Homily for the 32nd Sunday in Ordinary Time — Year A

My brothers and sisters in Christ, imagine standing outside a church on the day of a wedding. The bridegroom is coming. The doors are about to open. Everyone is excited. But then, suddenly, you realize that you have forgotten the one thing you absolutely needed to get inside.

And the doors close.

That is the rather frightening image Jesus gives us in today's Gospel.

Ten virgins are waiting for the Bridegroom. Five are wise; five are foolish. All ten have lamps. All ten are invited to the wedding. All ten fall asleep.

But only five have brought enough oil.

And when the Bridegroom finally arrives, only five are ready.

Now, what makes this parable so powerful is that Jesus is not really talking about a wedding. He is talking about the greatest love story ever told: God's love for humanity.

Throughout Scripture, God reveals Himself as the Bridegroom, and His people as His Bride. Jesus Christ is the Bridegroom who has come into the world to win our hearts, to unite us to Himself, and ultimately to bring us into the eternal wedding feast of Heaven.

And we, the Church, are His Bride.

That means this Gospel is not simply about preparing for death. It is about preparing for love. It is about becoming the kind of people who are ready to meet Christ when He comes.

And that brings us to a fascinating detail.

The difference between the wise and foolish virgins is not that some fell asleep and others stayed awake. They ALL fell asleep!

The difference is that five had prepared their lamps beforehand.

And what is that oil?

It is the *living faith*, the *charity*, the *grace-filled love* that must grow within our hearts through a real relationship with Jesus Christ.

It is not enough simply to carry the lamp of Catholic identity. It is not enough to say, "I was baptized. I go to Mass. I belong to the Church."

The question is: Is there oil in the lamp? Is the love of Christ actually burning within me? The fuel that alone gives light to my life is the love of Christ within me.

And here is something even more challenging. When the foolish virgins ask the wise ones to share their oil, the wise virgins refuse. That sounds terribly unchristian, doesn't it?

But Jesus is teaching us something profound: there are certain things that nobody else can do for us.

Nobody else can love God in my place. Nobody else can make *my personal surrender to Christ* for me. Nobody else can live *my life of faithfulness*.

I must respond to God's love *myself*.

And yet, here is the beautiful paradox: the love that cannot be borrowed from somebody else, is also precisely the love that must be shared with everybody else.

Because a lamp is not lit simply to admire its own flame. It is lit to ***give*** light.

And that brings us to something very important for our parish family.

Next weekend, our Diocese of Rapid City will launch its 2027 Annual Diocesan Appeal.

And I want you to understand something: this is not simply another fundraiser. This is not about paying bills at some office in Rapid City.

This is about souls. This is about bringing people to Jesus Christ. This is about keeping the light of faith burning across western South Dakota.

Think about what our diocese does.

It helps young men discern and prepare for the priesthood, so that future generations will have priests to celebrate the Eucharist and forgive sins.

Our diocese forms catechists and parish leaders to teach the Catholic faith. It strengthens marriages and families. It provides opportunities for our young people to encounter Christ, and supports the formation and ongoing ministry of our clergy.

In fact, the Annual Diocesan Appeal supports more than twenty ministries throughout our diocese.

And these ministries are bearing fruit! Young people are discovering Christ. Families are being strengthened. Men are preparing for the priesthood. People are growing in holiness.

But none of this happens by accident. It happens because Catholics like you believe that the mission of Jesus Christ is worth sacrificing for.

And here is something I especially want you to understand.

We are not simply members of St. Rose of Lima or St. John the Baptist. We are members of the Catholic Church, united under our bishop, Bishop Scott Bullock.

Our parish is not in competition with our diocese. Our parish is part of our diocese!

Just as the first Christians shared their resources so that the Gospel could spread beyond their own communities, we too have a responsibility for the spiritual well-being of our brothers and sisters throughout western South Dakota.

That is why I am asking for something very specific this year.

I want us to strive for 100% participation in the Annual Diocesan Appeal. Every family. Every household.

Not because everyone can give the same amount. Of course not!

Some families can give numerically more. Others can less. Others may only be able to give a little.

But every gift, offered with love and according to our means, matters.

Because the real question is ***not***, "How much can somebody else afford to give?"

The question is, "Lord, what are You asking ***ME*** to give?"

And remember: the Appeal is not asking you to neglect the needs of your own parish. It is inviting you to extend your generosity beyond our parish, to the entire family of faith to which we belong.

Next weekend, I ask every household to prayerfully consider making a gift or pledge, however modest, to this important mission.

Because one day, when we finally meet Christ the Bridegroom, I hope we will discover that among those gathered at His eternal wedding feast are people whose lives were touched by the generosity of our parish family.

People we never met. Souls we helped bring closer to Christ.

And perhaps the Lord will say to us: "You helped keep their lamps burning."

Brothers and sisters, let us be the wise virgins. Let us keep our own lamps filled with the oil of faith and charity.

And let us be generous in helping the light of Christ shine throughout our diocese.

So that when the Bridegroom comes, He will find us ready.

And together, we may enter into the joy of His eternal wedding feast.