

**Thirty-Second Sunday in Ordinary Time, Yr A.**  
**November 12, 2017**  
**Father Mike Holloran**

In a field one summer day a grasshopper was lying in the sun singing to its heart's content. An ant passed by dragging along a kernel of corn to its nest. The grasshopper said, "Why not stop and chat with me instead of toiling the day away?"

The ant replied, "I am helping to lay up food for the winter, and I suggest you do the same." "Why worry about winter?" replied the grasshopper. "There's plenty of food right now." But the ant continued its toil, day after day. After many days winter came, and the grasshopper had no food and found itself dying of hunger. The ants, meanwhile, had grain in abundance stored in their colony. The grasshopper said to the ant, "Please give me some of your grain, for I am hungry and cold."

The ant replied, "No, there may not be enough for us and you. Go instead to the merchants and buy some for yourself."

Well, I slid right from Aesop into Jesus. Both were teaching a common-sense human wisdom. Aesop lived 500 years before Jesus, so Jesus may even have heard about the ant and the grasshopper. But Jesus wasn't teaching just human wisdom. He was using human wisdom to teach about the kingdom of heaven, specifically about preparing for his second coming, when we will meet him face to face. Jesus is the parable bridegroom, who will someday come to claim his bride, the Church, and consummate the purpose of God's creation. And as the parable indicates, we have had a long wait. Even if the wait is simply for the end of your individual lifetime, it can seem like a long wait. We can get tired, even bored and restless. Some fall asleep, some wander off and find something else to do. But if we know that we are in for a wait, we prepare ourselves, like the ant plugging away gathering grain, or like the wise bridesmaids who brought along extra oil for their lamps. So, what can we do, so that we are ready when the time comes?

First, believe. Believe that there is a God, and that we will each render an account to Him for the life we lived, and that our preparation will make a difference. Of course, that sounds so easy. Just believe! A non-believer once said to me, "You say that faith is a gift. Well, God didn't give them that gift". I think that was kind of a dodge, excusing himself from addressing the ultimate question. Faith is a gift, but it's a gift that God offers everyone. If you are having difficulties, look for the difficulty. Question yourself. Study. Read a good book like "New Proofs for the Existence of God", by Robert Spitzer. Anyone who can absorb that book, and the evidence it presents from science and philosophy, and still believe that there is no God wants to believe that there is no God, wants it pretty badly. Study can open the door to faith.

Study also keeps faith alive. TV and the internet are full of false information and bogus

arguments against Christianity, the Catholic faith in particular. If you don't know your faith, you are trying to fight a war of wits unarmed. Faith that is not well-grounded in study-- of Scripture, theology, history-- will succumb to attack. But faith can also die from simple neglect. We lose interest, we get distracted, we start to doubt to facilitate our lifestyle, we stop showing up in Church and then stop believing. Keep reading, keep learning, keep deepening your understanding, and you will keep your faith alive. Some might call this trying to convince yourself that it's true. I call it reminding myself that it is true.

Of course, many people believe in God the way the grasshopper believed in winter. Oh sure, theoretically, someday, but no need to bother with it now. A long wait is the undoing of many. If you have all summer to paint the house, when do you paint the house? September? October? Oops, sometime next spring. The best way to make sure it gets done eventually is to do something about it today. As St. Paul said to the Corinthians, "Now is an acceptable time.; now is the day of salvation."

(2 Cor. 6:2)

So, put your faith to work in deeds of mercy. You can tell a person's true character by what they do, and what we do shapes our character. If you want to be a person of faith, ready for the Lord when he comes, be a faithful person, doing the deeds of mercy. Jesus healed the sick and fed the hungry. He also instructed the ignorant, comforted the sorrowful, admonished the sinner, and forgave injuries. Review those corporal and spiritual works of mercy and do them. Remember what James said in his epistle: "What good is it, brothers and sisters, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? No! Faith without works is dead."

(James 2:14 & 26)

And through all the studying and believing and doing, make sure you are also praying. If you know all about God but never pray, you are like a woman who knows she has a husband but never talks to him. The relationship will die. Pray with your fellow believers. On Sundays, be here with your fellow believers doing with them what Jesus told us to do in his memory. Pray on your own, one on one with the Lord, who knows everything about you and loves you anyway. Who better to vent to when you are stressed out? Who better to listen to when you need good counsel? Every Sabbath Jesus was in the synagogue. He also went regularly to the mountain to pray, alone with his heavenly Father. He did both. We need to do both.

Study, believe, pray, put it into practice and you will have all the oil you need to get through the long night of waiting. You will be well-prepared to enter that wonderful wedding banquet that Christ has prepared for those who love him.