

33rd (SJ&QA) Sunday in Ordinary Time Year A

What gift or talent would you want to have in life? Today's parable is more than an object lesson on using our talents well. It speaks of the way God deals with us just like the master in our story. *Each according to his ability.* The master in the parable does three things to his servants. First, he *entrusts* them his property. Second, he asks for an *accounting*. Third, he *rewards* each one. When the master entrusts his possessions to someone he has a clear expectation that the receiver will make it grow. In the parable the talents that the master gave the servants represented something more than money. *It represented a gift* – a gift of *life and love* that calls for greater moral and spiritual responsibility. To act on this responsibility may be risky business, but if today's parable is any indication, *playing it safe may be riskier* and what a tenant should do is be *ready*. As Jesus refused to speculate as to when that day of reckoning will be, St. Paul in his letter to the Thessalonians draws a familiar analogy: *"The day of the Lord will come like a thief at night."* Without a timetable we must always be prepared. However to be prepared is not to be passive. Good and faithful servants entrusted with their master's possessions must be responsible and resourceful with these possessions - *like the worthy wife in our first reading.*

God has given each of us all the gifts, talents, wisdom, experience that we need to make the most out of life. *First*, the Lord entrusted and blessed us with talents, and that is indeed good. He gives us *freewill* and

intellect and leaves us to decide what to do with these gifts. Our family, parents, children, friends, talents, time, treasure... everything are God's gifts handed over to our care. We do not totally own what we have but we have to take good care of them. *Second*, with freedom comes not only *responsibility but also accountability*. The Lord has invested *his life, his mercy, and his love* for us. We will account for every gift we have received. Like the master in the parable who expects his servant to use his money productively, God takes delight in seeing us develop our talents and use them to benefit ourselves and others. *Third*, most of all God rewards faithfulness. The more we develop our God-given talents, the more we will receive graces from him. We all expect some reward for what we do. We will not be disappointed. Blessings await those who have served the Lord.

The parable is not only a story about the character of the tenants but also a story about the character of God. *What kind of God do we serve?* He is a God who is *trusting, welcoming, generous, compassionate and benevolent*. That is the way the narrator presents him; that is the way the first two servants perceive him—otherwise they would not have been so free to risk and act—and that is the way the master conducts himself. Clearly, the third servant has badly misjudged the master, distorting him into a tough, uncaring landlord and foolishly acting accordingly. Even deeper, he views his master not just as tough but as evil. *Our view of*

God influences our actions. If we trust the goodness of God we discover the joy of God's providence everywhere.

The parable tells us that often the reason for our failure to use God's gifts properly is **fear**: "*Out of fear I went off and buried your talent.*" In burying his gift the third servant exposed his attitude towards life and love. Not only that, he even defended his attitude by focusing on his master's hard and demanding expectations. In so doing he tried to shift the problem from himself to his master. *Some of us may have this tendency too!* When problems and bad things start to happen we look around for scapegoats to pin the blame and divert the problem towards others. Like an ostrich we bury our heads in the ground, refusing to look at the reality of our lives. But on the other hand, we can also be like the other two servants who used their gifts and talents to help others discover themselves in an enlightening and reassuring way.

For us, how we stand before people is not as important as how we stand before God. As it is expressed in the parable, it does not really matter what and how many talents we receive. What counts is how we use them. Let us remember that "*we walk this way but once, and whatever good we can do, let us do it now, for we shall never walk this way again.*" Learn not just doing well, but also doing rightly. With whatever duty and responsibility we are given we have to use them diligently. That is what life is all about. In life if one does not take risks,

one eventually becomes a loser. *“Use it or lose it!”* As the saying goes. And this is true of eternal life too!

We are only overseers of these gifts. We must use them according to God’s will for his glory and in the service of our neighbor. Each one will be judge individually. *We cannot discharge our duty to God by proxy. God wants full custody of us not just a weekend visit!* Whatever good we can do, whatever love we can give, let us do it now. Let us not bury our lives in the ground and waste it away. **There is always the work of love to carry out, and we will not rest until our hearts find rest in the Lord. Amen!**