

Thirty-Third Sunday in OT A2023

God our creator is good and generous. He has given to each one of us gifts and talents, sign of his bounty towards us. It is those gifts and talents that are at work in various activities in which we are involved in the world when we display our skills, abilities and knowledge.

For sure, we are all different, but we are all equal in effort for God has equipped each one of us, according to his magnanimity. The question, then, becomes not that of judging how much we have received, but rather that of how well we use what we have received. Whatever talent we have, small or big, we must use it for the benefit of our fellows and at the service of God.

This is the point of today's parable. The talents that the man gave to his servants before traveling symbolize the gifts that God freely gives us. To one is given three, to another two and to another again one. These gifts are given to each according to his capacity and have to be put to good use.

If I could apply this parable to the organization of ministries, I would say that one is entrusted with announcing the word of God; another is given the task of preparing the catechumens for baptism. Some may help the young couples to prepare for marriage; others may care for the needy. Some others may try to reconcile the members of the community that might have had dissensions; others still will organize the liturgical celebrations and singing, etc. This is what it means to have five or three talents and to trade them.

The expectation of the travelling man, who is our Lord himself, is that on his return he might find us have worked with the gifts given us for the good of the Church and that of our brothers and sisters. In that perspective, the gifts become the means by which we reconnect to our Lord, the source of everything we have, and to our fellows by doing good to them. In other words, God has given us his gifts so that we make them produce. That is the reason why the servant who received one talent got into trouble as he did not trade with it.

What all that means is that whatever gift we have, we should never minimize it. It is always worthwhile because God who has given it to us knows the reason why he did so. He does not demand of us what we do not have, but he expects us to make profitable what we have for the sake of his glory and the wellbeing of our fellows.

Such a vision opens up the question of risk and responsibility. God wants that we give the best of ourselves with the gifts he has given us. We have to take some responsibility with these gifts and strive to make them yield fruit. In concrete terms, it means that 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.

The misfortune of the third servant was not that he lost his talent, but he simply buried it in the ground. That is worse than to lose it after having tried to work with it. The talent gifted us grows with its use and withers with its disuse. The third servant's fear created a paralysis that prevented him being undertaking and creative. Because of that, he was

punished and his talent taken away. In the end, he lost everything, including his freedom and his talent.

Some Christians function that way. They are afraid of God, not in a good sense. They envisage him as a policeman controlling the traffic and punishing anybody breaking the laws. Whoever imagines God like that will end up like the third servant, and will do just the minimum possible in his life. Such one will just try to avoid mortal sin so as to be on the safe side. He will never risk anything new, because whoever tries something new may also make mistakes. Imagine if the first Missionaries did not have a spirit of adventure and an openness of mind. Imagine if they did not brave dangers to go evangelize Africa, Asia, or America, what would have become of Christianity?

The point here is that if we remain fearful, we cannot do anything. We have to take the risk of working with the gifts God has given us, for the glory of his name and wellbeing of our fellows. It is only by taking some risk that we can do more. This is true in civil society as well as in the life of the Church.

We should not also forget that being gifted is demanding for the simple reason that when God gives us more than others, he will ask us also more of us. The more gifted we are; the more demanded we will be. 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.

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 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.

Proverbs 31: 10-13, 19-20, 30-31; 1 Thessal 5: 1-6; Matthew 25: 14-30



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