



Sunday Mass Preparation Guide

Including

The Readings

**First Reading
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Second Reading
Gospel**

Study Guide

**Study Guide including Background on Readings
And Thought Questions**

In-Depth Reflection

**A Thought-Provoking Written Analysis on
One of the Readings**

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UNITED STATES CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS

USCCB » Bible » Daily Readings

NOVEMBER 19, 2017

Thirty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time
Lectionary: 157

Reading 1

PRV 31:10-13, 19-20, 30-31

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.
She obtains wool and flax
and works with loving hands.
She puts her hands to the distaff,
and her fingers ply the spindle.
She reaches out her hands to the poor,
and extends her arms to the needy.
Charm is deceptive and beauty fleeting;
the woman who fears the LORD is to be praised.
Give her a reward for her labors,
and let her works praise her at the city gates.

Responsorial Psalm

PS 128:1-2, 3, 4-5

R. (cf. 1a) Blessed are those who fear the Lord.
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.
R. Blessed are those who fear the Lord.
Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine
in the recesses of your home;
Your children like olive plants
around your table.
R. Blessed are those who fear the Lord.
Behold, thus is the man blessed

who fears the LORD.
 The LORD bless you from Zion:
 may you see the prosperity of Jerusalem
 all the days of your life.
 R. Blessed are those who fear the Lord.

Reading 2**1 THES 5:1-6**

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.
 When people are saying, "Peace and security, "
 then sudden disaster comes upon them,
 like labor pains upon a pregnant woman,
 and they will not escape.

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.

Alleluia**JN 15:4A, 5B**

R. Alleluia, alleluia.
 Remain in me as I remain in you, says the Lord.
 Whoever remains in me bears much fruit.
 R. Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel**MT 25:14-30**

Jesus told his disciples this parable:
 "A man going on a journey
 called in his servants and entrusted his possessions to them.
 To one he gave five talents; to another, two; to a third, one--
 to each according to his ability.
 Then he went away.
 Immediately the one who received five talents went and traded with them,
 and made another five.
 Likewise, the one who received two made another two.
 But the man who received one went off and dug a hole in the ground
 and buried his master's money.

After a long time

the master of those servants came back
 and settled accounts with them.
 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.'
 Then the one who had received two talents also came forward and said,
 'Master, you gave me two talents.
 See, I have made two 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.'
 Then the one who had received the one talent came forward and said,
 'Master, I knew you were a demanding person,
 harvesting where you did not plant
 and gathering where you did not scatter;
 so out of fear I went off and buried your talent in the ground.
 Here it is back.'
 His master said to him in reply, 'You wicked, lazy servant!
 So you knew that I harvest where I did not plant
 and gather where I did not scatter?
 Should you not then have put my money in the bank
 so that I could have got it back with interest on my return?
 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.'"

Or

MT 25:14-15, 19-21

Jesus told his disciples this parable:
 "A man going on a journey
 called in his servants and entrusted his possessions to them.
 To one he gave five talents; to another, two; to a third, one--
 to each according to his ability.
 Then he went away.

After a long time

the master of those servants came back
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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.'"

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THIRTY-THIRD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

November 19, 2017 A

Opening prayer: *Loving God, in your Word today, you call us to be wise and industrious stewards of all that you have placed in our care. Help us to develop and utilize all that you have given us to bless the communities we belong to. Breathe your Spirit upon us as we gather to share life in your Word. This we pray through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

Sharing life: As we approach another Thanksgiving Day, what are you most grateful for this year?

Facilitator reads focus statement: Two interesting but contrasting figures appear in this Sunday's first and third readings. In Proverbs, the wife and mother, with all her domestic duties, finds time to develop skills and to dedicate herself to the needs of others. In Matthew's Parable of the Talents, the rejected servant is totally devoid of an enterprising spirit. We are told in these readings that the fruitful use of God's gifts enter into the final assessment of our lives. In the second reading, Paul urges vigilance in the light of the uncertainty of the time of the Second Coming of Jesus.

If you have not read the commentary prior to the meeting, consider doing so either before or after each reading.

FIRST READING: Proverbs 31:10-13, 19-20, 30-31

The Book of Proverbs is a part of Israel's Wisdom literature. It is a collection of teachings on how to live a good and virtuous life.

