

GOSPEL:

LUKE 12:32-48

Jesus said to his disciples: 'There is no need to be afraid, little flock, for it has pleased your Father to give you the kingdom.

'Sell your possessions and give alms. Get yourselves purses that do not wear out, treasure that will not fail you, in heaven where no thief can reach it and no moth destroy it. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

'See that you are dressed for action and have your lamps lit. Be like men waiting for their master to return from the wedding feast, ready to open the door as soon as he comes and knocks. Happy those servants whom the master finds awake when he comes. I tell you solemnly, he will put on an apron, sit them down at table and wait on them. It may be in the second watch he comes, or in the third, but happy those servants if he finds them ready. You may be quite sure of this, that if the householder had known at what hour the burglar would come, he would not have let anyone break through the wall of his house. You too must stand ready, because the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.'

Peter said, 'Lord, do you mean this parable for us, or for everyone?' The Lord replied, 'What sort of steward, then, is faithful and wise enough for the master to place him over his household to give them their allowance of food at the proper time? Happy that servant if his master's arrival finds him at this employment. I tell you truly, he will place him over everything he owns. But as for the servant who says to himself, "My master is taking his time coming", and sets about beating the menservants and the maids, and eating and drinking and getting drunk, his master will come on a day he does not expect and at an hour he does not know. The master will cut him off and send him to the same fate as the unfaithful.

'The servant who knows what his master wants, but has not even started to carry out those wishes, will receive very many strokes of the lash. The one who did not know, but deserves to be beaten for what he has done, will receive fewer strokes. When a man has had a great deal given him, a great deal will be demanded of him; when a man has had a great deal given him on trust, even more will be expected of him.'

The Gospel of the Lord.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Does this reading fill you with excitement, expectation and readiness - or does it bring fear? – which from the outset Jesus tells his disciples there is no need for.
2. Based on an examination of the desires of your heart – what is your treasure?
3. What gifts have you been given by God, both personal and situational, and how might you be called to bear more 'fruit' for the Kingdom?

A REFLECTION BY POPE FRANCIS

In the text of today's Gospel, Jesus speaks to his disciples about the attitude to assume in view of the final encounter with him, and explains that the expectation of this encounter should impel us to live a life full of good works. Among other things he says: "Sell your possessions, and give alms; provide yourselves with purses that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys". It is a call to give importance to almsgiving as a work of mercy, not to place trust in ephemeral goods, to use things without attachment and selfishness, but according to God's logic, the logic of attention to others, the logic of love. We can be so attached to money, and have many things, but in the end we cannot take them with us. Remember that "the shroud has no pockets".

Jesus' lesson continues with three short parables on the theme of vigilance. This is important: vigilance, being alert, being vigilant in life. The first is the parable of the servants waiting for their master to return at night. "Blessed are those servants whom the master finds awake when he comes": it is the beatitude of faithfully awaiting the Lord, of being ready, with an attitude of service. He presents himself each day, knocks at the door of our heart. Those who open it will be blessed, because they will have a great reward: indeed, the Lord will make himself a servant to his servants – it is a beautiful reward – in the great banquet of his Kingdom He himself will serve them. With this parable, set at night, Jesus proposes life as a vigil of diligent expectation, which heralds the bright day of eternity. To be able to enter one must be ready, awake and committed to serving others, from the comforting perspective that, "beyond", it will no longer be we who serve God, but He himself who will welcome us to his table. If you think about it, this already happens today each time we meet the Lord in prayer, or in serving the poor, and above all in the Eucharist, where he prepares a banquet to nourish us of his Word and of his Body.

The second parable describes the unexpected arrival of the thief. This fact requires vigilance; indeed, Jesus exhorts: "You also must be ready; for the Son of man is coming at an hour you do not expect".

The disciple is one who awaits the Lord and his Kingdom. The Gospel clarifies this perspective with the third parable: the steward of a house after the master's departure. In the first scene, the steward faithfully carries out his tasks and receives compensation. In the second scene, the steward abuses his authority, and beats the servants, for which, upon the master's unexpected return, he will be punished. This scene describes a situation that is also frequent in our time: so much daily injustice, violence and cruelty are born from the idea of behaving as

continued next page

masters of the lives of others. We have only one master who likes to be called not “master” but “Father”. We are all servants, sinners and children: He is the one Father.

Jesus reminds us today that the expectation of the eternal beatitude does not relieve us of the duty to render the world more just and more liveable. On the contrary, this very hope of ours of possessing the eternal Kingdom impels us to work to improve the conditions of earthly life, especially of our weakest brothers and sisters. May the Virgin Mary help us not to be people and communities dulled by the present, or worse, nostalgic for the past, but striving toward the future of God, toward the encounter with him, our life and our hope.

REFLECTION QUESTION

- What has struck you from this reflection by the Holy Father?

PRAYER

*Spend some time in prayer
with one another*

1. Conscious of what has just been shared, members briefly name/ describe their prayer needs.
2. Intentionally call on the Holy Spirit to be present (e.g. “Come Holy Spirit, please be present as we pray”)
3. Move to prayers of thanks and praise to God
4. Pray for each others’ prayer needs. Where appropriate, you may like to encourage the group to place a hand on the shoulder of the individual that you are currently praying for.
5. Conclude your prayer time with another prayer of praise, perhaps reciting the ‘Glory Be’ or similar prayer.