

## **“Spare Light Bulbs” - 32<sup>nd</sup> Sunday (A)**

The reason why I am not an even worse time-keeper than I already am is because of my fear of a certain priest in our diocese. I am not going to give you his name but I am never late for him - or at least not since my days as a seminarian when I twice kept him waiting. The first time was when I was serving Mass for him. I was chatting away to the housekeeper in the kitchen and glanced at the clock only to see that Mass should have begun. I raced to the sacristy. He had waited but I vested in an atmosphere similar to a Siberian winter. The second time we were meeting up at the Barbican in London but I decided to walk from Waterloo, which took much longer than I had suspected. When I finally got to him I was subjected to a silence that a Trappist monk would have found oppressive. I have never been late for him again and that's good - we shouldn't be late for others.

And it's good that we hand in our homework on time because it means we keep on top of the subject. But what often makes sure that this happens is our fear of the teacher's reaction. And it's good that we don't drive over the limit because it saves lives but what often makes sure that this happens is because of our fear of the police. It is so often fear that ensures we behave wisely, sensibly.

And as Psalm 127, says, 'O blessed are those who fear the Lord;' for as the Book of Proverbs teaches, 'the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom' (1.7). However, we may find such a phrase troubling. We balk against the idea of being seemingly threatened and we like to think of God as loving. Well, He is but the people I love, those who have given me most, are those whose good opinion I would fear most to lose. And no one's good opinion is more worthwhile than God's good opinion for He is our Creator and Father, He is Truth and Goodness. He merits my fear; He has a right to my service and respect.

Put it another way: when we realize someone loves us we should feel reverence because love is pure gift and holy but we should also feel a certain fearfulness that we might betray that love, knowing our weakness. To fear the Lord is to revere Him who loves us and to be wide awake - fearful - of our weakness in returning His love.

Now, I am not saying I am a sensible bridesmaid; I don't have any lanterns and I like to think that I wouldn't be a natural in a dress. But for every light in the house, I have a spare bulb in the cupboard so should one blow it can be immediately replaced. I have been wise enough to ensure that I won't be left in the dark because I don't want the annoyance of it. I fear such annoyance.

Well, knowing, at least in theory, how much God loves us but also realizing, if we are wise and sensible, how weak we are, why don't we do more to consciously cultivate and grow our life with God? We plan out and prepare for everything else we do in life. We charge the mobile, we keep a diary, we shop for the week ahead. It should be no different in our life of faith. To charge the mobile is to regularly pray and like new phones with plenty of apps that need a lot of charging so we - who are so busy - should do a lot of praying. To keep a diary is to make time

for our Christian friends because their company and advice strengthen us. To shop for the week ahead is to see the needs of others and care for them; in such a way, will our love grow. Armed with charged 'phone, diary and a week's shopping - that is, prayer, Church friends and care for the needy - we shall be every bit the modern bridesmaid, who, fearing the Lord, is ready to meet Him.