to help us understand why they cannot share oil is similarly personal: the importance of each person's own lamp, which would be required to identify oneself to others in the dark. We each need our own light. I remember as a cub scout camping long, long ago, how important it was to have your own flashlight with you. In case, you had to go out in the middle of the night (maybe going to the bathroom), to ensure that you would be recognized (I.D.-identified) by someone you meet on the path, you lifted your light to shine on your face to show yourself (like in old war movies, when in the total darkness, you

heard a sound, and someone called out, “Who goes there?” and while you could try speaking your name -that could be faked, but the best ID was to flash a light on your face to hear back, “Oh, it’s you, okay-come through.” In this case, one’s lamp and the oil in it, like your personal identity card. And I like to throw in here too how much more practically, the inability to share oil at that late stage on the game was probably due to simple risk of fire when trying to pour oil from one lamp into another. For example, imagine this detailed breakdown of the virgins’ experience. When it was announced that the groom was near, I bet the wise maidens went straight to pouring their extra oil in-refreshing the volume in the lamp. When the others realized that no amount of tilting-turning their lamps was going to work keeping it lit, *(I’m sure it took a minute of them trying tricks-like when we take out batteries and reinsert them trying to get a few more minutes out of them, or take them out blow on them-what does that do-but watch that we do try such!)* So, to attempt to pour oil from one burning lamp into another burning lamp (keep in mind that the maidens would be in long flowing robes – they’d be infernos- human wicks lighted), this would be so risky as to be out of the question. Again, at such a late stage in the game, the sharing opportunity has passed. *(I suggest that they did help, as I feel they gave information about a special friend vendor (‘my source’) in town who could get them oil- recall that it is in middle of night!)*

But such finality as what we find in this parable, it should motivate us now to be ready, having lamps lit, but also extra oil in hand. This parable reminds us of how personal, how very personal accepting Jesus and living with Jesus should be for each of us. And what is our light but our witness to Christ – our life lived showing Christ to others by our actions. Our ID, or who we are is revealed by what we do. And the extra oil we need to amass comes from additional service of Christ and all works of mercy performed in His name. Jesus taught in Matthew 5:15-16 about lamps not being lit to be put under bushel baskets. Nor they are lit to give light to all (on a stand). In verse 16, Jesus says, “Just so, your light must shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your heavenly Father.” So our light amounts to our ‘deeds of mercy’ done in His Name, so that we may be recognized/received (ID’d) into the wedding banquet of Heaven.