

Gospel Verse
Sunday, November 16, 2008
(8:30 AM Mass)

“The one who had received five talents came forward bringing the additional five. He said, ‘Master, you gave me five talents. See, I have made five more.’ His master said to him, ‘Well done, my good and faithful servant. Since you were faithful in small matters, I will give you great responsibilities. Come, share your master’s joy.’”

■ **Mt. 25:20-21**

Today is our share the master’s joy Sunday. If you brought your response cards with you, just take them out. If you didn’t bring your cards, there are some in the side pews. Pass them to somebody who might need one so we all have a card in our hand as we begin to share what this means.

Last Wednesday I had a wonderful opportunity to do something that I love to do. I didn’t get to do this at my last parish and that’s a lot of teaching. I was so busy with the ‘pastoring of the parish’ that I couldn’t be the teacher that I wanted to be. Here I’m able to do it a lot. I’m in the R.E. classes almost every Wednesday. I’m giving different classes and giving tours of the church. I had a chance to teach the parents of the second-graders on Reconciliation. And then last Wednesday I had a chance to teach Temptations adults. I love teaching adults. Jesus played with the children and taught the adults.

I love teaching adults because you all come with this wonderful wealth of experience. And, as you share with them the power of the Gospel, and plus their experience, all kinds of possibilities happen. Last Wednesday I had the opportunity to teach the parents of the kids who are going to make their confirmation. And it was a delightful evening. It really was. And the reason I wanted to teach them was because they are the master teachers. I was kind of teaching a master’s teacher’s class. They are the master teachers of those whom they have been put in charge of. That’s their children.

I am always convinced that God gives children the right parents. By the time they are 13 or 14, they are convinced God gave them the wrong parents. But they got the right ones. But the job of parents is to ask them the one question. This is the question I gave to each parent that day to ask their kids over and over again. Tell me? What do you plan to do with this one precious life of yours?

A child of grace. A child of God. A child that God has given to me. The greatest give that God has ever given to me. I want to know: **What do you plan to do with this one, magnificent, wild, precious life of yours.** What you have is a gift from God. What you do with that gift from God is your return to God. The master has given you incredible talents. Incredible talents. And it is your job to use those talents. Make them multiple and give them back not just to the master but to all that you come in contact with. And that way the Kingdom of God comes about. It’s up to you to do with what has been given to you. Now, what do you do?

I asked the parents, first, to catch their talents. To name their talents. Each one of us has a gift. And it’s a very special gift. Whatever you have been received as gift, first, has to be named so that it can grow and be used. I think if we’ve got a really goof talent, we think it’s so natural to us that it’s nothing special. But, once it’s pointed out, once it’s named, you can watch it grow.

My granddaughter has a wonderful desire to serve. And she is forever helping. She is the helper’s helper. And she’s helping with the table and helping her little brother. I said one day to her, ‘Do you know what you have?’ She said, ‘what?’ I said, ‘You have a servant’s heart’. She said, ‘I do?’ And you can almost watch her light up like a Christmas tree. I named her talent. And now whenever she finds herself serving, because she knows what her talent is, she can exercise it even more and watch it grow.

That’s what I was asking the parents to do. What are the talents that your children have? God has given them gifts. We are going to call them the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Gifts of knowledge and wisdom, fortitude

and right judgment. What are you going to do with those great talents so that they can produce wonderful, wonderful fruit?

I used the Gospel to day with their children about three or four weeks ago. And I asked them the same question, 'What are you going to do with your talents?' Now the Gospel today, the word 'talent' means a number of different things. In the ancient Hebrew and Greek languages, a talent was money. So when the master gave the stewards talents, he was giving them cash. Of course, they are also our gifts, our abilities and the things we are able to do.

I have three classes who are about to be confirmed. I said I'm going to give you my talents. I am the pastor and this is my money. And it was mine. It really was. I gave them 100 a piece. \$100. Each class got \$100. I said, 'Now, what are you going to do with it. There are no strings attached. If you decide to have a huge giant pizza party, knock yourselves out. But if you decide to do something with it, what shall you return from it? It really is up to you.' But I said, Let me tell you this – while I put no conditions on it and you will not be punished unlike the Gospel of Matthew over here for not doing something with it (it's yours free and clear), I have to tell you this – this is disposable income. This is stuff. If you use that which is disposable, I promise you you are going to receive that which is in-disposable. That's what's going to last forever. You're going to hear the words come back, 'Well done good and faithful servant. Enter into that which no one can take away from you – your master's joy'. Joy. We use that which is passing away in order to receive that which cannot pass away. They are called the Fruits of the Spirit. St. Paul lists them in Galatians. We know someone who has used their talents well, their gifts well, because here are the fruits – peace, joy, love, forgiveness.

