

Sunday, November 15, 2020

33rd Sunday of Ordinary Time

Meditation and Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion

Mass Readings:

1st Reading: Proverbs 31:10-13, 19-20, 30-31

2nd Reading: 1 Thessalonians 5:1-6

Responsorial: Psalm 128:1-5

Gospel: Matthew 25:14-30

Being Alert, Awake, and Ready to Meet the Lord When He Comes

A man . . . called in his servants and entrusted his possessions to them. (Matthew 25:14)

Valued at nearly twenty years' wages, even one talent was an astonishing amount of money. So the master was not giving his servants a small gift or an insignificant coin. While we often think these talents represent our own gifts or abilities, a number of commentators suggest that we look at them as the extremely valuable gifts of mercy and love that God lavishes on us. And as we learn from the servant who hid his talent, those gifts multiply, not when we try to guard and keep them, but when we use them!

That's where our first reading comes in. The "worthy wife" of Proverbs 31:10-31 is not just a quaint lesson, or worse, the product of a patriarchal society. Her story is much closer to the servant in today's Gospel who doubled his five talents by using them—by multiplying mercy and love by sharing it.

Look at how she is described: She works busily within her household and does it "with loving hands" (Proverbs 31:13). But she doesn't stop there. "She reaches out her hands to the poor, and extends her arms to the needy" (31:20). She does not hoard the self-giving love and compassion she has received from God. She generously gives it away, both to her family and to anyone she sees in need.

You see, it's not her charm or beauty that gives her value. It's her fear of the Lord, her reverence for God. It's the way she recognizes the wideness of his mercy and love and imitates him by sharing them. That is what brings her, and her whole family, such joy.

Each one of us has received God's precious gifts of mercy and love. Each of us has the opportunity to open our hands and our hearts to give them away to the people around us. The wife from Proverbs 31 did it. Let's go out and do the same.

"Father, you have given me precious gifts. Help me to multiply them by sharing them."

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Questions for Reflection or Discussion:

1. The first reading opens with these words: *“When one finds a worthy wife, her value is far beyond pearls. Her husband, entrusting his heart to her, has an unfailing prize. She brings him good, and not evil, all the days of her life.”* It then goes on to describe the virtues of a *worthy wife*.
 - What do the opening words of the first reading mean to you?
 - How would you summarize the virtues of a *worthy wife* described in the reading?
 - Why do you think *her value is far beyond pearls*?

2. The responsorial psalm begins with these words: *Blessed are you who fear the LORD, who walk in his ways! For you shall eat the fruit of your handiwork; blessed shall you be, and favored. Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine in the recesses of your home; Your children like olive plants around your table. Behold, thus is the man blessed who fears the Lord.*
 - What do you think it means to *fear the LORD*? Why is this so important in living our lives as Christians?
 - What do you think it means to be *blessed* by God? How does it apply to your life?
 - Why do you think being blessed and fearing the Lord so positively affects your wife and children?

3. The second reading is the conclusion of St. Paul’s discussion of the Second Coming of Christ (see also 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18). The reading opens with these words: *“Concerning times and seasons, brothers and sisters, you have no need for anything to be written to you. For you yourselves know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief at night. The reading closes with these words: But you, brothers and sisters, are not in darkness, for that day to overtake you like a thief. For all of you are children of the light and children of the day. We are not of the night or of darkness. Therefore, let us not sleep as the rest do, but let us stay alert and sober.*
 - What do you think these verses mean when they say that *the day of the Lord will come like a thief at night*?
 - The closing words of the second reading tell us that we *are not in darkness but are children of the day and children of the light*. What do these words mean to you?
 - We are also called to *stay alert and sober*. What steps do you need to take to be more ready for the Second Coming of Christ?

4. In the Gospel parable, the servants who used their gifts wisely heard these words from the master: *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.* The servant who buried his master’s talent heard these words: *Now then! Take the talent from him and give it to the one with ten. For to everyone who has, more will be given and he will grow rich; but from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. And throw this useless servant into the darkness outside, where there will be wailing and grinding of teeth.*
 - Why do you think the master’s response was so much different for these servants?
 - Why do you think the servant who buried his master’s talent was so harshly punished?
 - How important is it to you to hear the following words from the reading when you meet the Lord in Heaven? *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.*
 - What do you believe are some of the *small matters* in your life that require more faithfulness?

5. The meditation also speaks of using our gifts and talents wisely, as described in the Gospel reading, especially “the extremely valuable gifts of mercy and love that God lavishes on us.” It goes on to describe the “worthy wife” of Proverbs 31:10-31 as “much closer to the servant in today’s Gospel who doubled his five talents by using them—by multiplying mercy and love by sharing it.” The meditation closes with these words: “Each one of us has received God’s precious gifts of mercy and love. Each of us has the opportunity to open our hands and our hearts to give them away to the people around us. The wife from Proverbs 31 did it. Let’s go out and do the same.”
 - Why do you think the “worthy wife” of Proverbs 31:10-31 is described as being “much closer to the servant in today’s Gospel who doubled his five talents by using them”?
 - What are some additional steps you can take to give to others “God’s precious gifts of mercy and love” -- that you have received?

Take some time to pray and ask the Lord for the grace to share the precious gifts God has given you, especially those in most need of his love and mercy. Use the prayer below from the end of the meditation as the starting point.

“Father, you have given me precious gifts. Help me to multiply them by sharing them.”

[Maurice Blumberg is currently a member of the board of directors of the ChristLife Catholic Ministry for Evangelization (www.christlife.org), a member of the National Service Committee Council of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal (www.nsc-chariscenter.org), and a board member of The Love of Christ Foundation. Prior to this, Maurice was the founding executive director of the National Fellowship of Catholic Men, a chairman of the board of *The Word Among Us* (www.wau.org), and a director of partner relations for The Word Among Us Partners ministry. He is also a current leader of his parish ChristLife, Healing, and Men’s Ministries. He can be contacted at mblumberg@aol.com.]