

32nd Sunday in Ordinary Time – Year A (2020)

Martin Luther King Jr. once said “We are now faced with the fact that tomorrow is today. We are confronted with the fierce urgency of now. In this unfolding conundrum of life and history, there "is" such a thing as being too late. This is no time for apathy or complacency. This is a time for vigorous and positive action.

William Penn once wrote: “If there is any kindness I can show, or any good thing I can do to any fellow human being, let me do it now, and not defer or neglect it, as I shall not pass this way again.”

“Sense of urgency” is a term that we’ve heard a lot this week. Deliver the ballots; get to the poll; count every vote. Even beyond this election season, the world around us is constantly changing, and we need to react right now! In short, you adapt, evolve; compete or die.

There is, if you didn’t notice, a great sense of urgency in today’s gospel. Jesus seems to be saying that you and I must be attentive, awake, and very much aware of what’s going on: “This is a time for vigorous and positive action.” “...the door [will be] locked; and some will say ‘Lord, Lord, open the door for us!’ And the Lord will “reply, ‘Amen, I say to you, I do not know you.’

It is much like a husband and wife who have a very heated argument. The wife storms off to the bedroom. The husband wisely waits about thirty minutes and drudges upstairs, places his hand on the doorknob and it doesn’t move. He realizes he is locked out, and that’s a really bad place to be.

St. Frances de Sales had his own take on this when he said: ““I will then prepare myself for that hour, and I will take all possible care to end this journey happily.”

Jesus is telling us in stark and unambiguous terms: don't put things off and be left with regrets. The biggest regret is not being welcomed by the bridegroom into the wedding feast.

Now, some of you may be thinking: could not the bridesmaids have shared their oil? And here is one of the hardest truths of this parable: Jesus says, "no," that cannot happen. No one can simply infuse his or her goodness, generosity, or compassion into another person: there are things in life we cannot borrow; things in life we cannot share.

Sunday after Sunday, for almost a year, we have been listening to Jesus, who has been telling us in a myriad of ways on how our life is meant to be lived on earth as a preparation for our heavenly homeland" (§1525).

It's a homeland worth looking forward to—not the caricatures that we're used to from comics and the movies: angels flitting around from cloud to cloud with harps and happy grins and nothing much to do.

No, heaven will be an adventure—the greatest adventure of them all. If we're among the saints, we'll find ourselves united with our resurrected bodies, and we'll launch expeditions into the reality of the Trinity and the infinitude of the divine which no chronicle could ever record and no poet could ever imagine.

Perhaps, it was C. S. Lewis who came very close to a description of the unimaginable. In his final paragraph of *The Last Battle*, Lewis sketched out his own vision of the heavenly campaign that awaits in these words:

"All their life in this world and all their adventures in Narnia had only been the cover and the title page: now at last they were beginning Chapter One of the Great Story which no one on earth has read: which goes on forever: in which every chapter is better than the one before."