Chapter 31, from which today's reading is excerpted, is introduced as advice given to Lemuel, King of Massa, by his mother. The reading sings the praises of a good wife. The author looks upon this wife, not just as a companion to her husband, but also as a worker and producer. [In the light of today's Gospel, this reading offers us a practical example of a woman who did make good use of her God-given talents. In the Gospel, fear paralyzes the third servant.] In this reading, fear of the Lord seems to motivate the woman to live an industrious life, using her talents to create clothes, etc. Also, "she reaches out to the needy." (See chapter 31 for a full description of this woman.) Most of all, she has a deep reverential fear of the Lord. These lasting qualities are far more important and superior to a perishable physical attraction. Even though in the culture of the time the woman is seen as property, ("a good wife is an unfailing prize"), she is also portrayed as one who employs her gifts for the good of the family and the other members of the community. The reading reflects an image of a woman prevalent at that time. She is valued for what she can do for her husband, rather than recognized for her true value as a woman of wisdom and enterprise.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM 128

This wisdom psalm refers to the blessing of a worthy wife extolling the virtues of family life in general.

SECOND READING: 1Thessalonians 5:1-6

These verses speak to the question: *When* will the Second Coming occur? Paul responds: "Who knows? It will come like a thief in the night. But, if we live in the light of Christ, we will have nothing to fear. Because the Lord could return when we least expect it, we should put aside all deeds of darkness."

GOSPEL: Matthew 25:14-30

These verses continue the theme of preparedness that began in last Sunday's Gospel. Here, the focus is on the manner in which one is expected to use the time before Jesus returns.

The man who goes on the journey (Christ) shows great confidence in all three servants, for he gives each one a significant amount of money. When the man returns from his journey, he settles accounts with his servants. He praises the first two for being industrious and enterprising, but condemns the third servant for his inaction and failure to use well his master's money. The master is obviously not happy with those who "bury" their gifts. Reflecting on this Gospel, Fr. Denis McBride writes:

The parable imagines God as a gambler, one who is forever taking risks in entrusting us with his gifts. He has no guarantee on his return, but that is the risk. He dares us to share a common enterprise; he trusts us to do it in our own way, knowing that if we succeed both will have reason to celebrate.

The defense of the third servant is interesting. He focuses on the reputed meanness of the master, not on his own proven lack of enterprise. He takes the problem away from where it is— with himself— and places the problem where it is not—with his master.

He portrays the master as harsh; there is no admission that his own creativity leans toward the cemetery. He ends up burying part of himself. And we should only bury what is dead.

The bottom-line message is: Faithfulness, risk-taking and activity are blessed. Unfaithfulness, cowardice and inactivity are condemned.

(Used with permission granted by Denis McBride CSSR, *Seasons of the Word.*)

FAITH-SHARING QUESTIONS

1. What verse, idea or image in the readings spoke to you most? Why?
2. What quality do you most admire in the woman described in the first reading?
3. Husbands or single men: what qualities do you or would you seek in a wife or female friend? Wives or single women: what qualities do you or would you seek in a husband or male friend?
4. What talent(s) have you developed and shared with the community? What talent(s) do you feel you may be sitting on? Do you have a talent that you don't use but would like to?

RESPONDING TO THE WORD

Name one way you can act on this Sunday's readings. Suggestion: Activate a gift/talent you are sitting on.

CONCLUDE WITH PRAYERS OF PETITION AND INTERCESSION

Especially pray for the grace to see gifts that you are not utilizing. ©

Save the Date!!

Saturday, March 10, 2018

Annual Day of Reflection

by the Space Coast Alliance of
Small Christian Communities with
Father Dave Pivonka, TOR,
The Wild Goose Is Loose!

Daily Reflection
33rd Sunday of Ordinary Time-A
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In this 33rd Sunday of the Ordinary time we shall meditate on the Parable of the Talents which deals with two very important themes and very up to date: (i) The gifts which each person receives from God and the way in which he receives them. Each person has qualities, talents, with which he can and should serve others. Nobody is only a pupil, nobody is only a professor. We learn from one another. (ii) The attitude with which persons place themselves before God who has given us his gifts. During the reading, we shall try to be very attentive to these two points: which is the attitude of the three servants regarding the gifts received and which is the image of God that this parable reveals to us?