Whenever you find somebody who knows gifts abiding in them you can be sure you found a good Steward. Trust that. Whenever you are with somebody who has those qualities, they are a true Steward of God. When you need to use the gifts, you will then become that kind of Steward and receive that imperishable gift. It leads to all kinds of wonderful things.

I was so excited about what I gave the 8th graders, that two weeks later I gave it to all the kids. I didn't give them the cash, but I gave them their little children's envelopes. I gave all our R.E. kids, all 530 of them...by the way we've got a larger R.E. program than Visitation. So there! And, I said to them, 'This is your gift. You're God's stewards. What are you going to do with it?' Last Monday as we were looking over the collection, we had a stack of children's envelopes come back like that. If adults do as well as the kids, we are in great shape. They were marvelous. And they were writing down this is what I'm going to do for my family. This is what I want to pray for. These are the things I'm going to give up. And here's my little treasure.

I want to say what I'm going to do with the children's collection. It looks like it's going to eventually be substantial. We will list, beginning next week, we will list what the children's collection is. At the end of the year I'm going to ask what do they want to do to receive the Master's joy. How do you want to spend it? Do you want to buy a heifer for some poor kid in Africa? Do you want to drill a well for a little village that has no water? Literally save lives? What do you want to do with it?

I want to tell you what incredible joy comes from that kind of sharing of gifts. And that's what Stewardship's all about. By now, surely, you understand that. And that's the reason this week I wrote to you and I enclosed in your envelopes your 'certificates of deposit'. So I'm going to ask that you take your certificates of deposit and look at them. If you already filled them out, fine. If you have not, take a peek. What are you willing to share? What's your gift? Has it been named? If it hasn't been named, maybe it should be named. Are you good mechanically? Good with sharing? Good with singing? Do you want to sing in the choir? Are you good with visiting? Are you good with teaching? What are your gifts? What do you want to give back? Whatever that maybe, am I willing to do it? Just make it. And if it's something specific, write it down. And then the last part says, 'I/we are willing to commit a share of our financial resources'. What I am asking you to do is to give back a portion of what we have received. Of course, the deal is the 'tithe'. This is going to be a tithing parish. The time is going to come when we will tithe 10% off the top to the poor, to the needs of those outside of us, back to God. We will bank 10% of it. My goal is to operate the daily operations of this parish with the other 80% of it. That should not be difficult. The needs

of this community are going to grow exponentially. We know that. Those of us who God continues to bless, it is imperative and incumbent upon us to return it and be generous.

I'm going to ask that you choose a percentage. Even though we cannot tithe 10% right now of our income, because we'll shut down. We're going to do 4% or 5%. I'm going to sit down with the Parish Council and the Finance Council and say, 'How do you want to do this?' This is your money. We've got to return to the Lord? And they are of one accord.

I'm going to ask that you do a percentage. What that percentage is at this point depends on where you are in your own faith. Where you are. If it's 3% or 4% that's fine. Whatever it is, it is. The goal is to give 5% to the needs of the parish, 4% for all of our other favorite charities, and 1% to the annual diocesan appeal. Whatever it is.

I ask that you mark that down, weekly or monthly. Then I want to encourage you to do it by the Parish Pay system. I signed up last week and it's so easy. Go to MaryQueen.Org, fill in what you want to give on a monthly basis, click again, and you're registered. Anybody can do it. The reason it's so good is because I've done it. It's done. I put God first. It's automatic. I'm never going to miss it. With my certificate of deposit I await my return.

But, I got to tell you, no deposit, no return. This is our investment in the talents that God has given to us, the financial gifts that God has given to us. It's our investment to the Lord. And it is worth while.

I was in a town one day with an Evangelical church with neon signs that said, 'Jesus Saves'. And what next door was the Jewish Synagogue and it had a big sign that said, 'Yes, but Moses Invests'. This is our investment. Our investment in the gifts that God has given to us. And when we do that, let me assure you, you'll receive the imperishable fruits of the gifts that we give. We will enter our Master's joy.