**The Parish of Saint Anthony Glen Huntly**



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**Homily at Mass 31st Sunday in Ordinary Time Year A – 8 November 2020**

Who of us can’t identify with the bridesmaids of today’s Gospel? We are so happy to be present at a real, tangible celebration of Sunday Mass after months and months of Mass on TV or on the computer. This has had its advantages: it's kept us connected with the life of the Church; we've listened attentively to the Word of God proclaimed and preached. Perhaps we've found a good source of spiritual nourishment from someone like Bishop Robert Barron or one of the priests on EWTN. If we've regularly watched Mass from St Patrick's Cathedral, perhaps we've had an opportunity to get to know our new Archbishop a bit better. But what all faithful Christians have missed is the community aspect of Sunday worship - keeping up with fellow parishioners, the Sign of Peace, the joy of Holy Communion, singing a hymn or two, the cycle of the liturgical year - the joy of Easter, feasts like Pentecost and Assumption, Mother’s Day and Father’s Day, the journey of the Christian life and the saints in Ordinary Time.

We come to Sunday Mass today, glad of this opportunity once again, although it feels strange not being inside St Anthony’s Church – hidden away in the Presbytery backyard like the Irish at Mass in the hedgerows in penal times! Perhaps we feel that our lamps are running on empty, our supply of oil is low, we’re holding on just by our finger nails. But - just in time – Christ our bridegroom announces his return: “The Bridegroom is here! Go out to meet him”. Christ the Lord, the Church’s Bridegroom, he who loves us, is here! He is present even in this small community of faith, praise and prayer gathered today! He speaks to us with warmth, love and encouragement in his Holy Word. And he gives himself to us as food and comfort in his gift of the Eucharist. In all these ways he affirms his unfailing promise: I am with you – always.

We meet together today for the first time since March. The last time we were at Mass together it was Lent. We are now in the last days of Ordinary Time. Advent begins on 29 November. In these last weeks of the Church year we look to the end of time, Christ returns in glory, he is our Lord, Judge and King. November is always set aside as a time to remember our dead – our parents, family members, pastors, teachers, friends – and to pray for them. It’s also time to check the compass of our lives – how am I travelling, what is my goal? Perhaps these long COVID months have given us pause to re-think our lives, our priorities, our friendship with God. This is Wisdom – the Holy Spirit who tops up the oil lamp of faith, and purifies our hearts.