

THE QUESTION OF THE WEEK

“Give us some of your oil, our lamps are going out. No, there may not be enough for us both.
Go to the merchant’s and obtain some oil for your lamps.”
(Matthew 22: 4)

When I taught high school Religion for seven years I would try to emphasize how real the teachings of Jesus were and how they were to have a real life application in the way we lived. For example, Jesus would have his disciples share their resources with those in need. A basic dimension of life on The Way. I would encourage my students to adopt such a stance and attitude. But not always. Now always? Yes, not always. For example, not during tests. Not sharing homework. You get the idea. Sharing is a really integral part of following Christ—except when it’s not.

We get all this. But I ask you to keep that in mind with the little parable Jesus tells today about the wise and foolish virgins. Some things in life should not be shared at certain times. And some things in life simply cannot be shared because of the way we have been made. If I am a confident person because of the decisions I have made and the grace of God I have cooperated with throughout my life, but you, who are my close friend, are not confident because of bad experiences in your past and some deep personal failures, I may want to share my confidence with you. But I cannot. Even if you really are in need of it. I can encourage you, support you, pray for you, walk with you but I cannot give you my confidence. I cannot share my confidence with you.

Same thing with faith. If you are a strong believer and I recognize that and realize that my own faith is weak, I can want you to share your faith with me to make mine strong but you cannot give me some of your faith. You can support me, encourage me, pray for me, walk with me but you cannot give your faith to me. Parents see that with their children all the time. Certain things we must acquire ourselves—with the grace of God. Always. Of course. We are not left to our own devices. Ever. Even if we think we are. But we do have to supply some of our own sweat equity in order to become a woman or man of faith. Or to become addiction free. Or to become holy. Or to become hopeful. Or to trust another person. No one can give these things to us. Those others, those virgins, have their own oil for their own lamps but they cannot share that oil with us. They can want the best for us, assist us, pray for us, walk with us but they cannot share their oil. To grasp the truth of this is a big step on the path of spiritual maturity. Does that resonate? That is the question for this week.