Year A – 33rd Week Ordinary Time

I’m sure you’ve heard this advertising slogan before, “When money talks, people listen.” In today’s Gospel, we hear Jesus speaking about “talents”. During Jesus’ time, a “talent” was a weight measurement of gold currency. There are some biblical scholars that say a talent was approximately 33kg… which is roughly 75lbs. Now, fast forward to today where the price of gold is around $1,190/ounce or about $38/gram. At that price one talent, weighing 33kg today, would be worth around $1.25 million dollars. This means that the first servant in today’s Gospel received over $6 million dollars and returned to the master over $12 million dollars. With investing, whenever you can double your money, that’s considered a pretty good return. Jesus uses this parable about “talents”, because he knew then, and he knows now, “When money talks, people listen” And he wants US to listen to him.

But, you see, the real message today isn’t about money at all. It’s about how we use the God given talents… the God given gifts, we have been given. It’s quite simple to conclude in this parable, that the master is Jesus, and the servants represent each one us.

Do you see yourself as a servant?... totally empty of your own personal needs and desires, and totally dependent upon God? In our culture, and many other western cultures around the world, a good number of people tend to think of themselves as the center of the universe… that everything should revolve around them. Our contemporary society is now guided by the power of technology and instant gratification…rather than being obedient, obedient to God.

St. Matthew makes it very clear that we are not God, we are not the center of the universe. We have been created to share in Jesus’ mission… bringing God’s Kingdom to this world. Not tomorrow, not next week or next year, but today! Knowing the Father, loving the Father, and serving the Father, is how we should go about pursuing and achieving that mission. God has given each of us a certain number of “talents”, and I’m sorry to break the news to you, but it’s not the talent that’s worth millions. No, what we have been given is… our abilities, our skills and gifts, all the abundant blessings we have received, they are worth more than money, they are “priceless”.

Out of love for us, God has also given us free will…

Free will so each of us can choose how to invest these gifts and increase their value, before returning them to the Father.

Ask yourself, what kind of servant are you? Are you squandering your gifts and burying them in the ground like the third servant? If so, is it because of fear?... self-indulgence?... or, out of laziness and greed? Or will you choose to use them as Christ would want you to use them? Living a life centered not around yourself, but around the corporal works of mercy; feeding the hungry, giving water to the thirsty, clothing the naked, sheltering the homeless, visiting the sick, visiting the imprisoned and burying the dead.

St. Teresa of Calcutta was someone who chose the life of a servant. A life beautifully illustrating what it means to use God’s given talents to the best of ones’ ability. St. Teresa was once staying with a community of other sisters in Australia working with the Aborigines. While she was there, she visited an elderly man who was living in total isolation. He was ignored by everyone, and his home was disordered and dirty. She told the elderly man, “please allow me to clean your house, wash your clothes and make your bed.” He answered, “I’m okay like this, just let it be.” St. Teresa responded, “you will be better off if you would just allow me to help you.” He finally relented and agreed to St. Teresa’s help. While she was cleaning the house, she discovered a beautiful lamp stuck in a corner covered with dust. It probably hadn’t been used in many years. She asked the man, “Don’t you use that beautiful lamp, do you ever use it?” “No, no one ever comes to see me. I have no need to light it. Who would I light it for?” St. Teresa asked him, “if the sisters came to visit you, would you then light it every night for them?” “Of course.” he replied. From that day forward the sisters committed themselves and took turns visiting the elderly man.

Two years after St. Teresa left Australia, and having completely forgotten about the encounter with the elderly man, she received a letter from the sisters. In the letter was a message for her from the elderly man. He said… “Please tell my friend that the light she lit in my life, continues to shine brightly.”

Our mission in this life is to do just as St. Teresa did… to “light as many lamps” as we possibly can. St. Teresa followed three steps in helping her to develop her talents and they can also help us to develop ours…

First, identify what your gift is. Prayerfully reflect on one or two strong characteristics, traits or talents that God has given you. What types of thing do you enjoy the most? What activity has always excited you? What personality trait have others complimented you on? What have you always wanted to do but were afraid to get started?

The next step is to pray to God and ask Him what He wants and desires for you. The third servant left his mission unfulfilled because he didn’t have a good understanding of what the master expected of him, he didn’t understand what his responsibility was. Have a truthful knowledge of Sacred Scripture and the teachings of Holy Mother Church. St. Jerome once said, “Ignorance of Scripture is ignorance of Christ!” Don’t allow yourself to become ignorant. Get to know our Lord intimately and then our talents, our gifts will bear much fruit.

Finally, put your gift at the service of others. Be creative, be courageous, be Christ like! Always remember to, “love one another as I have loved you.” Once again, Jesus will be the perfect example of self-giving, the perfect example of love, through the Eucharistic celebration today. As we receive him tonight/today, let’s make him a promise, that we will go out and courageously invest our God given time, talents and treasures, and return to Him abundantly more than what was given.

Tonight/Yesterday, Father Solanus Casey, is/was being Beatified in Detroit. Father Casey has deep Irish roots steeped in Catholic tradition. He was the sixth child in a family of ten boys and six girls. His call to the priesthood came while attending midnight Mass one Christmas Eve. At the age of 21 he entered the seminary, where he struggled in his studies. It was suggested at that point that he should look into joining an order like the Jesuit Franciscans or the Capuchins. After praying a novena which ended on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, he heard his calling, “Go to Detroit”, which was the headquarters for the Capuchins. After his ordination he spent 20 years in the state of New York. He was then assigned to St. Bonaventure in Detroit for another 20 years. Father Solanus spent his entire life serving the sick and the poor. He once said, “I have two loves; the sick and the poor.” He founded the Capuchin Mass Association to help support missionary work. But, he probably is most well known to us as founding the Capuchin Soup Kitchen in Detroit in 1929, and after 88 years that soup kitchen is still serving God’s people who are in the most need. Father Solanus also is attributed to having interceded in a number of miracles even after his death. Father Solanus Casey lived to be 87 and as he lay dying said, “I looked on my whole life as giving, and I want to give until there is nothing left of me to give.” The next morning, on the 53rd anniversary of his first Mass as a priest, Father Solanus breathed his last words, “I give my soul to Jesus Christ.”

Father Solanus is just another example of God’s gift that just keeps on giving. He is a servant who returned to the Master much more than what he was given. We too should take stock of our own talents and invest them for the betterment of others.

Jesus is asking us to join in building up his Kingdom. He is asking us to take all that he has given us and put it to good use. Our world is in deep need of peace and security. Your contribution of intercession, of mercy, of generosity and of love will make a significant difference.

Together, we can do great things for God and help to make this world a better place.

Together…

Let us pray for all who are suffering in the world.

Let us pray for an end to war and poverty.

Let us join Jesus in bringing his peace and security to everyone.

Today and every day, try to out do that first servant in what we return to God, so we too can hear those words, “Well done my good and faithful servant. Come, share your Master’s joy.”

Blessed Solanus Casey pray for us.

Praise be Jesus Christ – Now and Forever