

32nd Sunday in Ordinary Time

Cycle A

Saint Margaret Parish, Bel Air
November 5-6, 2011 7:30 and 9am

Sand in and Hour Glass

There is a story about a little girl who lived near the beach.

This little girl had a grandfather whom she loved very much. Her grandfather had a collection of hourglasses and she liked to turn them upside down and watch the sand steadily sift through to the bottom.

Her grandfather once told her that the hourglasses reminded him that time was so very precious. Well, this particular year, Christmas was coming.

With difficulty, this little girl's mother told her that her Grandpa was in the hospital and was very sick. He might even die.

The little girl asked what that meant. And her mother explained that life was like one of Grandpa's hourglasses and that Grandpa had very little time left.

Her mother suggested that she make a special Christmas gift that they could take to Grandpa. So the little girl excitedly went to work on her gift.

When they got to the hospital, she gave her Grandpa a beautifully wrapped box. He slowly unwrapped it and looked inside and just smiled.

He immediately understood. His granddaughter had filled the box with sand.

The Story of the Bridesmaids

Well, if it were only that easy!

If only we could extend our days by adding more sand to our hourglasses or more pages to our calendars! But, of course, we cannot!

Today's parable of the bridesmaids addresses this very issue. There are three important reminders or lessons that I see here.

1. Prepare

First, each of us must prepare for the moment when we will meet God face to face.

We must do this for ourselves. No one can do it for us.

We see this in the refusal of the five wise bridesmaids to share their oil with the others. This is not an issue of sharing.

Instead, it is about being prepared. These bridesmaids did not share their oil because they could not share this kind of oil.

This is the oil of personal preparation, the oil of who we have become as persons in the course of our lives. We can motivate and encourage one another, but ultimately each one of us must do this kind of preparation for ourselves.

2. Watch the Time

The second lesson is that our time is limited.

There is a limited number of grains of sand in the hour glass. We see this in the inability of the five foolish bridesmaids to go and buy oil for themselves.

Obviously, it was midnight and the stores were closed. And that is exactly the point: it was too late!

The moment had come, the groom and bride were arriving and there was no more time to prepare. This will be true for each one of us at some moment.

So, we need to watch the time and be ready today. We need to live as if this were our day to meet the Lord face to face.

3. Keep Our Lamps Lighted

And then the third lesson is that we must be about light.

Psalm 36 in the Old Testament praises God by saying: *"In your light we see light."* The idea is that we need to allow ourselves to be drawn into the light of God.

And then, with this light, we can see light in the world and bring light to one another. *"In your light we see light."*

We see this in the oil lamps that the bridesmaids are to keep burning brightly. We are to be and to bring light in darkness.

This is a helpful way for understanding our role in promoting respect for human life. We can lift up the wonder and preciousness of an infant, or tend the person who is homeless, or provide comfort to a person who is dying.

These are actions of light – of keeping our lamps burning brightly. They will accomplish much more for respect for human life than just cursing the darkness.

Conclusion

So, the sands in the hour glass are a good reminder for us.

We are to be prepared. We need to watch the time because it is limited.

And we are to be a light for the world around us.