

**October 20, 2020**  
**Tuesday of the 29th Week**  
**Eph 2:12-22**  
**Lk 12:35-38**

Our gospel today is a call to be faithful to the lifestyle we are called to live as Christians. The life is hard, as evidenced by Luke's exhortation to us to gird our loins. The work of Kingdom building is indeed hard.

Luke also exhorts us to light our lamps—to be ever alert so that we can discern what each of our particular callings might be.

God might be calling us to service in His Church, to serve in one of the various ministries. He might be calling us to service in our community, to labor in an occupation of public service. He might be calling us to family life, to serve spouse and children, or to serve as a caregiver to one or more family members.

Whatever our calling, today's gospel exhorts us to embrace our calling and be ever faithful to it.

For most of us, God calls us to rather ordinary lives in service to His Kingdom. But He also gifts us with examples of extraordinary lives lived to inspire us to keep our loins girded and our lamps lit in His service.

One such man is Fr Jerzy Popieluszko, murdered on this day in 1984.

I came to know of Fr Jerzy in the early 1980's when I was living in Copenhagen, Denmark. For recreation I played in an industrial basketball league which, for reasons unbeknownst to me, consisted of many Polish players—men who had made their escape from Communist Poland. These were tough guys who had clearly been

through some challenging, even life-threatening, ordeals. A broken nose on the basketball court was nothing for these guys.

Over the course of a couple years and more than a few post-game beers, I got to know some of these men pretty well. Once they learned I was Catholic, a rarity in Denmark, conversation generally centered on two of their heroes: Pope John Paul II and Fr Jerzy Popieluszko. These men genuinely loved Pope John Paul II and Fr Jerzy.

It was Pope John Paul II's 1979 visit to Poland that inspired the people of Poland to rise up against their Communist overlords through a series of labor strikes that crippled the country. While Pope John Paul II inspired the people from afar, it was Fr Jerzy who became their boots-on-the-ground spiritual leader during the hardships of their struggle for freedom, hardships like hunger, deprivation, arrest, and torture—even death. Many like my basketball friends were forced to flee the country.

Then one day in October 1984, word came out of Poland that Fr Jerzy had been murdered by the secret police. I went to the bar frequented by the basketball players. I suspect most of

Copenhagen's small Polish community in exile was there. Through tears, many of them from the basketball toughs, I heard inspiring stories about Fr Jerzy.

From the stories I heard, I doubt Fr Jerzy ever did anything that he would have thought heroic. He celebrated Masses at strikes and labor organizing meetings. He preached truth to power. He ministered to the working class, marrying couples and baptizing their babies. He listened not only to their confessions, but to their physical and spiritual pain. He visited imprisoned dissidents and ministered to their families. Yet through his labors he became an inspiration to a movement, a movement that came to fruition five years after his death when Poland overthrew the Communists and became a free and democratic nation.

I tell you this story because whenever you light your lamp and gird your loins to minister in service to the Lord and His people, you are an inspiration to someone. You probably don't realize it, but people do notice. And although they may rarely say anything, someone will always be inspired by what you do when they see you doing it, no matter how routine or ordinary you may view the work you do. For example, I'm inspired every day when I see a hospitality minister hand out a sanitary wipe. I'm inspired not by the act, but the love behind the act because someone cares enough to try to keep us healthy.

So no matter what you do or how you do it, keep your loins girded and your light lit, just like Fr Jerzy. The world needs you and would be a darker place without you. **"Blessed are those servants."**