

From The Pastor

As happens each year, we find ourselves surprised by how quickly the end of the year is upon us. In the Church calendar, this is the 33rd Sunday of Ordinary time. Next week is the Feast of Christ the King, which is the last Sunday of the liturgical year. Two weeks from now begins the Advent\Christmas season, which tells again the story of God's love and salvation for our redemption.

This important time of year give us pause to ponder and give thanks for all that life has afforded us. With the dying of the nature cycle, we naturally think of death; all we have lost and been asked to surrender in the rhythms of life. We ponder our loved ones who have died with memories of both love and sorrow. Love for all they have meant to us, and sorrow that they are no longer with us. We hope and pray for their peace, even as we pray with hope for our future and security.

The Sunday readings turn to themes of end times, judgment, and final things. We are confronted with our personal mortality, and our spiritual readiness for what lies ahead. We are invited to ponder the time we have been given in this life, and the fruitful use of the talents we have been given by the One who put us here. Some look forward to these kinds of ponderings, others are made uncomfortable, while still others just ignore the opportunity out of fear of what change might be asked for.

Today's gospel parable sets the stage for our pondering. It is about time and talents, and what has been made of them while the Giver was away. We can look from a worldly or economic view, and then a spirit view. The two perspectives are different and look for different 'dividends' at the end. Economically, we trade or use our talents only with the view of increasing what we have. We do not share for the sake of sharing; we trade with the hope of increase. We invest our dimes, hoping for dollars. If good fortune should smile on us, we are thought to be astute and we grow in wealth and stature. This is a good thing, mostly; but it is not how the spiritual way works.

Each of the servants in the parable is given 'talents' according to their ability. God honors our differences, and seeks a response only according to what we have been given. Similar to a worldly view, more given expects more in return.

In the economic law, there is always risk. (And don't we know that). The spiritual law is different. Notice that the two servants who shared or traded their talents were blest with a full return on their investment. What they shared they got back a hundred fold.

Spirit gifts, or talents, are like that. Spirit is life and love. When we share with others God given gifts, we do not have less than before, but more. When we share or invest love, we do not have less love than we had before. If our love is received we still have what we gave away, plus the return on what we shared. We have doubled what we had. In the story, five talents traded became ten; two talents shared became four. Spirit gifts are meant to be shared, and can only increase by giving them away.

In a worldly or economic way, the third servant seems to be wise. He chooses the safe way and buries the talent. He can be confident that what he was given can be safely returned upon the master's arrival. Imagine his shock and dismay when he is harshly rebuked for his fearful securing of the talent.

In the spirit world we cannot 'possess' spirit talents for personal ownership and secure keeping. To hide or hoard spirit gifts is to lose what we think we have. A spirit gift does not remain a gift unless it is given away. A dollar stuffed in a mattress will always be a dollar. (Give or take inflation) Love hidden and buried in the heart out of fear ceases to be what it is meant to be. It is lost. Spirit gifts are a 'use it or lose it' proposition. As we have received, so are we to share. To share the spirit gifts that are ours secures a positive welcome on the Master's return. To bury such gifts is to lose them, and we will find ourselves in the darkness grinding our teeth.

This sounds harsh, doesn't it? It may be harsh, but it is spiritually and psychologically sound. Do not those who hide from love, or remain too fearful to love find themselves in the darkness of loneliness, or the angst of some form of anger or blame? What was given to be shared has been buried, and as a result, lost.

Every single one of us has tremendous spirit gifts, each given according to our ability. Ponder the gifts of love and gospel values you have been given. Are you sharing the life of love that God has bestowed on you? Will your pockets be full of unused 'talents' on the day the Lord calls you home, or will your trading and generous sharing find you blest in the Lord?

With generous and open hearts, let us prepare to hear that joyous welcome:
'Well done good and faithful servant. Come; inherit your Father's blessing'.

Father John Esper