

**33<sup>rd</sup> SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME; Nov. 19<sup>th</sup> 2023**  
**Proverbs 3:10-13, 19-20, 30-31; 1Thes. 5:1-6; Matthew 25:14-30**

Dear Sisters & Brothers,

We are almost reaching the end of the Liturgical Season of the Ordinary Time and cycle – A. Next week we will conclude the Season with the celebration of Jesus Christ the King of the Universe. This week Jesus continues with another Kingdom Parable. Last week our focus was on the five foolish virgins who failed to have enough oil in their lamps and thus failed to welcome the bridegroom. In today's parable our attention is drawn to the third servant who lost the master's appreciation due to his *fear* and laziness in investing the money. Both the parables speak about the Last Judgment.

Like any other parable this one too had an immediate lesson for those who heard it from Jesus and a whole series of permanent lessons for us today. *It is always known as the parable of the talents.* The talent was not a coin; it was a piece of gold, silver or copper valued by its weight. The most common metal used as talent was silver and the value of a silver talent was equivalent to fifteen years' wage of a working man. The daily wage of a worker was one Denarius and then you can calculate the money value of a talent. And also it seems the master was very generous with his money as he distributed five, two and one *talents* among his three servants. Here, the master has not given them the money just for personal enjoyment; rather they were only his stewards. They were supposed to invest the money rightly and do business. His intention is clear from the statement, 'he gave them *-to each according to his ability.*' The third servant seemed to be afraid of losing his talent and also he was lazy and didn't want to put his talent in any sort of investment. From the master's reaction it is very clear that he expected the servant to do something with his talent, though he would lose it in the venture. But even then the master would have appreciated his good effort.

In this parable, literally speaking, what involved is purely the monetary value. But every parable, as we know, goes beyond its literal sense and teaches the audience a great moral lesson. Here the third servant stands for the scribes and Pharisees who protected the Mosaic Law and never wanted any sort of change in that. They never even helped the ordinary people with that. As Jesus sees, even in the religion there should be adventure and God can find no use for the shut in mind.

This parable goes beyond Jesus' time and reaches us with great lessons. Here we leave the monetary value of the talent aside and focus on the various gifts

God has bestowed upon each one of us. Our very life itself is a gift from God and all other gifts, like our abilities, skills, talents, time and material wealth are great blessings we enjoy from God. At the same time, as in the case of the servants, we are only stewards of the gifts, not the real owners. So God wants us to use them according to His plan and will. In other words, God expects us to employ those gifts in His service, means for the good of humanity and his Church. It is not acceptable to God that we simply bury our gifts in ourselves and keep them safe or use them for our selfish interests. We are also supposed to recognize our gifts and develop them the best way possible. The gifts which buried are dead.

This parable reveals certain facts: first of all it shows that we are not equal in our abilities and talents. Our God given gifts vary from each other. Similarly the expectation of God also varies from person to person, according to the amount of gifts he has given to one. In the words of Jesus, **“Much will be required of the person entrusted with much, and still more will be demanded of the person entrusted with more.”** At the same time each one can be equal in one’s enterprise or effort to earn more gifts. So I should not complain that I have less gifts and my neighbor has more. If I am given less, God expects less from me.

The Parish Community is the best place for the faithful to contribute their gifts in different capacities and also a parish runs only with the voluntary service of its members. We should not stay back with the complaint that I am less talented and let others do the service. We all can do something. **Unless we share our time, talents and material wealth with the community and the needy, our Christian life will not be complete.** If we refuse to work on our talents, then we will become like the third servant whom the master condemned, though he protected his talent. His sin was that he didn’t do anything with his talent. So he is judged by the master as wicked and lazy. So let us acknowledge our gifts and share them with our community.