

33RD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

NOVEMBER 19

Columbus trusted his maps and calculations, considered his risks, and sailed off to encounter the “new world.” Magellan based his charts and maps on the most current information then available, and boldly circumnavigated the world. A few centuries later in their search for a Northwest Passage, Lewis and Clark set off, crossed the entire North American continent, and explored and mapped previously unknown territory in the west. All these explorers had at least one thing in common. They all based their momentous journeys on maps that were mostly inaccurate, hopelessly flawed, or vastly mistaken. Yet each of these adventurers went ahead, accepted the risks, plunged into unknown territories, and changed the world. It is precisely because of their risk-taking that the map of the planet was re-drawn and the dreams of future generations were re-shaped. Those without the vision, without the courage to take risks, are quick to label others as crazy, fools, and failures. — In the parable of the talents this week, Jesus gives a stern warning, discipleship does not promise complete safety. On the contrary, true disciples are called to take risks and venture beyond the known and the secure, trusting in His grace.

This penultimate Sunday of the liturgical year reminds us not only of the end of the liturgical year but also of the end of all things and of the preparations we need to make to reach Heaven. The main theme of the three readings is an invitation to live in such a way that we make the best use of the talents God has given us so that at the hour of our death Our Lord will say: “Well done, my good and faithful servant! Come and share the joy of your master” Mt 25: 21). The first reading suggests that we should be as diligent and industrious as a loyal and faithful wife in the use of our God-given gifts with “the fear of the Lord.” In today’s Responsorial Psalm, Ps 128, the Psalmist echoes the concept of the blessedness of the faithful servant of the Lord. The Psalm affirms that the fear of the Lord is the key to human happiness and success. In the second reading, Paul advises us to keep awake and be sober, encouraging and building each other up as we wait for the “Day of the Lord.” He challenges the Thessalonians to turn fear of the Lord into positive, constructive, and life-affirming action. Today’s Gospel challenges us to ask the questions: Are we using our talents and gifts primarily to serve God? Are we doing everything we can to carry out God’s will? The parable of the talents challenges us to do something positive, constructive, and life-affirming with our talents here and now.

Some of us are very gifted with valuable abilities, but there is no one, absolutely no one, who can say he has been gifted with nothing. We may be especially talented in teaching children, cooking meals, repairing homes, or programming computers. So, we should ask ourselves how we are using our particular gifts in the service of our Christian community and the wider society. Why not follow the example of people who use their God-given talents the best way possible, like, for instance, nursing assistants who take great pride in keeping their patients

clean and comfortable, or carpenters who gain enormous satisfaction from building quality homes, or teachers who find joy in the discoveries of the classroom, or attorneys who keep the goal of justice at the very center of their practices?

God calls us to live in a world of abundance by taking risks and being generous. In addition to our homes and families, the best place to do this is in our parish. This means that we should be always willing to share our abilities in creative worship in the Church and innovative educational events in the Sunday school. We can fulfill needs we will find right in our parish: feeding the hungry, visiting the sick or the elderly, housing the homeless, and welcoming strangers in our midst. We need to make the bold assumption that there's going to be a demand for every one of our talents in our parish community. We should step out, with confidence, believing that every God-given gift we have is going to be exceedingly useful and fruitful!

All of us in the Church today have received at least one talent. We have received the gift of Faith. Our responsibility as men and women of Faith is not just to preserve and "keep" the Faith. We need to work with it. We need to offer it to the men and women of our times. Unless we do this, we stand in danger of losing the Faith just as the third servant lost his talent. The way to preserve the Faith or any other talent that God has given us, is to put it to work and make it bear fruit.