

“Stay awake and be ready. . .”

We hear these words in our gospel acclamation this morning; a phrase that we are going to be hearing quite a bit more about in the days and weeks ahead as we wrap up these final weeks of Ordinary Time and prepare to embark on a new Liturgical Year with the season of Advent.

The Gospel today tells us the story of the ten virgins. They were awaiting the bridegroom to return after a long trip and they did not know when he was going to return. They were vigilant and they even had lamps in case he returned in the evening after dark.

Now we have to remember that during this time, they simply could not just flip the handy switch by the door and leave the front porch light on. They had to have oil to keep the lamps lit. When I hear this gospel I remember back to when I was a kid. When the power went out we would light candles and all kinds of different oil lamps that we had in the house. Now these lamps were a bit different than the lamps that the virgins had in our gospel today, but they still required oil. If you did not have enough oil, you would be left in the dark.

So, of course as in the case of many of our gospel stories, the bridegroom returns late in the evening. The virgins hear of his return and get up and get their lamps ready. Now, five did not have enough oil, so they had to go off and get more oil and when they returned, they had missed the bridegroom.

Now, often we take the idea from the story that we have to be prepared. Meaning, that we need to make sure that we are like the wise virgins who made sure that they had enough oil for their lamps and a bit more in reserve. But, I think we can also look at this from a different point of view. Why didn't the wise virgins share the oil they had?

Well, they could have run out and then they would not have had enough. But, would that have been the case? We don't know. The whole point of many of the gospel stories is that there is always enough. There is enough room at the table, there is enough food to feed 5000. I am sure that there would be enough oil, especially because the bridegroom that they are waiting for IS Jesus! Yes, they could run out, but God always provides what we need. Let us strive to always be prepared and when those around us may not be as prepared as they should be, let us offer a bit of what we have, so that they can be included as well.