Our watchfulness must be a daily thing. A little girl admits that she learned her first lesson in responsibility the day she returned home from school to find her guinea pigs missing. She ran to her mother to ask about them. Her mother said: “I gave them away because you didn’t care for them.” “But I did take care of them,” the little girl said. Mom said, “Joni, I gave them away ten days ago.” As the days get shorter, nighttime gets longer, and the rain gets colder, the Scripture gets more serious. As the liturgical year nears the end, Scripture will challenge us to focus on “the end of the world” and the “final judgment”. We hear about disciples who are vigilant and prepared for the end times when we must stand before the throne of God, and we will hear about disciples who are not. The invitation to all of us is to keep watch for we know not the day or the hour when our Lord is going to call us. The question the Gospel will be asking us these next few weeks: are we prepared to stand before the throne of God and offer an accounting? This might seem like a scary question to ponder, but it really isn’t for people of faith. It’s a message aimed at helping us to get our priorities straight, if they aren’t already, to focus on our discipleship more intensely because we don’t have all the time in the world. In our Gospel passage, ten virgins grabbed their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. The ten virgins are what we would call today "the bridesmaids", the "bride" in this story can be interpreted as humanity. The bridegroom is Jesus whose divinity marries humanity in the incarnation. It’s a marvelous exchange. Jesus receives as the dowry our sin and death while we receive from Jesus His everlasting life. The point of the Gospel passage is the "bridesmaids", you and me, are challenged to keep our lamps lit and full of oil so that when the Lord comes, we can enter this marriage banquet that unites humanity and divinity for the sake of our salvation and the salvation of the whole world. What does that image mean for us today? When it comes to discipleship, no matter how dark the world can be at times, we need to be Good News and keep our lamps lit so our lives will lead people to Christ. How do we keep the lamps full of oil? We keep our lamps full of oil by loving God and our neighbor. We keep our lamps full of oil by staying close to Jesus in our prayer life and following His commandments. We keep our lamps full of oil by being good stewards of the gifts God has given us by making our parish, community, nation, and world a better place. What might this mean for us? For one, maybe we can stop being angry towards people who think differently than you and I and try to love them instead. What would that look like? We don’t have to sacrifice what we believe in to love someone we disagree with. Jesus does that every day. There’s the proof (the cross)! Only Jesus is the light of the world! When we fill our lamps with His grace and goodness, our baptismal candles will never go out. Configured to Christ, we’re to be Good News, a beacon of light to others in good times and in bad.