

## **Keeping the Home Fires Burning**

November 8, 2020, 32nd Sunday in Ordinary Time – Gospel of Matthew 25:1-13

Fr. John

There was a song that became popular during the First World War [I hope I'm not dating myself] called: 'Keep the Home Fires Burning'. It was a song that was meant to boost the morale of the civilian population of England at a time when that country was in anguish over the fate of its soldiers engaged in a very gruesome war. The casualty rate, due to newly developed weapons and the poor sanitary conditions in the trenches, was great and nearly wiped out a whole generation of young people. It was truly a dark and challenging time for both those on the war front and the home front.

The relevance of the song is not lost on us, not only as we approach Remembrance Day, but because of the darkness that the Covid-19 virus has cast over our world this year. As during wartime, sometimes victory seems far off and people become weary and fatigued. The scary thing in these situations is that the mental and psychological distress of social isolation and fear begins to take its toll and the 'lamps' of people's hopes begin to flicker and in some cases go out completely.

So, today's gospel might be a very fitting reading. What will keep our home fires of hope burning as we struggle through these days? And what will be the 'fuel' that keeps our lamps lit.

Generations born after World War Two have never personally known the sacrifices that people had to make both at home and on the battlefield during those cataclysmic times.

Perhaps this year, 2020, will test the metal of those of us in this present time.

There was a saying [out of WWII] -'There are no atheists in foxholes'. In other words, whenever we get in close touch with our mortality, we often retreat to a faith that we have put on a backburner.

Why then does it take a war, a natural disaster, or a pandemic to draw people back to faith? Why does it take a fear factor to help us acknowledge our dependency on God? Why indeed, do we allow our faith lamps to go out because we have fallen asleep in our self securities and entitlement attitudes?

Our first reading today praises the gift of Wisdom. It is the wise person who keeps the 'bigger picture' in mind. Life is not always about me and my particular agendas. It is about how I can pour out something of my life for the greater good as Christ poured out and emptied his life for all of us.

At this time we are called to set aside some of the things that we have taken for granted, some of the privileges that we have enjoyed and make a few sacrifices like having to wear masks to church; restricting our social gatherings, and not being able to be with some of our elders in person. We need to keep in mind that we do this not only for our own protection but for the protection of others.

We do these things, no matter how inconvenient and tedious they might be because they are the small sacrifices we are called to make at this time just as past generations had to make in their day. In that sense, perhaps the masks that we don today are like the poppies we wear on Remembrance Day.

Prime Minister Winston Churchill said in the middle of the London Blitz in 1940 that history would regard it as England's finest hour. The lamps of steadfastness and resolve on the part of the British populace were not to be extinguished and proved that cooperation and self-sacrifice would ultimately triumph.

The fuel that keeps the hopes of our 'home fires' burning is love. It is the ultimate motivation that allows us to make the kind of sacrifices required of us in any particular situation.

It is love that comes under the guise of sacrifice and self-giving that fuels the lamps of hope and the anticipation of the coming of the Bridegroom - Christ himself.

Hopefully we can prove to be like the wise bridesmaids of Jesus' parable who kept the oil of gladness and hope enough to maintain our lamps during these challenging days.