CELEBRATE SABBATH

Thirty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time

When we let God be God and let him work through us and not give him directions, we experience a sense of peace and serenity.

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.

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.

Saint of the Day, November 15 - St. Albert the Great and 24 other saints are remembered this day.

Albert was born sometime before the year 1200, probably in Bavaria, in southern Germany. We know very little about the details of his family origins. We know that he was well educated, attended the University of Padua where he learned about Aristotle and his writings.

In 1245, Albert became a Master of Theology under Gueruc of Saint-Quentin. He was the first German Dominican to achieve the title. He later went on to teach theology at the University of Paris and became the Chair of Theology at the College of St. James. One of his students was the famous Thomas Aquinas who would also become a doctor of the Church and a saint. Albert was very interested in Aristotle, and he made commentary on nearly all of Aristotle's works. He also studied the teachings of several Muslim scholars. At this time, the Islamic world led Europe in terms of scholarship, science, and medicine.

In 1260, Pope Alexander IV appointed Albert as bishop of Regensburg. Although he was a bishop, Albert refused to ride a horse and went everywhere on foot. The life of a bishop did not agree with Albert and he resigned from his post in 1263. Albert became ill in 1278 and he died on November 15, 1280.

St. Albert, the patron of scientists, lived during the period when the first universities came into being. He studied every field of knowledge that was taught in those schools of learning. He became a Dominican. One of his students, Thomas Aquinas, was brilliant but very shy. Albert saw the greatness of Thomas and affirmed and encouraged him!

He studied everything he could, including plants, animals and astronomy! He was the first to study the mountain ranges of Europe! While many believed that such studies would destroy Christianity, Albert believed that all knowledge could help us deepen the knowledge and experience of God! His faith and hard work paved the way for a new age of scientific exploration.

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