

THE TEN WISE VIRGINS

On one occasion, as found in Matthew, Ch. 25, Jesus tried to explain the importance of being ready when the Lord returns, to always watch and pray and wait with eager anticipation, for we do not know the hour or the day.

In order to get his point across, the Lord uses the famous parable of the ten virgins, five of whom were foolish (for they had no oil for their lamps) and five of whom were wise (for they were well-prepared).

Two weeks ago in an Amish one-room schoolhouse located in the small village of Nickel Mines, PA, ten little virgins taught a lesson for all of us, as they were led to the slaughter like lambs before the shearer. These innocent virgins were taken up to heaven before a truly madman could have his way with them. Five died at his hand, and more will probably follow, and even as she could see and hear the murder of her schoolmates, one brave girl, only 12 or 13 years of age, begged the killer to shoot her instead of the smaller ones.

It takes a while when something bizarre like this happens, for time is needed to reflect and sort things out. These Amish innocents were truly lucky. They came from loving families, had parents who adored them. They learned the Scriptures in their short lives, and, above all, they were baptized in Jesus' name and knew that he truly was their friend and savior.

The "world" thinks that the Amish live "on the fringe" of society. It thinks the same thing about Jesus Christ. The world thinks that it is a shame that these Amish girls and their kind had no electricity, no TV, no chance to get their bodies pierced and some tattoos, and chat incessantly on a cell phone, and perhaps start drugs at the age of 14. But it is really not a shame, for they were taken up into heaven before they could be corrupted.

People who have no belief in life beyond the grave ask, "Where was God? How could a good God allow this to happen?" God is where his ten virgins have gone or will go, for none of these were foolish. These Holy Innocents of Nickel Mines have taught more in a few hours of torture and death than untold numbers of theologians and preachers could ever do.

Their story has been told countless times before, as in the Book of Wisdom (Ch 3):

The souls of the just are in the hand of God,
and no torment shall touch them.

They seemed, in the view of the foolish, to be dead,
and their passing away from us was thought an affliction
and their going forth from us utter destruction.
But they are in peace. For it before men, indeed, they be
punished, yet is their hope full of immortality.

Chastised a little they shall be greatly blessed, because God has tried them and found them worthy of himself. As gold in the furnace He proved them, and as sacrificial offerings he took them to Himself.

In the time of their visitation they shall shine, and shall dart about as sparks through stubble. They shall judge nations and rule over peoples, and the Lord shall be their King forever.

Those who trust in him shall understand truth, and the faithful shall abide with him in love, because grace and mercy are with his Holy ones, and his care is with his elect.

-- Father Saladna

**SCHEDULE OF MASSES
FOR THIS WEEK**

MONDAY, OCTOBER 16 – St. Hedwig

8:00 AM David Platt

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 17 -- No Mass scheduled for today

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 18 – St. Luke, Evangelist

8:00 AM Dolores "Dodie" Sestini

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 19 -- North American Martyrs

8:00 AM Paul Blume

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 20 – St. Paul of the Cross

8:00 AM Joan Meleski (85th Birthday) **Happy Birthday!**

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 21 – No Mass on Saturday morning

5:00 PM [For Sunday] Helen Decroo (Birthday)

NEXT SUNDAY, OCTOBER 22 – Twenty-ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time

8:00 AM For all Parishioners, Liv. & Dec.

11:00 AM Bill Hurley

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SCHEDULING OF MASS INTENTIONS in our Church for 2007 began last Monday. As in years past, forms can be found in the Activity Room.

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REST IN PEACE -- The parish family of Saint Alphonsus wishes to extend their deepest sympathy to the families of Leano Bossola, Veronica Gaydos and Mary Louise McCloskey (sister of Anna Mae Tomayko). Please remember the deceased and their families in your prayers.

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CONGRATULATIONS TO:

- Baby **Jacob Stephen Harvanek**, son of Brian Matthew and Sarah Marie (Hopkins) Harvanek, baptized last Sunday, October 8.
- Baby **Rachel Ann Schumann**, daughter of David Alan and Tamara Ann (Simpson) Schumann, who will be baptized on Sunday, October 29.

TODAY'S 11:00 AM MASS is offered in particular for Nancy Seiler, who died 25 years ago. The sanctuary flowers are donated by Joan Brewer, daughter, in her memory.

