

SUNDAY 32 (A) (2020)

A) THUNDERSTORM

- a wedding is usually a memorable occasion, but sometimes for the wrong reasons
- a few years ago we had a wedding in my previous parish in the middle of the summer
- it so happened that there was a big storm brewing, and the clouds gathered as we waited for the Bride
- she arrived at the church just in time, because then it started to rain heavily
- as the wedding service proceeded, the skies got darker and darker and there was thunder and lightning.
- After one clap of thunder there was a power-cut in church and we were plunged into total darkness, and the service came to a complete halt
- Fortunately the lights came on again soon afterwards and we were able to complete the ceremony
- The one good thing about that hitch was that it broke the tension, everybody laughed and we all relaxed.

B) OIL CRISIS

- in today's Gospel Jesus tells a story about another wedding in which things did not go smoothly, and not everyone was happy about the outcome.
- The background to the story is that, at a wedding, the bride would await the arrival of the bridegroom at her own home.
- Her friends, acting as bridesmaids, would meet the bridegroom when he came with his friends.
- Then they would join in escorting the couple back to the bridegroom's house, where the wedding-feast would be celebrated.
- But in this story, there is a hitch, and the bridegroom is late.
- All ten bridesmaids have lamps and all the lamps have oil.
- but five of them have no reserve supply. They are unprepared for any delay.
- Eventually the bridesmaids doze off to sleep.
- At midnight the groom appears, and the foolish bridesmaids appeal to the wise for oil from their reserve stock.
- But there is none to spare.
- So, the wedding procession, minus five bridesmaids, goes into the feast and the door is shut.
- When the foolish bridesmaids arrive later, they are refused admission.
- They were not ready when it mattered.

C) LESSON FOR US

- although it might seem an an amusing story, Jesus gives a serious warning at the end of it:
-"So stay awake, because you do not know either the day or the hour."
- We do not know the day or the hour of Christ's Second Coming.
- We do not even know the day and the hour of our own death.
- But we too need to stay awake and watch for the bridegroom to call each one of us to the wedding feast of heaven.
- but staying awake should not cause us anxiety.
- if we are trying to be faithful to him each day and each moment, if we are trying to recognise his coming in the events of our everyday lives,
then we will certainly be ready when he comes to call us home.

D) EVERYDAY WISDOM

- the wisdom of five of the bridesmaids consisted in doing what was expected of them
- it was a wisdom that wasn't extraordinary, just eminently practical
- and it's the same for us: if we do what we have to do, quietly and conscientiously, we have no reason to fear the unexpected coming of Christ.
- there is a virtue in doing the ordinary things as well as we can, with care and common sense.
- the 14th Century mystic Meister Eckhart said: wisdom consists in doing the next thing you have to do, doing it with your whole heart, and finding delight in doing it.
- this is illustrated in a well-known story about a holy old monk, who was sweeping up leaves in the monastery garden.
- when a visitor asked him what he would do if he knew he were to die in ten minutes' time, he replied, "I would carry on sweeping."

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