

Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time

February 5, 2017—Her name was Anne and she was a college senior, working at one of the big Cape Cod hotels for the entire summer, cleaning rooms, and taking on maid duties to earn money for her college tuition.

Over the course of her days at work she had a wonderful time meeting interesting people—even some celebrities—who were vacationing on the Cape.

But of all the people she met during her summer work, there was one who stood out the most. His name was Jim.

Jim had showed up one weekend, alone. All he had with him was a small leather traveling bag and a few belongings. He kept to himself and was always quiet and withdrawn, not even allowing Anne into the room to clean.

About mid-week, Jim let Anne into the room and as when did, he began talking to her, even helping her pick up his things and make the bed. He was pleasant, always polite, and seemed very kind.

One Saturday, after Anne finished working, she began walking down the street to the 5 p.m. Saturday evening Mass. Walking toward her was Jim. He stopped to greet her and asked her if she was done for the day and headed home. She told him that she was going to Mass.

He seemed a bit stunned, but then asked if he might walk along with

her. Anne agreed, and as they walked Jim began to ask her all kinds of questions, *How often did she go to church? Why did she go when so many college students didn't? How good were the sermons?*

When they arrived, Jim surprised Anne even more by asking if he could go in with her. She felt a bit strange about all the questions, and his interest in Mass, and felt even stranger when Jim knelt beside her in the pew, closed his eyes, and remained that way throughout the entire Mass. But the strangest thing was yet to come, for as soon as Mass was over, Jim stood up and walked out the doors of the church, without saying a word to Anne. Without a wave, nod, or even a gesture of goodbye, he left.

The next day Anne went to clean Jim's room. The little travel bag was gone, and in its place was this note:

"Dear Anne,

"The gift inside is for you for the beautiful things you have done for me, without you even knowing it. I came here last week because my life was in ruins and, for many reasons, I thought it best to end it. The more I thought, the more confused I got. Then you came along. Your cheerfulness and kindness and your faith in God touched me deeply and when I attended Mass with you, it was the first time for me in many, many years.

"At that Mass, God gave me insight about my life and my problems and

I am heading back to face them all. I am going home grateful to Him and grateful to you for being a shining light when my world seemed so very dark. I will never forget you for giving me back my life ... and my faith. –JIM.”

Inside the box was a gold chain and a beautiful gold cross.

My friends, Our Blessed Lord in today’s Gospel [MT 5:13-16] instructs His disciples that **they** must be the light of the world. That **they** must shine before others through the good deeds they do. As the simple story of a college girl named Anne working a summer job and her cheerful and kind disposition, and active faith life illustrates so well, we are all going about very serious and lasting business—and witnessing to Him in everything that we do—in very subtle, but often very powerful ways.

You know, the early Church—those who set the foundations on which we now stand so firmly in place, the Peters and the Johns, the Matthews, the Marys, and the Marthas—had no classrooms or catechisms. They had no church buildings, parishes, or programs of study or seminary training, yet their numbers grew every day because the witness of their active and very real faith showed their love for God by their love for others as the belief that had been poured out in their hearts poured out into their lives. It changed the world, it re-wrote history, and it made Christianity a faith and a people that would last forever.

My friends, let us resolve then, you and I, to do our part in our homes and schools, where we work or shop or play, in the quiet corners of our lives, and with both the people we know and strangers that we meet, for the Master spoke then and speaks to us now:

“Your light must shine before others, so that they may see goodness in your acts and give praise to your heavenly Father.”

May we **hear** it. May we **believe** it. But most of all, may we **live** it!

God Love You.