

Thirty-second Sunday in Ordinary Time: Using Time Wisely

I want to begin today by asking you to imagine that you get a call from a lawyer telling you that you are the main beneficiary of your Great Uncle Frank's will. Now, everyone had said that Frank was more than a bit eccentric and rather avoided him, but you always went out of your way to visit him, joke with him, and so forth. Well, it turns out that Great Uncle Frank was rich. He left you a great deal of money, but in his typical fashion, he had certain rules. Everyday for a year, you would receive \$86,400. The money would be administered by the lawyers. You had to spend the \$86,400 every day. You couldn't withdraw it to save it. And you had to show receipts for how you spent the money. At the end of each day, whatever you did not spend would be removed from your account. The next day you would start with a fresh \$86,400.

I am sure that you and I would find some really creative things to do with the money.

Now, let's return to reality. Every day we are given 86,400 seconds to use wisely. Every night, God writes off as lost whatever portion of this time we have not used well or have wasted. In the bank of time, there are no balances and no overdrafts. Each day a new account is opened for us. Each night, what remains is written off, lost, gone forever.

Everyday's 86,400 seconds have to be invested in commodities that will hold their value from day to day, quarter to quarter, year to year and beyond. These commodities are lasting values like justice, compassion, forgiveness, and love.

There were five wise virgins and five foolish ones. The five foolish virgins squandered their time. The five wise virgins made the best use of every moment. The wise virgins entered into the banquet of the Master's love. The foolish virgins were too busy wasting time to be ready for their Master's return. They were locked out of the celebration.

How much time do you and I have left? We really don't know. Recently, we have had young members of our parish come down with sudden illnesses and die just a few months after the diagnosis. Another died due to an accident. In our American denial of death, we all like to think that sudden death happens to other people and that this could not happen to any of us. But it does.

Did you ever read the comic the Wizard of Id? That's the one with the little short king. In one strip, King Twerp calls the royal monk in to ask him a theological question. He asks the monk, "How do you feel about capital punishment?"

"There's not much we can do about it," the monk says to the King.

The King is quite perplexed by this answer, "What do you mean that there is

not much we can do about the death penalty?"

"Well, the fact is," says the monk, "that we are all born with it."

The proper Christian attitude is not to deny death, but to prepare for it. This is the wisdom behind the five bridesmaids who were prepared to enter the wedding reception. They didn't know when the bridegroom was coming, but they were ready.

So how do we prepare? Well, survivalists prepare secret places where they hope to live for months or years after what they figure will be a devastating war. They gathering supplies. Evidently, they want a lot of toilet paper. Chances are good that the Survivalists in Pinellas and Pasco counties have stocked up on Ensure. (Sorry, I couldn't pass that up.) These methods are all wrong. We do not prepare for the end by saving a lot of stuff, or by doing a lot of things. We prepare for the end by nurturing the proper disposition, the Christian attitude. Some of the most important words in scripture are two verses from Paul's Letter to the Romans:

Do not conform yourselves to this age but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and pleasing and perfect. Romans 12:1-2.

"Be transformed by renewal of mind." Paul tells us to take an attitude of life that is completely different from the attitude of the world. Throughout the Gospels, particularly in *Matthew* where today's gospel is taken, Jesus emphasizes the need for inner transformation. His complaint against the Pharisees was that they were hypocrites. They behaved one way, but were another way. He called them whiten sepulchers. On the outside, they looked nice and clean. On the inside they were rotten. The tax collectors and prostitutes who turned to Jesus transformed their lives. Their devotion to the Lord was a reflection of the Christian disposition they had taken on.

So, how do we form and nourish the Christian attitude of life? On the negative, we cannot give ourselves over to that which destroys the presence of the Lord. We live in a materialistic society. To the vast majority of society success is counted in the amount of possessions a person accumulates. Pleasure, even fleeting pleasure, is the goal of life. The glorification of sex is just one of the many ways that this is expressed. We, you and I, have to fight against the forces outside of us and, particularly, within us that are drawing us into materialism and away from the Christian disposition of life.

On the positive, we can form and nourish the Christian disposition by continually communicating with the Lord. We need to pray daily. We need to find a time, even if it is brief, but still a time when we can be with the Lord and freed of the distractions of life. If we have a family, then we have the additional responsibility to pray as a family every day. Bedtime prayers when the children are little is a great time for this. As they get older, Mom and Dad should continue praying with their children

every evening and then, as time goes on, for their children every evening.

The main focus of our prayer life should be on the Lord's Day, Sunday. On Sunday we celebrate the passion, death and resurrection of the Lord and, if we are able to come to Mass, receive the Eucharist. The presence of Christ within us in this sacrament gives us the strength to be who we claim to be, Christians.

Today's first reading speaks about wisdom. Wisdom is a way of life. The wise are always ready for the Lord because they are always united to him. The gospel lesson is simple for this Sunday. Be like the wise virgins. Be ready to celebrate the banquet of the Lord's love.