

Spending time with Richard Kirkendoll always revealed something unexpected. At first he looks like an ordinary guy. Pleasant. Nice family. Polite. He seemed like a retired man who had led a good life, but perhaps not an extraordinary one.

But if you spent time with him, you learned the unexpected. There was nothing ordinary about him. Richard was a leader. In business, in city government, on the boards of organizations, at his parish church, and in his family, he was a leader. If you think leaders only want things to go their way, you wouldn't expect a guy like Richard to be one. He had a different quality. He wanted to serve people more than lead them. He thought more about others than he did of himself. Some people lead because they like the attention it brings them; others lead because they want to improve the world around them. The best leaders are servants. And that was Richard.

We all looked up to him. Young people wanted to be like him. Older people wanted him to keep giving advice – to bring the knowledge, experience and skills of his past to our needs in the present. There aren't many people like that around, and to lose one is to lose a link to our past, an anchor for the present, and a visionary for the future.

No one will miss Richard as much as his beloved family. No matter what he got involved in, it always seemed like his family was number one.

Richard could reveal the unexpected. And this week he surprised us again. We knew we had a great man among us. We knew he had given many years of service. Still, we did not know he would be with us for so short a time. He left us when we weren't expecting it.

Jesus warned us about this kind of thing. In his parables he tells of ten virgins carrying lamps to meet the bridegroom. The foolish ones brought no oil, but the wise brought flasks of it. When the bridegroom came, the foolish ones had already gone to buy more oil. The wise went in to the wedding feast. Jesus says, "Stay awake, for you know neither the day nor the hour."

None of us knows the day or the hour of our death, nor of the death of the people we love. Some of us are foolish and do not prepare for the end. Some of us are wise. We store up oil for our lamps – the oil of faith and charity, of kindness and service. We store up the oil of love and wisdom. We hoard it wherever we find it, so it'll be there when we need it.

Richard Kirkendoll stored up barrels full of love and service. He generously gave to each one of us and to our community as a whole. He showed us how to share the gifts God gives, and this week he shows us how to stay awake for the heavenly bridegroom when he comes.

My brothers and sisters, in this time of sorrow, let us not forget the lessons we have learned and the example we have received. Jesus asks us

to stay awake and be prepared. Let us be ready to share our love and our service at any moment, at any hour, even when it is unexpected.