

Homily based on the readings from July 1, 2025 (Genesis 19.15-29;
Matthew 8.23-27)

Among all the events recorded in the Old Testament, perhaps the most *bewildering* is the fate of Lot's wife. For whatever reason, the Scriptural account never actually tells us her *name* – although Jewish tradition frequently refers to her as either *Ado* or *Edith*. Even without a name, though, it is impossible to forget what happened to her. As she and her family were fleeing the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, she looked back – either intentionally or unintentionally – to witness the destruction that was being rained down upon the cities. At that instant, she was transformed into a pillar of salt – a geological feature that, according to local tradition, is still visible near the border between the modern-day nations of Israel and Jordan.

The most obvious question – in fact, the only question – that occurs to most people who hear this story is *why?* Why did this particular woman, about whom we know so very little, receive this unusual and – if we are

being honest – rather bizarre punishment? The short answer, of course, is that we will never know for certain. Beyond the fact that Lot's wife disobeyed the angels' direct command, there is not a great deal of relevant information. Numerous legends and theories have developed over the centuries, but none of them really provide much insight. The only substantial evidence we have comes from the New Testament – from Our Lord himself in the Gospel of Luke:

So it will be on the day the Son of Man is revealed. On that day, a person who is on the housetop and whose belongings are in the house must not go down to get them, and likewise a person in the field must not return to what was left behind. *Remember the wife of Lot.* (17.30-32)

Even though Our Lord is speaking specifically about his second coming, there is a lesson here that is applicable to each of us on a daily basis: we must never allow our earthly attachments, whatever they may be, to interfere with our *absolute* commitment to following Jesus Christ.

In many cases – as with the residents of Sodom and Gomorrah – such attachments are objectively immoral. Today’s world, as I am sure we all know, is replete with temptations that are tailor-made to separate us from a godly life. On the other hand, it is actually possible for some of our attachments to be *positive* – even opportunities for service or self-sacrifice. Nevertheless, we must still be ready to abandon them at a moment’s notice.

It is an interesting coincidence that today is July 1, the day on which clergy reassignments often take effect. I am aware of at least three priests from nearby parishes – to be clear, none of whom were previously at Saint Brendan the Navigator – who are beginning new assignments today. All of these men had certainly developed attachments to their previous parishes – which were rooted in ministering to the members of the community and proclaiming the Good News of Jesus Christ. Nevertheless, for the greater good of the diocese and out of obedience to the bishop, each of them *had to* walk away – setting aside commitments and relationships to which he had literally

devoted *years* of his life. When we come to think of it, the same fact applies to Bishop Reidy – who evidently had a rich and fruitful ministry in the Diocese of Worcester prior to coming here – and even to Pope Leo himself.

Even if we are never asked to make a renunciation as dramatic as a priest leaving his parish, each of us is expected – over the course of a lifetime – to move past many of the people, places, and institutions to which we have grown accustomed. Although the details of her story are largely inscrutable, Lot's wife clearly attests to the principle that we must always move *forward* for the sake of the Lord. Even when we are unable to discern the path ourselves, we have to trust that Christ knows *exactly* where he intends to lead us – and that all *we* need to do is have the *courage* and the *humility* to follow in his footsteps.