SUNDAY HOMILY

Keep Your Lamps Filled

Father Bob • Sunday, November 8, 2026
A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew 25:1–13

Our first reading and the Gospel today extol the virtue of wisdom, and our good friend St. Thomas Aquinas gives us a working definition of wisdom. He says wisdom is the capacity to judge and order all things according to their highest cause and their ultimate end.

Yeah, that sounds a little philosophical, I know, but it makes sense, as Jesus tells us today in that beautiful Gospel parable.

What Jesus is saying is that it is wise for us to order our lives to the highest cause, which is to live in our Lord's grace and friendship. Another high cause is to know and love Him and serve Him. And, to use the analogy of the Gospel parable, to be expectant and ready to meet the Lord when He comes again in glory at His second coming.

If we do that, we attain the highest good. We attain the ultimate end, which is salvation.

So that's simply what Jesus is defining as wise. Exercise wisdom so as to be ready to meet the Lord when He comes. For us, that means His second coming, the Parousia, or in death.

But that's often easier said than done, isn't it?

And especially at this time of year. That's why I think this Gospel is so perfect. It's so timely. It's exactly what we need to hear today.

Because we have already entered our culture's holiday season, which actually began before Halloween, when I saw Christmas commercials.

And then on Monday, November 2, I was driving home to visit my dad, and I turned on the radio. And on November 2, they had their list of Christmas songs. SiriusXM had already switched over to the seasonal offerings of nonstop Christmas songs.

So that's what our secular culture does and says. It says the holiday season is basically from November 1 until December 25, at which time, after the last gift has been opened, Christmas is over and the tree is out by the curb on December 26.

But that's not what it is for us Catholics. For us Catholics, we have to remember not to get sucked into the vortex of the holiday season, because we experience three seasons to their one.

We're in a season now, which is the end of Ordinary Time. The theme of the end of Ordinary Time is the end of time and the end of our lives. So the Liturgy of the Word calls us to contemplate the four last things: death, judgment, heaven, and hell. And also, as we hear in the Gospel today, the second coming of Jesus Christ, also known as the Parousia.

And then from Ordinary Time we flow into Advent with its two themes. The beginning of Advent is to prepare for the second coming of Jesus. The end of Advent is to prepare for the birth of our salvation in Jesus Christ.

Advent leads us beautifully into the Christmas season, where we celebrate the birth of our salvation in Jesus Christ.

So how do we exercise wisdom in this culture at this time of year? I think the answer is not a great mystery. I think the answer is by keeping our spiritual lamps filled. Keeping our spiritual lamps filled with the oil of an active faith life, a lively prayer life, and good works, charity. The staples of our Christian life: active faith, lively prayer, charitable good works.

I think what Jesus is saying in the parable of the ten virgins is, "Don't fall asleep. Stay awake." Don't get sucked into that holiday vortex and put your faith on the shelf with the elf, which is so easy to do in the busyness of the holiday season, right? We can put the faith on the shelf with the elf. Then we say, "I didn't have time for prayer." Yeah, but I had time for everything else on my list that I had to do.

And charitable good works. Well, remember what George said, George Costanza said to Jerry Seinfeld, "Isn't that for priests and nuns?" So the words of Jesus are very relevant today, reminding us that we enter this season that is extremely busy. I want you to think right now and feel the exhaustion that's coming.

Yeah, that's not the good news, is it? When we think about everything that we have to get done until December 25. Yeah. That's the bad news, right?

And if you feel a sense of defeat with that, that's the oil draining out of your lamp. What Jesus is saying is that we can't let that happen. We have to replenish that oil by an active life of faith, a lively prayer life, and charitable good works.

That's what refills the oil lamp. That's what helps us to be ready for Him when He comes again in glory to judge the living and the dead.

Actually, it helps us to be ready for everything, as our first reading says. To live in our Lord's grace and friendship is the answer to so many of life's problems and challenges.

So with that, let us also remember that Jesus said no one else can fill our lamps for us. We have to make the choice to do that for ourselves here and now.

So let us make that pledge to order our lives according to the wisdom of Christ, so that as we await His second coming to judge the world, the living and the dead, we may be busy about all the right things, and that our lamps will always remain filled with the oil of gladness and salvation.