

This Gospel reading invites us to be the persons who are always prepared. Just like when we travel, we pack everything we need, or even extra in case we may further be in need or someone else has a need. Here in this parable, there is something which is disturbing. The women who come prepared for the long vigil won't share their oil with their needy sisters. Instead, they send them off on a foolhardy mission at midnight to go buy their own.

This parable is about the end time, which speaks about how each person needs to be accountable for his or her own good deeds, or lack of them, at the time of judgment. Just as in the Sermon on the Mount, where Jesus says, "Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father".

So, in today's gospel, the oil that fuels the light is also to be understood as good deeds, and no one can share theirs with someone who has nothing. It shows us contrast state of soul that we have. Some are wise and some foolish, some are completely prepared and some not at all; some are welcomed into the feast and some are locked out.

This contrast is much more like another passage we find in Matthew which tells us about weeds and wheat, sheep and goats, house built on rock and one built on sand, the wise and the foolish. But real life seems always to be somewhere in between: each of us a little bit foolish in our growth toward wisdom, all of us somewhat prepared, but never completely. The whole context of this Gospel instead of making us fearful, it gives us an assurance that when we are responding all along to the lifelong courtship by the bridegroom, we will be ready for the moment of consummation. We prepare for the critical moment of meeting the beloved face-to-face with all our daily choices for living justly.

The center of this parable is the oil. Oil is a vital part of human life then and now. We use it in many ways in our daily life and sometimes we run out of our oil like this tragedy of this parable where five of the bridesmaids ran out of oil. They had beautiful containers, magnificent lamps, but they were empty. The oil ran out. That is where the parable touches us. Have we run out of oil, the strengthening of God's grace in our life?

Our oil can run out through neglect when, for instance, we do not replenish our spiritual life, going through the motions when we say lots of prayers but are never "in prayer," in communication with the Lord. A crisis often comes and we are not prepared. We can have a beautiful vessel, a great appearance, but we are running on empty. Our spiritual life, our soul is dry. The oil has run out.

We all were filled with oil at our Baptism, at our Confirmation and at our Marriage or Ordination. Then, as time goes on, something always seems to come up that prevents us from praying and when an important moment comes, we are empty. We can run out of oil and empty our soul of spiritual vitality.

There are some things we can't borrow from others which is the point of the other five not lending any oil. We can't borrow someone else's faith, someone else's grace, and someone else's spirituality. We are responsible before God for our own spiritual condition, what we have done with the oil given us. We can blame the world for many things but not for the state of our soul. That is up to us. Are we prepared for the Master's return? We prepare for eternity by how we live. Could people rely on us?

This parable prepares us for the coming of Christ to us. As we look back on our life, maybe some opportunities are forever gone but we have other opportunities now to grow in God's grace.

None of us knows when the Lord will come to us. Whenever He comes, we know our lamp will be burning ready filled with oil at that time if it is filled with oil and burning ready all the time.