

Thirty-Third Sunday in OT A2020

Let me start this homily by referring to the practice of business. Those who run a business know that the success of their enterprise depends, to a large extent, on the evaluation of the performance of their workers. The more the workers are performing, the more successful is the business.

Sometimes at the occasion of an evaluation, there exists a prize, like the employee of the month or the Year. When a manager does so, his message does not aim only at encouraging the other workers so that they follow the example of their colleague. But rather, and most importantly, he wants to celebrate the exceptional qualities displayed by that employee.

Keep that picture in mind and let us go to the first reading. The book of Proverbs praises the exceptional woman who is great in her household by her care and her undertaking. She is wonderful and beautiful, inside and outside. Her value does not come from the pearls she wears or the external appearances of her beauty. Everything comes from within, for from the heart comes out that unique touch that made someone say: "Happy woman, happy house". [Of course I do not ask the question of: "Who will find a perfect husband, full of love and care for his household"?] That touch is not something coming at random. No; it is the outcome of her faith, because she is full of the fear of the Lord.

Here is a question: How did such a woman come to such an honor? What did she particularly do in order to deserve such a high prize of being celebrated and remembered? Well; she put to good use the talents and gifts she naturally received from God.

This invocation brings us to today's Gospel, which is simple, but very instructive. Three servants receive talents from their master who traveled abroad for a long period of time. The master gives to the first, five talents; to another, two and to the last, one; each according to his abilities.

Two of the servants understand that they have been entrusted with a big responsibility and they have to react in consequence. They invest the money, and so double the capital. The third is paralyzed by the fear of losing what he has received and buries it in the ground.

A couple of years later, the master comes back to settle accounts with them and see what they have done with his money. The first two servants are happy, because they have produced more. The master recognizes their spirit of enterprise and entrusts them with more responsibility.

The last servant has done nothing; he is incapable of a spirit of enterprise. Moreover, he is harsh with his master whom he judges at mere intention. As a consequence, he is dispossessed of everything and left empty handed.

What is at stake in this parable? What are the point and the message that Jesus wants to communicate to us? There are three important things, which I want to share with you: First, the parable teaches that God gives us different gifts or talents, each according to his abilities and skills. What is important, then, is not how much talents we have received, but rather how well we use them.

In that perspective, God does not demand of us what we do not have. But rather he wants that we use to the full the gifts and talents we do possess. Of course, we are not equal in talents and gifts; but we are equal in effort. Whatever talent we have, small or big, we must use it for the benefit of our brothers and sister, putting it at the service of God.

In other words, God wants that we give the best of ourselves with the gifts he has given us. Moreover, everyone has to take some responsibility with the gifts received and strive to make it yield fruit. Each must undertake some ministry within the community in proportion to his or her ability. Not a single treasure of what God has entrusted to us a gifts or talents should remain unused.

Second, when God gives us more than others, he will ask us also more of us. The more gifted we are; more will be demanded of us. The two servants who produced double of what they received are not asked to sit down and cross their arms. They are given more responsibility so that they keep working and produce more again. That is how God works with us.

Third, those who are punished are not those who have less talents, but those who do not try to use them. The servant with one talent did not lose it, but he simply buried it in the ground. That is worse than to lose it after having tried to work with it. We have to risk our talents and gifts for the good of the community and for the glory of God. In other words, not a single treasure of Christ should be allowed to remain unused; the talent gifted us grows with its use and wither with its disuse.

Now let me finish with the last verse of the Gospel. “Everyone who has, more will be given and he will grow rich; but from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away”. This is an expression of a universal truth. What it means is that if we have a talent and exercise it, we can make progress with it. But, if we have a talent and fail to exercise it, we will inevitably lose it. This is a lesson of life that the only way to keep a talent is to use it in the service of God and of our brothers and sisters.

Let us pray, then, and ask the Lord to give us the courage to develop the talents and gifts he has given us. Let us ask him to make us aware of his return so that when he comes back he finds us working with our talents for the glory of his name and the good of our brothers and sisters. May God bless you all!

Proverbs 31: 10-13, 19-20, 30-31; 1 Thessal. 5: 1-6; Matthew 25: 1-13



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