

The readings speak of being prepared, no matter the circumstances. A humorous example of being prepared, some of the best things to say if you get caught sleeping at your desk: "They told me at the blood bank this might happen."

"Someone must've put decaf in the wrong pot . . . " But the best thing to say if you get caught sleeping at your desk . . . "In His name we pray. Amen." Yes, may Jesus find us praying when our time comes.

In today's gospel we have five virgins who fell asleep with no excuses when the groom showed up. Was Jesus having a bad day when he composed this story? He usually errs on mercy.

We must remember that this is a parable not an allegory. An allegory is a story that has many points of reference to human experience - many punch-lines, so to speak - but a parable has only one.

The development of the story itself has only one purpose in a parable: to add strength to the one point.

For that reason, the refusal of the wise to help the foolish is not being held up as a model behavior for us. Obviously, Jesus himself had a partiality for the weak, the sick, the wounded, the strayed, and the lost.

The one point of this parable of the bridesmaids is readiness. Jesus was continuously telling people to wake up and to stay awake.

\*\*It warns us that there are certain things which cannot be obtained at the last minute. I doubt anyone who ran in the marathon this weekend started training the day before. If they did, good chance they did not finish it running.

It is too late to acquire a skill, or a character, if we do not already possess it, when some task offers itself to us. When Sunday Mass comes, our musicians don't just show up, they have worked hard to bring such beauty to this space. The same for our very faithful, coming Sunday after Sunday.

+We hear those commercials, "Just ten minutes" and you can have six back abs" – as if in one day this can be, sorry, not going to happen.

If all this is true in everyday life, similarly, it is easy to leave things so late that we can no longer prepare ourselves to meet with God. There are no short cuts to holiness nor loopholes to be found in the bible. As we know, it wasn't raining when Noah built the ark.

+While in college, I remember one particular professor very well - He did not give final exams. Wow, sounds like a great guy! No, instead each week he gave a pop quiz and that was how you were graded – so every day you had to be prepared for a test. Good lesson for us in our spiritual lives.

+We suffered yet another shooting tragedy this past week in a small Christian parish in Texas. I'm not going offer any theological explanations for this, but what I can say is that on the last day of their lives, the Lord found them worshipping him and most certainly knew each one of their names.

Most of us, thankfully, will never face something as that, but everyday does matter and each offers us an opportunity for redemption.

I believe each day of our lives the Lord provides us with a grace to accept or ignore and that is how we will be graded for each day of our lives. As the gospel warns us, don't put it off – seize the day as it might be your last!

+I once had a car battery that was at the end of its life, but I kept pushing the envelope, neglecting to replace it and hoping for the best.

Well, I was getting my car washed in one of those auto car washes, listening to the radio and then all of a sudden, everything went dead. It was so dead, I could not even move the car into neutral to roll it out.

The first car waiting behind me was a police car and some angry people behind her. After finding out what had happened, she waved everyone away and then I walked away, toward the store, waiting for triple A.

There will be no triple A rescue us on the last day of our lives. The point is do not neglect your spiritual life. If something is draining the life out of you, it is time to do something different.

We could say the oil (or my modern example, car battery) in those lamps might represent faith or one's prayer life. How charged up are you? Every weekend Mass is your charging station, miss enough and you might find yourself empty as I was in a car wash.

**\*\*Lastly, the gospel warns us that there are certain things which cannot be borrowed.**

+I remember as a kid a neighbor coming to our door asking to borrow some wood for his wood fireplace. Afterward dad said humorously, "How do you borrow fire wood it?" The foolish virgins found it is impossible to borrow oil when they discovered they needed it.

We cannot borrow a relationship with God; we must possess it for ourselves. We cannot borrow a character; we must be clothed with it.

We cannot always be living on the spiritual capital which others have amassed. There are certain things we must win or acquire for ourselves, for we cannot borrow them from others.

+When the Episcopalian Bishop Philip Brooks, author of "O, Little Town of Bethlehem," was seriously ill, he requested that *none* of his friends come to see him.

But when an acquaintance of his named Robert Ingersoll, the famous anti-Christian propagandist, came to see him, Brooks allowed him to enter his room.

Ingersoll said, "I appreciate this very much, especially when you aren't letting any of your close friends see you." **I close**, Bishop Brooks responded, "Oh, I'm confident of seeing them again in the next life, but you, I am not so sure!"