

Be Prepared.

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That motto has been tattooed on the mind of every scout, every fireman, every police officer and especially every member of our armed forces.

Be Prepared.

We are a society of preparers.

Think about all the things in life we prepare for. Big things like vacations, weddings or childbirth or buying or selling a home. Applying for work or college or taking the SAT. Entering into those things with out being prepared would be foolishness at best and at worse insanity.

And don't forget all the hundreds of things we prepare for day-in-and-day-out. We get dressed in the proper clothes for work, school or play. We watch the weather forecast. If there is a chance of rain, we prepare by taking an umbrella. We prepare for hunger by buying groceries. We prepare presentations, proposals and peanut butter and jelly sandwiches.

Some forms of being prepared are so common place to us now that we don't even think of them as preparing:

Seat belts

Bike or motorcycle helmets

Charging cell phones

Locking our doors.

Be Prepared! I'd say we are, in general, a pretty well prepared bunch of people, don't you think?

The author of the book of Wisdom in our first reading has something interesting to say about being prepared:

The night of the Passover was known beforehand to our fathers, that, with sure knowledge of the oaths in which they put their faith, they might have courage.

It's easy to feel secure, or to have courage when you know how to be prepared and what to be prepared for. We are able to go about our daily business, having a practical **faith** in what we have prepared ourselves for.

The presentation will go well, the proposal will be accepted and I'll be having peanut butter and jelly for lunch.

So, let me ask you this: What would you do if you went to work on Monday and you are laid off?

What if you found out you have cancer?

What if your spouse left you or, God forbid, your child went missing?

These are bad things, horrible things, sudden and unexpected disasters for sure. How do you prepare for such calamity and despair? You can't. You really can't prepare for anything so unexpected.

My point so far has been that there are things that can be prepared for, mostly because they are common enough, or we've had enough life experience with to make proper preparations. For these types of things we can take courage and walk in faith because we are prepared.

But there are also things that are sudden, and unexpected, things we've never thought about enough to be ready for. These things catch us by surprise and leave us feeling helpless, confused, angry.

Now I went through all of that so that I might ask you this: If you were to die tonight, which category will that fit into? The unexpected or the expected? The pre-parable or the un-pre-parable?

It's a very important question, don't you think? Very important. It is of such importance that I cannot help but preach with a sense of urgency.

I mean, if death were the end of life, if all we had was our temporal and ephemeral selves, then I wouldn't be up here, and frankly you wouldn't be here either. There would be no need for this beautiful Cathedral, or any other church building. No need for Sacraments, No need for Jesus to die for us, therefore, no need for the Mass. There's no need for God, or anything above us or below us. What's the point? All that would matter is making sure we grabbed all we can before we die.

That must be what hell is like. No hope, no faith, no chance it will ever get better or mean anything more.

But we know, whether it be a clear and present realization, or a deep in the heart feeling waiting to surface that there **is** more to life than a hopeless existence, that there is a purpose for which we live. We have the gift of faith, and therefore we have hope. What does the writer of Hebrews tell us today?

“Faith is the realization of what is hoped for and evidence of things not seen”

We haven't attained Heaven, but we can! That makes our death something we can be prepared for.

We haven't seen heaven clearly yet, but we've seen glimpses of it, enough to know it is real and eternal and worth having. Reason tells us that if we know our lives on Earth are finite, but our lives in eternity are infinite then we can, and we must prepare for it. Faith tells us it is possible to prepare for it. To know it is coming and not prepare for it would be foolish at best and insane at worst.

How do we do this, how do we prepare for our death, which is the beginning of eternal life?

I want to briefly outline three things, taken directly from our readings today.

1. Live in faith. You were given the gift of faith at your Baptism. It's meant to be lived and built upon. It's meant **not only** to be an anchor in a storm, but to be a part of our every breath. There are some here today that would say "my faith is too weak". Well, Amen brother, I struggle with that too. I think we all do. We need to build on the faith we do have. How?

Partake of the Sacraments, especially Reconciliation and the Holy Eucharist. Receive the Graces that are available to us in them.

Pray. Especially the Rosary.

Study, especially Holy Scripture. Read the Lives of the Saints.

Seek their intercession, especially the aid of the Blessed Virgin

Mary I Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death.

2. Allow our faith to build up in us a great hope. Today's Gospel quotes one of Jesus' softest and most beautiful moments:

“Jesus said to his disciples:

“Do not be afraid any longer, little flock, for your Father is pleased to give you the kingdom.”

Have confidence, build confidence in God and in His promises.

Scripture says that His patience is for our Salvation.

3. “Gird your loins and light your lamps”, Jesus says. Be on your guard, not only to avoid evil, but to do good, always acting out of love and concern for others. Now I know that is hard. It also means staying in a state of Sanctifying Grace. No mortal sin. If we stumble, and we will, get it taken care of. We have some big guns on our side to help us in this tough journey. And if I sound redundant, forgive me, but for strength and fortitude to battle sin, and to strengthen us to love our neighbor, even the ones we don't like so much, we need the Sacraments.

I should mention that mortal sin can be forgiven only, within the limits of our own human weakness, by the Sacrament of Reconciliation. It is VITAL (vital means necessary to sustain life), it is vital that we remain close to this Sacrament of healing and restoration. This Sacrament breathes life into all the other Sacraments we have received.

(Marriage)

The Eucharist is powerful in its depth of love. It is the re-presentation (not representation) of the eternal Sacrifice on Calvary by Jesus Christ. It is the Sacrament of perfect love. Our receiving Jesus, regularly, in a state of Grace, cannot help but transform our weak and imperfect love for others into the Love of Christ for all creation.

So there you have it. Nothing all that new. The three theological virtues of Faith, Hope and Love are the formula to be prepared for our inevitable death and our hope of eternal life in Heaven. This takes us back to the very beginning of this homily.

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Jesus says in today's gospel, that to those who receive much, much will be required. The Sacrament of Holy Orders is a huge gift, and a huge responsibility. It sometimes overwhelms me that a poor kid from south Omaha has been chosen by God to serve Him and to serve His people. I stand here tonight to tell you I love you, and am here to serve you. But to not be worried for the loss of your souls, would be a huge disservice.

So I beg, please, be prepared.