

Thirty-second Sunday in O.T.  
Year A – 2011

### Taking Advantage of Opportunities

There were ten virgins, five wise and five foolish. The wise virgins took advantage of the opportunity they had to serve the Master. The foolish ones squandered their time and did not get to enjoy the banquet of their Lord's love.

Are you a procrastinator? A procrastinator is a person that at times best works under severe pressure. He or she goes into action the very last minute. They may begin a diet two days before buying a new bathing suit. A procrastinator starts working on his or her taxes the afternoon of April 15<sup>th</sup>. And they may be the person who is still shopping for Christmas on December 26<sup>th</sup>.

All of us from time to time let certain obligations slip and then find ourselves scrambling. However, there are some obligations in our lives where we do not have the right to assume that a better, more convenient time might be possible. There are truly important and central things in life that we must act upon when the opportunity presents itself. Such as getting to know our children, healing divisions when they come up in our families, coming to realize the presence of God in our lives, and taking the time to learn and practice our faith.

Life is very short. Children become adults too quickly. One moment you are holding your first baby, then, before you know it while you still consider yourself a young man or woman, you are holding your first grandchild. At one moment we are beginning our careers, and then the next moment we are taking out IRA's or other ways to plan our retirement.

Life here on earth comes to an end much sooner than any of us expect. This is certainly evident when we hear about the death of a baby, a young man or woman, but even the deaths of our parents or grandparents well into their 80's and 90's is a shock to us as we try to contemplate life without a son or daughter, Mom or Dad, Grandma or Grandpa, sitting around the dinning room table at Thanksgiving or Christmas having a drink and celebrating life with their family.

Our Gospel reading is telling us to make the best use of the time we have been given. We cannot be a procrastinator towards those things that are important in our lives or our faith. These opportunities may never arise again. Some of these opportunities may seem quite minor, but actually they can have a tremendous positive impact upon us, upon others and upon our whole relationship with God.

I remember a priest telling a story about the experience of a young woman at a local children's hospital. She was asked by a teacher from her church to tutor a boy with some schoolwork while he was in the hospital. The woman didn't realize until she got to the hospital that the boy was in the burn unit, in considerable pain and barely able to respond. She tried to tutor him, stumbling through the English lesson, ashamed at putting him through such a senseless exercise.

The next day, when she returned to the hospital, a nurse asked her, "What did you do to that boy?" Before she could finish apologizing, the nurse interrupted her: "You don't understand. His entire attitude has changed. It's as though he has decided to live!"

A few weeks later, the boy explained that he had completely given up hope until this young woman had come into his life. With joyful tears he explained, "They wouldn't send a tutor to work on nouns and verbs with a dying boy, would they?"

Sometimes we are invited into people's lives and into places and events that, on the surface, have no meaning or purpose to us. We ask ourselves, what are we doing here? What purpose do we have here? Often we define our lives only by what we can see or understand; we forget that we are a part of something larger than ourselves. When we forget, we miss opportunity after opportunity, those moments of grace, to affect our world for the better.

As many of you already know we have been readying ourselves as a parish for a new way of praying at our Eucharistic celebrations. With the beginning of Advent; the English speaking nations of the world will begin to celebrate more deeply their faith by implementing the Third Edition of the New Roman Missal. On the local level our parish has provided bulletin inserts, pamphlets, workshops for our liturgical ministers and for those in religious education. Even some small groups are studying the New Roman Missal for six weeks. And next week the parish will provide an opportunity for anyone interested to attend; a retreat called "The Making of A Memorial: The Mass". This

retreat will explore the Mass through eyes of theologians, scholars, liturgists and pastors. Allowing the participants to explore the depth, richness and layers of meaning found in the celebration of the Eucharist.

Each opportunity given is designed help us enter into a deeper more intimate communion with God through the Mass. Many times over it has been said how the church had missed opportunities in catechizes when implementing the changes in the Mass after Second Vatican Council. You went to Mass one Sunday with the priest's back to you and the next Sunday everything was different with no real explanation. The Church in its wisdom has learned from these mistakes and has taken get lengths to inform and educate the laity on the changes coming in the New Roman Missal.

Two such important changes we are exploring can be found this weekend in our bulletin inserts. The Gloria and the Creed.

The Gloria the hymn you heard and sang for the first time this weekend has been part of the liturgy since the 11<sup>th</sup> century. Many people call the Gloria, the angelic hymn since its first words are taken from the angel's greeting to the shepherds at Bethlehem. The changes in the Gloria , *"We praise you, we bless you, we adore you, we glorify you, Lord God, heavenly King, O God almighty Father."* Were designed to offer fitting praise to the Lord for his presence in our lives and in the world.

The Creed will also have some new and different words but the meaning and strength behind our profession of faith remains the same. One such change in the Creed will be from our saying we believe to I believe. This small change makes the Creed a statement of each one's individual belief. The creed summarizes the story of Scripture. Moving from creation to Christ's incarnation, death and resurrection, to the sending of the Holy Spirit, to the era of the Church and finally to the Second Coming, the Creed carries us through the entire salvation history. Thus the Creed bridges the Liturgy of the Word to the Liturgy of the Table.

The Creed calls us not to be lukewarm bystanders like the bridesmaids who forgot their oil. But instead challenges us to declare that we will strive not to live like the rest of the world, but to give our wholehearted allegiance to the Lord: "I believe in one God . . ."

My friends in Christ, we have so little time left, children do grow up, and this present phase of our lives will come to an end before the Master comes for us. Let us remember, that opportunities do pass. And sometimes, when opportunities are not taken advantage of, they never appear again.

So let us look at the New Roman Missal as a time where we as Catholics will redefine who we are and what we are doing here, where we will grow in our relationship with our Lord. Let us not miss the opportunity, that open door, that moment of grace, which will affect us and our world for the better.