

Homily
Friday of the 21st Week in Ordinary Time
August 30, 2024

How often are we prepared for those things that can happen at any moment without notice? Who knows where the first aid kit is, just in case someone skins their knee or cuts themselves with the kitchen knife? In the unlikely event of an unexpected accident, we are prepared. Right?

Who can relate to the pregnant mom, at 38 weeks, when the baby could come at any minute? Was the 'baby room' decorated and stocked with all the required supplies? Was the hospital bag packed and by the door? Was the route to the hospital fully mapped out? Were all the necessary notifications ready to go; mom, mother-in-law, boss, baby sitters for the older kids? You were prepared. Right?

Who has all their personal funeral arrangements set? The plot at the cemetery; the casket; the headstone? What about our financial plan? Who gets the house, the car? How will the money be shared? Who is the executor of your will? Are you prepared?

How much more so is it important to be prepared for what comes next? Life in eternity is much more than life on this earth. Even those of us who live a long, long life will spend much, much more time in the afterlife.

Today's parable of the ten virgins serves as a powerful lesson on preparedness and vigilance in the face of uncertainty. This parable illustrates the contrasting behaviors of the wise and foolish virgins, each of whom awaits the arrival of the bridegroom. They didn't know when the bridegroom would return. Some were prepared; some weren't.

First, we must decide if we are going to be wise and prudent, or foolish and unprepared. This second part is only for the wise and prudent. And it begins with, "What does it mean to be wise and prudent for those preparing for the return of Christ, our Bridegroom?"

Yesterday we celebrated the martyrdom of John the Baptist. John announced the coming of Christ this way, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!" Mt 3:2, and "Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths." Mt 3:3b From this, we know we need to be prepared by repenting and following the straight path.

Today, Jesus tells us to, "stay awake, for you know neither the day nor the hour." Again, we need to be prepared. So, how do we stay awake? The wise and prudent focus on Jesus; we believe, we have faith. He gave us the Greatest Commandment, to love God and love our neighbor. He gave us the Beatitudes. He gave us His example by His own life; prayer, forgiveness and sacrifice. Jesus also tells us, as He told the adulterous woman, "Go, and from now on do not sin anymore." John 8:11b. And, maybe most importantly, He gave us His Sacraments, especially Baptism, Eucharist, Reconciliation.

Jesus gives us everything we need, every day. And every day is a chance to start anew. If we remain diligent, if we prepare, if we follow His Way, we can finally enter into His eternal joy where, "He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there shall be no more death or mourning." Rev 21:4a