

Homily, 32nd Sunday of Ordinary Time "A"  
Stewardship Commitment Weekend  
Cathedral of SS. Peter and Paul  
November 5 - 6, 2011  
Rev. Noah J. Casey

These weeks of November pave the way to the end of the liturgical year. As we approach the Feast of Christ the King, the last Feast of the Lord before Advent, and the beginning of a new liturgical year, we hear passages from the Bible concerning the end of time, and our readiness for the return of the Lord.

In the passage from Matthew's Gospel proclaimed today, Jesus teaches the parable of the wise and foolish virgins. This interesting story has the potential for distracting us from its ultimate point. For example, we could get caught up in what might appear the selfishness of the so called wise virgins who did not want to share their oil with the foolish ones whose lamps were going out. Secondly, we might linger for a while on the need to be prepared for the return of the Lord. However, the real point of the Gospel takes us to a much deeper level of meaning.

As we reflect on the parable, it is clear that all the virgins have come to greet the bridegroom. However, not all are truly invested in the moment. To be invested in the welcoming of the bridegroom, a deeper commitment is called for. The oil of their lamps becomes a symbol for this commitment. What the Gospel teaches us is that each of us has been given the oil of commitment that we carry in our hearts. It is not enough to "go and buy" oil from some outside source. Our oil is in the heart as is our deepening love for the Lord. In another place in the Scriptures, Jesus, faced with a huge hungry crowd will tell the anxious disciples to give the people some food themselves. The same challenge is revealed in this parable of the foolish

virgins. They are not foolish just because they have no oil; they are foolish because they don't realize that the real oil is within them. It is the oil of truth, the oil of love.

The challenge for us as disciples of the Lord, as those who keep vigil for the coming of the Lord, is the challenge to truly make the love of God our own. It is not enough for us to simply be able to recite the teachings of Christ; we must make those teachings our own, a part of the deepest identity. The making our own of the love of God is the very oil for our lamps. Living the Christian life is not like a baseball game where we can get someone else to pinch hit for us. We must step up to the plate ourselves, and not pass on the task of the Gospel to someone else.

We cannot fall asleep awaiting the Lord's return becoming drossy with apathy. We can seduce ourselves by thinking that the Lord's return is far off in the future. Our salvation is not in the future. It is to be lived now in our day to day living.

The teaching from our first reading today from the Book of Wisdom tells us that the presence of God will always be found by those who seek God and love God from the heart.

Our entry into the great banquet is not given by the one on the other side of the closed door. Our entry to the great feast comes from our awareness that the oil for our lamps can be found in our own hearts where we have made the presence of God a part of our own living and loving. This is the way we will always be ready no matter when the Lord comes.