What a Blessing Remains
By Fr. Jack Schuler

Some preachers treat this parable as an analogy. In other words, the bridegroom would be Jesus, and the maidens would be the people of the church, the banquet would be the heavenly kingdom, the door shut would be the final judgment, the delay of the bridegroom would be the second coming. But that's not the way parables work. Parables don't explain things. They actually make you ponder, wonder, and there's like a punch to them. Just simply, if you remember the parable of the lost sheep, no shepherd would let 99 sheep alone to go in search for one. That doesn't make sense. So the parable made you reply, "God's so big, he's a saint." So, too, maybe with this parable.

Maybe it's not about being awake and stuff, because everybody was asleep at one point in time. So it's not about the last ones because they weren't. I think it's about the oil. What about oil? So, oil is kind of a symbol of whatever value you want: mercy, compassion, kindness, acceptance, hope, grace. Any of those, do you have enough? Ah, and since it's November, and as you know, we have our table of saints in the back, November is when our church remembers our ancestors, those who are gone before us, and also asks you to reflect on death. And so, the second reading today in the Thessalonians is about death, and so I thought, maybe let's throw this oil into that box and saying, "What spirit of blessing do you want to leave for those behind?" And I give you an example. There was a man in England named Sir Nicholas Winton. And in 1938, Sir Nicholas went to Prague, and he saw these children and saw the frantic nature of the parents' anxiety because Hitler was moving in, and so he said, "I gotta do something." He rescued 669 children. He got them on trains, eight trains, to get them to England, where he had parents set up to foster them and take care of them. Actually, there was a ninth train that was supposed to move out with 250 children on it, but that's when Hitler declared war and the borders were closed, and so those 250 wound up in concentration camps and died. And no one knew that he did this, not even his wife. She didn't know that he had rescued 669 children until she found his scrapbook 50 years later. And in that scrapbook were the names of these children and pictures and things like that. And so, obviously, something like that, the press wants to get a hold of it, and they would interview him in different venues and sometimes, besides the interview, they would bring some of the children that he had rescued, who were then adults. And can you imagine the way those adults felt when they found who saved them. because they didn't know how they got out or who got them out? And here is this tremendous spirit of blessing. Certainly, that meeting they could never, ever forget that in their life, and that would, I hope, enlarge their hearts to be like Sir Nicholas Winton and spread God's goodness in whatever way God wants each individual to do that.

Alright, another example. Johnny gave this book to me for Christmas one time. It's called No Guilty Bystanders, about Bishop Thomas Gummerton. He was a kind of a famous bishop, kind of a liberal, radical kind of guy. He would fit in here. And I actually got to meet him. I was going to a priest conference, and I jumped in the van to get to the hotel, and he was next to me. He was going to the same conference, not to be a speaker. He was participating with the rest of us. But you couldn't help but sense the empathy of this individual. He just oozed empathy, and that's because of the people that he allowed to enlarge his heart. He was with the victims of abuse, he was with those who were tortured, he was with the women who were being taken advantage of, in the church, outside the church, he was with the LBGTQIA community, and no other bishop would be around those individuals. And so he has a spirit of blessing for the rest of us. Just in the few days that I was around him, you could tell that he was leaving a real spirit of blessing. And you can ask Johnny, because he's a good friend of Thomas.

And so, remember, it's the oil. What kind of spirit of blessing do you want to leave for those you love and those who love you?