YOUTH GROUP NEWS:

- **MEETING** today, October 15, after the 11:00 AM Mass.
- The Youth Group will be roaming the parish this afternoon (October 15) from Noon to 2 PM seeking donations to the **Lower Valley Food Bank**. (Non-perishable goods only).
- **ALWAYS LOOK** in the Bulletin for news of the Youth Group and activities, etc.
- **ALL FORMS, REGISTRATION SHEETS, PERMISSION SLIPS, ETC.**, for various activities can always be found in the **ACTIVITY ROOM** in the Church.

SPRINGDALE FREE PUBLIC LIBRARY – 2006 Photography Show – October 10 through November 12. Call for entries, 724-274-9729. Cash prizes, Special Award, Open Category. One entry \$5, three entries \$12.

KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS NEWS:

- The popular "Chance of a Lifetime" Knights of Columbus raffle, which benefits the Knights' College Scholarship Fund, will be held again this year, with tickets being sold here just one Sunday, next weekend October 21/22. Tickets are just \$1.00, with a booklet of 8 for \$7.00. Members of the Knights of Columbus will be at the Church doors on that weekend. Drawing will be on December 8, and \$65,000 in prizes are offered: 2 automobiles, Cruises and Tours, Plasma TVs, Computers and Laptops, Digital Cameras and Camcorders. Sixteen great prizes in all, with the 2007 Chrysler PT Cruiser 4-Dr Sedan as the TOP prize this year. (See the list of all prizes in the Activity Room).

CONFRATERNITY OF THE MOST HOLY ROSARY OF OUR LADY OF VICTORY CHURCH is sponsoring a Fashion Show and Luncheon on Sunday, October 29, at 2 PM in their Social Hall. Fashions by Phyllis. The donation is \$12 per person. For tickets or for more information, please call Dorothy at 724-274-6343.

NEXT SUNDAY, OCTOBER 22, our St. Paul Cathedral in Oakland will observe the 100TH Anniversary of its consecration (actual date is October 24). Bishop Wuerl will celebrate the Centennial Mass. Our parish will be represented by Mrs. Betty Faith and her son, David.

SEVENTH ANNUAL VETERAN'S DAY SERVICE at Burket-Truby Funeral Home, Oakmont, November 11, 8:30 AM. Refreshments will be served. For more information, call 412-828-3535.

CREATED, LOVED, REDEEMED BY GOD

An Invitation to Respect All Human Life
- by US Catholic Bishops

Most of us probably take for granted (at least some of the time) that we are created, loved and redeemed by God. Yet, distracted as we are by the noise and activities of daily life, we need to make time to reflect on this central truth of life – and the answer to the universal human question: Who am, and what am I doing here?

When our ancestors in faith lost their moral and spiritual bearings, Jesus took on human flesh to show us the radical nature of God's love. His love is far from being passive, generic or abstract. It is not just a kindly feeling toward others. Jesus' love was personal, passionate and self-giving.

He showed us by example, as well as through parables, what God expects of us. At the Last Supper, he told the apostles: "This is my commandment: Love one another as I love you" (John 15:12). Jesus was not speaking of affectionate feelings that we have for family and friends. The model of love by which we will be measured, according to the parable of the Last Judgment (cf. Mt 25:31-46), is that of the righteous who visited prisoners, and fed, clothed, welcomed and cared for the needy and strangers. They were serving Christ in the needy and will "inherit the kingdom prepared for [them] from the foundation of the world" (Mt 25:34).

As Christians, then, each one of us is called, to the best of his or her ability, to be involved in:

- Personal, concrete and practical acts of kindness toward those whom God puts in our paths
- Organized charitable activities, through personal service and/or financial support
- Working toward a just ordering of society by taking part in public life to help ensure that laws and policies respect the lives and dignity of all, especially those who are most vulnerable (Pope Benedict XVI, God Is Love).

Your Ministry of Support

Thank you for your offerings to Saint Alphonsus Parish
For Sunday, October 8, 2006

Offertory \$5,714.35
Parish Share \$402.00

**PLEASE REMEMBER SAINT ALPHONSUS CHURCH
IN YOUR WILL**

The special **second collection next Sunday, October 22**, will be for the Propagation of the Faith. October 22 is **Mission Sunday**. Your contributions in the second collection will help make the name of Jesus known, for how can people know and believe in him unless his holy Name is preached to them?

