

33<sup>rd</sup> Sunday per Annum - A  
Proverbs 31:10-13, 19-20, 30-31;  
I Thessalonians 5:1-6;  
Matthew 25:14-15, 19-21;  
Little Flower - 11/16/14

My Brothers and Sisters,

Today is the 33<sup>rd</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time, the second last Sunday of the church year. As the church year has drawn to a close, there is more focus on Christ's return in glory. Today's Gospel and next Sunday's Gospel both contain parables about the final judgment. Each suggests a different criterion of judgment.

In biblical times, talents were units of money. When we apply the parable to our lives, we apply it according to our definition of a *talent* as a God-given ability. Most of us grew up hearing our parents remind us that God expects us to develop and use the talents he has given us. The man in the parable doubled the five talents he received by investing them. This would be the equivalent of our doing everything we can to develop our talents and then putting them to good use.

At the same time, if our talents are God-given, we should be grateful for them. We thank God, first of all, every time we celebrate Eucharist. As we know, the word *Eucharist* means thanksgiving. At every Eucharist, we thank God for all his gifts to us. Second, we show our gratitude for our talents not only by developing them and using them but also by sharing them with others and with the community or by sharing their fruits with the community. For example, a wealthy man made a large donation to a parish to fund a ministry position for a year. He said that since he knew nothing about that area of ministry, the best thing he could do was share some of his wealth. Other people have skills that they can share, such as those who volunteer with Habitat for Humanity. Finally, some people share their time, which sometimes is the best gift of all. We need only think about those who volunteer with Big Brothers or Big Sisters or at the St. Vincent de Paul Food Pantry or Warehouse.

When our parents talked to us about talents, the underlying presumption was that God had given us our talents primarily for our own good. However, in his First Letter to the Corinthians, when discussing gifts, St. Paul wrote, "*To each person the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good*" [12:7; NAB, 1970]. In other words, God never gives us gifts simply for our own benefit. In some way, all our gifts are given to us to benefit others, to benefit the good of all. What this suggests is that all of us are called to be good stewards of all the gifts God has given us. He has entrusted them to us to make a positive difference in the world.

More importantly, because all that we are and have are God's gifts to us, this parable challenges us to do more than just developing our talents. We are called to become the best people we can be. In Leviticus, God said, "*Be holy, for I, the LORD your God, am holy*" [19:2]. In Matthew's Gospel, Jesus said, "*So be perfect, just as your heavenly Father is perfect*" [5:48]. In Luke's Gospel, he said, "*Be compassionate as your heavenly Father is compassionate*" [6:36]. In contemporary terms, Matthew Kelly suggests we are called to become the best version of ourselves.<sup>1</sup>

My brothers and sisters, St. Paul's First Letter to the Thessalonians reminds us that we must always be prepared for the coming of the Lord whether at the end of our earthly life or at the end of time. As Paul wrote, "*For you yourselves know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief at night.*"

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<sup>1</sup>Matthew Kelly, *Rediscovering Catholicism: Journeying Toward Our Spiritual North Star*, (Cincinnati, Ohio: Beacon Publishing, 2002), p. 69. "...to become the-best-version-of-yourself."