

Wellspring Fransalian Center for Spirituality

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November 19, 2023

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Today, we celebrate the thirty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time of the Year. Our Scripture readings of this Sunday advise us to let the “Fear of the Lord” become a moving force in our life. This “fear” is not something that paralyzes us but moves us with courage and wisdom and other qualities. The “fear of the Lord” should be translated as “the awe” of the Lord or perhaps, a “reverential fear”, not the kind of fear that “freezes” a person but the kind of fear that “frees” a person and empowers the person with qualities that would move him/her to generous service.

The first reading of this Sunday’s mass is from the conclusion of the book of Proverbs. This excerpt has been interpreted by many as a description of the qualities of an ideal wife. It does provide such insights. However, the worthy woman described here is the same woman, “lady wisdom” that the first nine chapters of the book of Proverbs spoke of. Wisdom, personified as a woman, welcomes all who seek her and offers them her (wisdom’s) skills and abilities in business dealings, in concern for social justice, in wise teaching and kindly counsel.

Such wisdom does not paralyze a person but moves the person to service. Such wisdom does not make a person bury his talent (like the man with one talent in the Gospel reading of today) but invest it in a way that benefits him/her and others and offer it in generous service. The worthy woman featured in this excerpt is freed, moved and empowered by the “fear of the loved” and not paralyzed by fear. She is a gifted woman and graced by God with many talents and abilities which she uses for the benefit of her family and friends as well as for the poor and the needy.

The Psalmist reflects on the blessings of the one who “fears the Lord” and walks in His ways. Blessing is on the person who is totally committed to God in obedience. He is blessed because he has no other loyalties or worries or desires. He knows that other loyalties would distract him, and he has no one else to please. The nations around him have many gods to please. Loyalty to the one true God, the God of the covenant, gives him freedom and joy. What else could he feel except “blessed”. This “fear of the Lord” that he speaks of is the fear of missing the mark, of missing the way of the Lord, of becoming disloyal, of losing the freedom and losing this gift of God’s favor.

The Psalmist goes on to count his blessings: wife being fruitful like vine in the house, children like olive shoots around the table, seeing prosperity of Jerusalem all the days of life, seeing

children's children. What else could he feel, except "blessed". And that is because he has the "Fear of the Lord".

The fear of the Lord is an attitude of respect, a response of reverence, amazement and wonder and not of being scared to act or to choose or to move. Paul advised the Thessalonians not to be afraid of what may happen as they waited for the coming of Christ but live as children of the light, not of darkness, not in ignorance and sin (the second reading) but in God's light.

Today's Gospel relates the Parable of the Talents. Jesus told his disciples a parable about the man who entrusted three of his servants with different "amounts" for investment according to their abilities. Two of them took the risk of investing what was given to them. They risked all they were given and gained as much as they invested. The third servant risked nothing and gained nothing because, according to him, he was afraid. Fear paralyzed him. He failed to use what he had and lost even the little he had. This is the fear that is debilitating and demeaning and makes one afraid to choose to act, to follow a plan or to take personal initiatives.

The one talent in the hand is just one talent, one dollar in the hand is just one dollar - the little remains little in one's hand, but when invested unlimited possibilities are open. The parable invites us to recognize the "one" talent or the little that is available, not to let fear and doubt paralyze us but to let the "fear of the Lord" make us free to invest our talent however small it may be and give it a chance to grow and become more. Like the woman in the first reading and the person in the Responsorial Psalm, we are called to use our talents and abilities for the benefit of our family and friends as well as for the poor and needy and not be afraid of losing what we have.

Saint Francis De Sales advises us.....

Be at Peace. Do not look forward in fear to the changes of life; rather look to them with full hope as they arise. God, whose very own you are, will deliver you from out of them. He has kept you hitherto, and He will lead you safely through all things; and when you cannot stand it, God will bury you in his arms.

Do not fear what may happen tomorrow; the same everlasting Father who cares for you today will take care of you then and every day. He will either shield you from suffering or will give you unfailing strength to bear it. Be at peace and put aside all anxious thoughts and imagination.