A PAPAL MESSAGE FOR WORLD MISSION SUNDAY

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

World Mission Sunday, which we will be celebrating on Sunday, October 22, is an opportunity to reflect this year on the theme: "Charity: Soul of the Missions."

Unless the mission is oriented by charity, that is, unless it springs from a profound act of divine love, it risks being reduced to mere philanthropic and social activity. In fact, God's love for every person constitutes the heart of the experience and proclamation of the Gospel, and those who welcome it in turn become its witnesses.

God's love, which gives life to the world, is the love that was given to us in Jesus, the Word of Salvation, perfect icon of the Heavenly Father's mercy.

The saving message can be summed up well, therefore, in the words of John the Evangelist: "In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him" (1 Jn 4:9).

It was after His Resurrection that Jesus gave the Apostles the mandate to proclaim the news of this love, and the Apostles, inwardly transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, began to bear witness to the Lord who had died and was risen. Ever since, the Church has continued this same mission, which is an indispensable and ongoing commitment for all believers.

Every Christian community is therefore called to make known God Who is Love. In My Encyclical *Deus Caritas Est*, I wanted to pause and reflect on this fundamental mystery of our faith. God imbues the entire creation and human history with His love.

In the beginning, man came from the Creator's hands as the fruit of an initiative of love. Later, sin obscured the impression of the divine within him.

Deceived by the Evil One, Adam and Eve, our first parents, failed to live up to the relationship of trust with their Lord, succumbing to the temptation of the Evil One who instilled in them the suspicion that the Lord was a rival and wanted to limit their freedom.

So it was that they preferred themselves to divine love freely given, convinced that in this way they were asserting their own free will. They consequently ended by losing their original happiness and they tasted the bitter sorrow of sin and death.

However, God did not abandon them. He promised salvation to them and to their descendants, announcing in advance that He would send His only-begotten Son, Jesus, who in the fullness of time was to reveal His love as Father, a love capable of redeeming every human creature from the slavery of evil and death.

In Christ, therefore, immortal life was communicated to us, the very life of the Trinity. Thanks to Christ, the Good Shepherd who did not abandon the lost sheep, human beings of all time were granted the possibility of entering into communion with God, the Merciful Father who was prepared to welcome home the Prodigal Son.

An astonishing sign of this love is the Cross. Christ's death on the Cross, I wrote in the Encyclical *Deus Caritas Est*, is "the culmination of that turning of God against Himself in which He gives Himself in order to raise man up and save him. This is love in its most radical form. It is there that this truth can be contemplated. It is from there that our definition of love must begin. In this contemplation the Christian discovers the path along which his life and love must move" (n. 12).

On the eve of His Passion, Jesus bequeathed as a testament to His disciples, who had gathered in the Upper Room to celebrate the Passover, the "new commandment of love – *mandatum novum*": "This I command you, to love one another" (Jn 15:17). The brotherly love that the Lord asked of His "friends" originates in the fatherly love of God.

The Apostle John noted: "He who loves is born of God and knows God" (1 Jn 4:7). Therefore, to love according to God it is necessary to live in Him and of Him: God is the first "home" of human beings, and only by dwelling in God do men and women burn with a flame of divine love that can set the world "on fire."

It is not difficult, then, to understand that authentic missionary concern, the priority commitment of the Ecclesial Community, is linked to faithfulness to divine love, and this is true for every individual Christian, for every local community, for the particular Churches and for the entire People of God.

The generous readiness of disciples of Christ to undertake works of human and spiritual advancement draws vigor literally from the awareness of this common mission. These works, as the beloved John Paul II wrote in the Encyclical *Redemptoris Missio*, witness to "the soul of all missionary activity: love, which has been and remains the driving force of mission, and is also 'the sole criterion for judging what is to be done or not done, changed or not changed. It is the principle which must direct every action, and the end to which that action must be directed. When we act with a view to charity, or are inspired by charity, nothing is unseemly and everything is good.'"

I willingly take this opportunity to express my gratitude to the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples and to the Pontifical Mission Societies (PMS), which are dedicated to coordinating the efforts made in every part of the world to support the activity of those on the front lines on the missionary frontiers.

– Pope Benedict XVI
From the Vatican, April 29, 2006