Matthew 25, 14-15: *A door to enter into the story of the parable*
The parable tells the story of a man, who before setting out on a journey, distributes his goods to his servants, giving five, two and one talent, according to the capacity of each one of them. A talent corresponds to 34 kilos of gold, which is not a small amount! In the last instance, all receive the same thing, because each one receives “according to his capacity”. The one who has a big cup he fills it, the one who has a small cup, he also fills it. Then the master goes abroad and remains there a long time. The story leaves us a bit perplexed! We do not know why the master distributed his money to the servants, we do not know which will be the end of the story. Perhaps the purpose is that all those who listen to the parable must begin to confront their life with the story told in the parable.

Matthew 25, 16-18: *The way of acting of each servant.*
The first two servants worked and doubled the talents. But the one who received one talent buries it, to keep it well and not lose it. It is a question of the goods of the Kingdom which are given to persons and to communities according to their capacity. All receive some goods of the Kingdom, but not all respond in the same way!

Matthew 25, 19-23: *The rendering of account of the first and second servant.* After a long time, the master returns to take an account from the servants. The first two say the same thing: “Sir, you gave me five / two talents. Here are other five / two which I have gained!” And the master responds in the same way to both: “Well done, good and trustworthy

servant, you have shown that you are trustworthy in small things, I will trust you with greater, come and join in your master's happiness".

Matthew 25, 24-25: Rendering of an account of the third servant

The third servant arrives and says: "Sir, I had heard you were a hard man, reaping where you had not sown and gathering where you had not scattered, so I was afraid, and I went off and hid your talent in the ground. Here it is, it was yours, you have it back!" In this phrase there is an erroneous idea of God which is criticized by Jesus. The servant sees in God a severe master. Before such a God, the human being is afraid and hides himself behind the exact and meticulous observance of the law. He thinks that acting in this way he will avoid the judgment and that the severity of the legislator will not punish him. This is how some Pharisees thought. In reality, such a person has no trust in God, though he trusts in himself and in his observance of the law. It is a person closed up in himself, far from God and does not succeed to be concerned about others. This person becomes incapable of growing like a free person. This false image of God isolates the human being, kills the community, does not help to live in joy and impoverishes life.

Matthew 25, 26-27: Response of the master to the third servant

The response of the master is ironic. He says: "You wicked and lazy servant! So you knew that I reap where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered? Well, then, you should have deposited my money with the bankers, and on my return I would have got my money back with interest!" The third servant was not coherent with the severe image which he had of God. If he had imagined God so severe, he would, at least, have deposited the money in the bank. This is why he was condemned not by God, but by the wrong idea which he had of God and which left him more terrified and immature than he was. It was not possible for him to be coherent having the image of God which he had, because fear paralyzes life.

Matthew 25, 28-30: The final word of the master which clarifies the parable

The master asks that the talent be taken away from him and given to the one who already has: For to everyone who has will be given more, and he will have more than enough; but anyone who has not, will be deprived even of what he has". This is the key which clarifies everything. In reality, the talents, "the money of the master", the goods of the Kingdom, are the love, service, sharing, the gratuitous gift. A talent is everything that makes the community grow and which reveals the presence of God. When one is

closed in oneself out of fear of losing the little that one has, one loses even that little that one has, because love dies, justice is weakened, sharing disappears. Instead, the person who does not think in self and gives himself to others, grows and, surprisingly, receives everything which he has given and much more. "Because anyone who finds his life will lose it, but anyone who loses his own life for my sake will find it" (Mt 10, 39).

The Different Currency of the Kingdom

There is no difference between those who receive more and those who receive less. All receive according to their capacity. What is important is that the gift is placed at the service of the Kingdom and that it makes the goods of the Kingdom grow, which are love, fraternity, sharing. The principal key of the parable does not consist in producing talents, but indicates the way in which it is necessary to live our relationship with God. The first two servants ask for nothing, they do not seek their own well being, they do not keep the talents for themselves, they make no calculations, they do not measure. Very naturally, almost without being aware and without seeking any merit for themselves, they begin to work, in order that the gift received bears fruit for God and for the Kingdom. The third servant is afraid and, because of this, does nothing. According to the norms of the ancient law, he acts in a correct way. He remains within the established exigencies. He loses nothing, but neither does he gain anything. Because of this he loses even what he had. The Kingdom is a risk. The one who does not want to run risks, loses the Kingdom!