



Thoughts on the Journey

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Several years ago, after a long stretch of gray cold days in February, I received a phone call. I had answered several types of these phone calls in the past that offer a free set of steak knives, or a new stereo if I would be willing to attend some information session on time-shares. Normally I would end those kind of calls with, “Thank you, but I’m not interested.” However, this time (did I say...on this very, very, gray and cold February evening) as soon as the words, “*free cruise to the Bahamas*” slipped out of her mouth, she had me hooked. “At least listen to what she has to say”, I thought. Like a fine angler, after 30 minutes of wrestling with me on her line, she pulled me in to her boat; I was on board hook, line, and sinker! My daughter Muriel was listening to parts of my conversation and when I hung up the phone, she asked, “What was that all about?” With all the excitement I could muster, I squealed out the words of winter redemption, “WE’RE GOING TO THE BAHAMAS!”

In just several weeks time, the day of departure arrived. We both loaded our luggage in the car and made the 40 minute drive to Rickenbacker airport: so far, so good. We stood in line to check in and it was there that I started looking for my passport and my plane ticket. In a frenzy, I began to tear through my purse, then my take-on bag, then my suitcase. There was not a trace of either document, both necessities for travel. It felt like my heart popped out of my chest and landed on the ticket counter. I explained to the attendant my dilemma and she told me the flight would be boarding on time. The only choice I had, at this point, was to risk a speeding ticket on Rte.33 and make every attempt to get back in time to board the plane. Praying like I’ve never prayed before on the trip back to my house, I knew I had no time to spare or I would be locked out of our flight. Flying through the front door into the house, I could find neither my ticket or my passport anywhere. It was time to call in the big gun: St. Anthony! “Tony, Tony look around, something’s lost and must be found.” It works every time!

Something told me to go through my purse again. Lo and behold, there they were, tucked in a side pocket of my bag.

Today’s gospel from Matthew, Jesus tells his disciples the parable about the ten virgins who went to meet the bridegroom. Five of the women were prepared with enough lamp oil to keep their torches lit and five were not. The five who were not prepared, asked to have some oil from those who came equipped. Fearful that they would not have enough for themselves, they told the women to go to the store and purchase the oil they needed. While they were gone, the bridegroom arrived. By the time the virgins returned the door was locked. They pleaded to come in, but the bridegroom said in reply,

“Amen I say to you, I do not know you. Therefore Stay awake, for you do not know the day nor the hour.”

In my excitement during the days before I left for the Bahamas, I failed to stay focused on what was most important—the very things I needed to get me where I was going. The virgins had a more unfortunate outcome. I may have been locked out of a flight they, on the other hand, were being excluded from the very feast they long awaited.

So is true for all of us. We are preoccupied with the distractions of this world. We long to be part of the feast, but are not prepared in the ways that most matter and we show up empty-handed or missing the day-to-day call to live the gospel in our lives. Jesus, the bridegroom, offers the invitation to join the heavenly feast; everyone is welcome. But in order to be granted entry, it is our Christian responsibility to be mindful daily, that we are to be awake and willing to live a life that exemplifies the life to which we are called in Christ Jesus. Fortunately, I just made it on my flight to the Bahamas, my hope is that I am better prepared and ready for eternal life today, because I do not know the day or the hour.