

19th Sunday of Ordinary Time - C

There is never a shortage of bad news in the news – that's what used to sell papers and it's what now gets clicks. Violence – including random violence – is always in the news. Random violence in particular is very unnerving and can have a negative psychological effect because of its very randomness. It erodes our sense of security. Many years ago, I lived and studied for a time in Paris, and my time there unfortunately coincided with a series of random terrorist bombings: some were in trash cans on busy streets, some were in the metro, and so on. You never knew where and when the next one was going to take place. So I can personally attest to the psychological effect that terrorism has on the mind. You begin to calculate risks of otherwise ordinary activities and then modify your behavior. After the bombing on the metro, in which about eight people lost their lives, I stopped taking the metro and started walking everywhere – spending hours every day

to get around. I stopped walking down busy streets. And there was a constant sense of paranoia.

Now, as horrible as these terrorist attacks are, a little perspective is necessary. More people died in terrorist attacks in Europe in the 70s and 80s than now. But in our media-saturated culture, they get more attention than ever before. And the odds of anyone being a victim of a terrorist attack are still extremely minute. The odds of dying by falling off your roof are much greater than being a victim of a terrorist attack.

But the human mind does not always work in a rational way. It's the same principle in effect that makes people cancel their flights after a big plane crash, even though the odds of dying in a plane crash are also extremely remote.

What these big, newsworthy tragedies do is create in us a false sense of vigilance born of fear. We spend a lot of mental energy on these kinds of things, even though the odds of them ever happening to us are extremely slim.

Yes, it is good to be vigilant, and it is good to act with prudence, but we are called to a different kind of vigilance. In our Gospel reading today, Jesus talks about the kind of vigilance to which he calls us. And the kind he talks about does not involve living in fear. In fact, the Gospel today begins with Jesus saying, “Do not be afraid any longer...for your Father is pleased to give you the kingdom.” But he also tells us that we must “gird your loins and light your lamps and be like servants who await their master’s return from a wedding, ready to open immediately when he comes and knocks.” Being vigilant means being prepared for the coming of the Lord. We all know that one day the Lord will come. It is possible to pretend that this day will never come – the younger you

are, the easier this is to do. It is possible to live as though this day will never come, through constant entertainment, addictions, constant work and activity, and so on. But it has come for each of the billions of human beings who have lived before us and just as surely it will come for each one of us. Whether this day be near or far off, we do not know. How it will happen, we do not know. Nor are we supposed to know these things. What matters is that we know that it will come and – are we ready?

Blessed are those servants who await their master's coming, Jesus tells us. So how do we prepare ourselves for the coming of the Lord, for that day when the Lord taps us on the shoulder and says to us, "It's time to go." There are a couple points from the Gospel that I would like to make about this. First, Jesus instructs us not to build up our treasure here on earth but rather in heaven. He exhorts us to give alms, to share what we have – what we have been given – with those less fortunate than we. And in doing so, we are

building up a treasure in heaven, a treasure that will last forever.

All the material things that we can acquire in this world are ultimately perishable. They will all be stripped away from us sooner or later. Why focus all of our energy on them when we should focus on what is imperishable – that is, growing in relationship with the Lord.

Secondly, the more we have been entrusted with, the more will be expected of us. This is especially applicable to those who have been entrusted with any kind of leadership role. But regardless, each one of us has been entrusted with something. What has been entrusted to you? What have you been given? Remember that everything we have is a gift. Whatever we have – talents, material possessions, whatever – it is all a gift. Even our faith is a gift. The fact that we are here today is a gift. How do we use the gifts we have been given? Do we seek to grow in faith? Do we cultivate our relationship with Christ? Do we spend time every day in prayer?

Or do we just take it for granted? And how do we fulfill the responsibilities we have been given? How do we live out our vocation in life – as husbands and wives, as parents? How do we live out our individual roles and responsibilities in life?

The more that has been entrusted to us, the more will be expected of us. We are expected to be good stewards of what has been given to us. In doing so, we are preparing ourselves for the coming of the Lord. This is true vigilance. It doesn't mean living in fear, nor does it mean living in a fantasy world; it means living in reality, aware that this life is not all there is. It means accepting everything as a gift from God and not taking anything for granted. Each day is a gift from God. Each Mass we attend, however mundane it may seem, is a gift from God. When we prepare ourselves to welcome the Lord when he comes, when we live as we ought to live, we can await the Lord not in fear but in joyful expectation.

Let us live lives of gratitude, always giving thanks to God for what we have been given. And let us live lives of generosity, sharing what we have received with others. And let us always be mindful that the Lord is coming, and is in our midst even now, and let us live our lives preparing to receive him with open arms.

- **August 10, 2025 at St. Mary's, Spring Lake**