

GOSPEL
Matthew 25:14-30

Jesus spoke this parable to his disciples: "The kingdom of heaven is like a man on his way abroad who summoned his servants and entrusted his property to them. To one he gave five talents, to another two, to a third one; each in proportion to his ability. Then he set out. The man who had received the five talents promptly went and traded with them and made five more. The man who had received two made two more in the same way. But the man who had received one went off and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money. Now a long time after, the master of those servants came back and went through his accounts with them. The man who had received the five talents came forward bringing five more. "Sir", he said "you entrusted me with five talents; here are five more that I have made." His master said to him, "Well done, good and faithful servant; you have shown you can be faithful in small things, I will trust you with greater; come and join in your master's happiness." Next the man with the two talents came forward. "Sir," he said "you entrusted me with two talents; here are two more that I have made." His master said to him, "Well done, good and faithful servant; you have shown you can be faithful in small things, I will trust you with greater; come and join in your master's happiness." Last came forward the man who had the one talent. "Sir," said he "I had heard you were a hard man, reaping where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered; so I was afraid, and I went off and hid your talent in the ground. Here it is; it was yours, you have it back." But his master answered him, "You wicked and lazy servant! So you knew that I reap where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered? Well then, you should have deposited my money with the bankers, and on my return I would have recovered my capital with interest. So now, take the talent from him and give it to the man who has the five talents. For to everyone who has will be given more, and he will have more than enough; but from the man who has not, even what he has will be taken away. As for this good-for-nothing servant, throw him out into the dark, where there will be weeping and grinding of teeth."

A REFLECTION OF POPE FRANCIS
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The Gospel this Sunday is the Parable of the Talents. The passage from St Matthew (25:14-30) tells of a man who, before setting off on a journey, calls his servants and entrusts his assets to them in talents, extremely valuable ancient coins. That master entrusts five talents to the first servant, two to the second, and one to the third. During the master's absence, the three servants must earn a profit from this patrimony. The first and second servants each double the initial value of the capital. The third, however, for fear of losing it all, buries the talent he received in a hole. Upon the master's return, the first two receive praise and rewards, while the third, who returned only the coin he had received, is reproached and punished.

The meaning of this is clear. The man in the parable represents Jesus, we are the servants, and the talents are the inheritance that the Lord entrusts to us. What is the inheritance? His Word, the Eucharist, faith in the Heavenly Father, his forgiveness..., in other words, so many things, his most precious treasures. This is the inheritance that He entrusts to us, not only to safeguard, but to make fruitful! While in common usage the term "talent" indicates a pronounced individual quality, for example talent in music, in sport, and so on, in the parable, talent represent the riches of the Lord, which He entrusts to us so that we make them bear fruit. The hole dug into the soil by the "wicked and slothful servant" (v. 26) points to the fear of risk which blocks creativity and the fruitfulness of love, because the fear of the risks of love stop us. Jesus does not ask us to store his grace in a safe! Jesus does not ask us for this, but He wants us to use it to benefit others. All the goods that we have received are to give to others, and thus they increase, as if He were to tell us: "Here is my mercy, my tenderness, my forgiveness: take them and make ample use of them". And what have we done with them? Whom have we "infected" with our faith? How many people have we encouraged with our hope? How much love have we shared with our neighbour? These are questions that will do us good to ask ourselves. Any environment,

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even the furthest and most impractical, can become a place where our talents can bear fruit. There are no situations or places precluded from the Christian presence and witness. The witness which Jesus asks of us is not closed, but is open, it is in our hands.

This parable urges us not to conceal our faith and our belonging to Christ, not to bury the Word of the Gospel, but to let it circulate in our life, in our relationships, in concrete situations, as a strength which galvanizes, which purifies, which renews. Similarly, the forgiveness, which the Lord grants us particularly in the Sacrament of Reconciliation: let us not keep it closed within ourselves, but let us allow it to emit its power, which brings down the walls that our egoism has raised, which enables us to take the first step in strained relationships, to resume the dialogue where there is no longer communication.... And so forth. Allow these talents, these gifts, these presents that the Lord has given us, to be, to grow, to bear fruit for others, with our witness.

I think it would be a fine gesture for each of you to pick up the Gospel at home today, the Gospel of St Matthew, Chapter 25, verses 14 to 30, Matthew 25:14-30, and read this, and meditate a bit: “The talents, the treasures, all that God has given me, all things spiritual, all goodness, the Word of God, how do I make this grow in others? Or do I merely store it in a safe?”

Moreover, the Lord does not give the same things to everyone in the same way: He knows us personally and entrusts us with what is right for us; but in everyone, in all, there is something equal: the same, immense trust. God trusts us, God has hope in us! And this is the same for everyone. Let us not disappoint Him! Let us not be misled by fear, but let us reciprocate trust with trust! The Virgin Mary embodied this attitude in the fullest and most beautiful way. She received and welcomed the most sublime gift, Jesus himself, and in turn she offered Him to mankind with a generous heart. Let us ask Her to help us to be “good and faithful servants” in order to participate “in the joy of our Lord”.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

What stood out to you from the Gospel or Reflection/ Homily?



Head: The servant who buried his talent acted out of fear. According to Pope Francis, what gifts has God entrusted to us that are meant to be shared rather than hidden away?



Heart: Pope Francis says that fear can block “the fruitfulness of love”. Where in your life might fear be stopping you from using the gifts, faith, or opportunities God has given you?



Hands: What is one gift God has entrusted to you that you could invest more generously this week for the good of someone else?

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 (for example, “Come Holy Spirit, please be present as we pray”)
3. Offer 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 praying the ‘Glory Be’.