I encourage you to take a few moments each day of this week to be still and reflect on how your day has been and how you have been using your God-given talents and gifts. Be grateful for all God's gifts and use them wisely for the benefit of family and friends as well as the poor and needy. Don't be afraid of what may happen. Let the "Fear of the Lord" empower you and move you to place all your gifts at the service of family and community.

God bless you and your family.

Fr. Gus Tharappel, msfs

Thirty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time

November 19, 2023

Every believer in this world of ours must be a spark of light,
a center of love, a vivifying leaven amidst his fellow men.
And he will be this all the more perfectly,
the more closely he lives in communion with God
in the intimacy of his own soul.
(Pope John XXIII)

Collect

Grant us, we pray, O Lord our God,
the constant gladness of being devoted to you,
for it is full and lasting happiness
to serve with constancy
the author of all that is good.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.

Liturgy of the Word

Prayerfully read the first reading and then read my reflections below and spend a few moments of personal reflection. Do the same with Responsorial Psalm and other readings.

What we see in Christ is steadfast love - merciful, forgiving, healing and sacrificial love - love that values the total well-being of others.

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

This excerpt is from the conclusion of the book of proverbs. The worthy woman featured in this excerpt is moved and empowered by the “fear of the loved”. This “fear” is not something that paralyzed her but moved her with courage and wisdom and other qualities. The “fear of the Lord” should be translated as “the awe” of the Lord or may be a “reverential fear”, not the kind of fear that “freezes” a person but the kind of fear that “frees” a person and empowers the person with qualities that would move him/her to generous service. She is a gifted woman and graced by God with many talents and abilities which she uses for the benefit of her family and friends as well as for the poor and the needy.

This excerpt has been interpreted by many as a description of the qualities of an ideal wife. It does provide such insights. However, the worthy woman described here is the same woman, "lady wisdom" that the first nine chapters of the book of Proverbs spoke of. Wisdom, personified as a woman, welcomes all who seek her and offers them her (wisdom's) skills and abilities in business dealings, in concern for social justice, in wise teaching and kindly counsel. Such wisdom does not paralyze a person but moves the person to service. Such wisdom does not make a person bury his talent (as the man with one talent in the Gospel parable of today), but invest it in a way that benefits him/her and others and offer it in generous service.

Wisdom is personified as a woman, born of God before all ages and active with God in the work of creation (Prov 8:22-30). The Latin word for wisdom "sapientia" comes from the word sapere, meaning "to savor," "to taste." Through the gift of wisdom the Holy Spirit enables us to taste and see how good the Lord is, to have a taste for the things of God, to sense the divine in all things. St. Paul says, "We have a wisdom This God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit scrutinizes everything, even the depths of God" (1 Cor 2:5-10).

Simplicity and purity and detachment are virtues that lead us to the Wisdom within.

Be Vigilant. Wisdom sometimes comes camouflaged in simple people, simple things, simple events, even in seeming foolishness.

Being smart, having a certificate or a college/university degree does not guarantee wisdom. Foster wisdom by opening yourself to the movement of the Holy Spirit.

Psalm 128

The Psalmist muses, "How blessed is the one fears the Lord and walks in His ways". Blessing is on the person who is totally committed to God in obedience. He is blessed because he has no other loyalties or worries or desires. He knows that other loyalties would distract him, and he has no one else to please. The nations around him have many gods to please. Loyalty to the one true God, the God of the covenant, gives him freedom and joy.

What else could he feel except feel "blessed". This "fear of the Lord" that he speaks of is the fear of missing the mark, of missing the way of the Lord, of becoming disloyal, of losing the freedom and losing this gift of God's favor, "Grace". The Psalmist goes on to count his blessings: wife being fruitful like vine in the house, children like olive shoots around the table, seeing prosperity of Jerusalem all the days of life, seeing children's children. What else could he feel, except "blessed".

Our Poet uses several images: (1) Like fruitful vine – is symbol of fruitfulness. The blessing is that this man's wife will be happy in mothering lots of children. A famous Rabbi wrote: "I never call my wife 'my wife'. I call her 'my home', she who makes a home for my children. (2) Like

olive shoots – is symbol of tender growth to be carefully and tenderly nurtured. (3) Around the table - is the symbol of family, fellowship and love.

**Blessed are all who fear the LORD,
and who walk in his ways.
What your hands provide you will enjoy;
you will be blessed and prosper**

I Thessalonians 5:1-6

Paul reaffirmed his teaching that the day of Christ's final coming is not known....it will simply surprise us. He warned the Thessalonians not to become complacent and encouraged them to be prepared and ready to welcome Christ whenever he comes. He encouraged them to live as children of the light, not of darkness, not in ignorance and sin.

He taught them again and us today to comfort and “up-build” one another.

Mathew 25:14-30

Jesus told them the parable of the man who entrusted three of his servants with different “amounts” for investment according to their abilities. Two of them took the risk of investing what was given to them. They risked all they were given and gained as much as they invested. The third servant risked nothing and gained nothing because, according to him, he was afraid. Fear paralyzed him. He failed to use what he had and lost even the little he had.

There is much wisdom in this parable, and much can be learned from reflecting on the many meanings that the parable carries for us. We could reflect on the talented ones, the two who were given much and how their enterprising quality, the risk they took and so on and appreciate and applaud their efforts. What they did with what they had is worthy of respect, appreciation, and imitation.

We could reflect on the servant with one talent, hiding behind his “lack of” talents and afraid to risk and invest what he had. He is not the kind of person who ordinarily gets much attention. Those who invest, risk and are enterprising get appreciation, attention, and applause. In this parable, the one who was afraid to risk and invest was treated as “worthless” and cast into the darkness outside because he failed to invest what was entrusted to him. Some of us can relate to this from personal experience and some of us know a friend or colleague who is convinced that he/she has so little to offer that it wouldn't make much difference to do anything with the little that is available.

The one talent in the hand is just one talent, one dollar in the hand is just one dollar, the little remains little in one's hand, but when invested unlimited possibilities are open. Invest the talent you have and give it a chance to grow and become more. Instead of digging a hole to bury the talent, use the energy to let the talent grow.....choose service to safety.....risk to retreat. The parable invites us to recognize the "one" talent, the little that is available with gratitude and make the best use of it.

Be generous with what is available rather than focus on what is not available. Our little in our hands seems little..... but our little in the hands of God is abundance.

We could reflect on the king's trust. He trusted his servants with his own wealth. Trust calls for loyalty, Fidelity. Trust calls for "TRUST" in return.

Reflect on God's trust! We are trusted with life, family, children, our vocation, etc. Reflect on what it means to be trusted.

The parable tells us that the servants who invested their talents and gained much were entrusted with more. The reward for faithfulness to trust is "more trust". Faithfulness to responsibilities and duties bring more responsibilities.

Faithfulness is its own reward!

The parable also tells us: To him who has more will be given.

There is no such thing as standing still in Christian life. We either get more or lose what we have. We grow or slip back.

Be Still for a few moments!

Pray for your needs and those of your family and community.

Spiritual Communion

Lord Jesus, I believe in your real presence in the Eucharist, the Sacrament of the Altar. I place myself in your presence and adore you, worship you and glorify you. I am unable to receive you in Holy Communion at Mass today. I hunger and thirst for your way, your truth and your life. Come into my heart Lord and satisfy my hunger and quench my thirst. Bless me that I may give witness to your presence in my life. Amen

Be Still for a few moments!

Saint of the Day, November 19 - St. Nerses the Great and 165 other saints are remembered this day.

St. Nerses was a native of Armenia. He studied in Cappadocia and married a princess who gave birth to St. Isaac the great. After his wife died, he served as a chamberlain in the court of King Arshak of Armenia. In 353 he was made Catholicos of the Armenians. Nerses devoted much effort to reforming the Armenian Church, including convening a synod in 365 based on the principles he had studied under St. Basil at Caesarea. Though he established hospitals and monasteries, his reforms and denunciation of King Arshak's murder of the queen led to his exile. He returned after Arshak's death in battle, but relations were not much better with the new Armenian ruler, Pap, whose dissolute lifestyle caused Nerses to refuse him admission into church. Nerses was invited to a royal banquet at Khakh, on the Euphrates River, and was assassinated by poison.

Fr. Gus Tharappel, msfs

**When the power of love overcomes the love of power,
the world will know peace.**