

## Homily of Thirty-Third Sunday in Ordinary Time of Year A, 2023

Proverbs 31:10-13, 19-20, 30-31; Psalm 128:1-5; 1 Thessalonians 5:1-6; Matthew 25:14-31

The first reading is a parable that speaks of our relationship with God. The husband represents God. The worthy wife represents us. The parable is an encouragement to us to embrace our duties and responsibilities with diligence and with fear of the Lord

Further, the worthy wife who is hardworking, caring and God fearing reminds us of all hardworking, caring, and God-fearing women who are sustaining families, communities, parishes, institutions, countries, and the world. They deserve our prayers, love, recognition, respect, fairness, protection, appreciation, gratitude, and praise. On a lighter note, someone says, "The man who said it can't be done should not interrupt the woman doing it." The reading says, "Give her a reward for her labors" (Proverbs 31:31). Misogyny ("hatred of, contempt for, prejudice or discrimination against women or girls") and violence against women are sinful. We pray for God's intervention in the lives of all women in difficult conditions.

The second reading was St. Paul's admonition to the Thessalonians who presumed, wrongly, that the day of the Lord was very near and therefore refused to do any work. They went 'to sleep.' In the reading, St. Paul encourages us 'not to go to sleep' but to be hardworking like the worthy wife in the first reading. We pray for the conversion of people "of the night" and "people of darkness" who cause agony to humanity.

In the gospel, the servants who worked hard and made profit were congratulated as good and faithful servants and were rewarded with great responsibilities. But as for the servant who went to 'sleep' by digging a hole and burying his master's money, his talent was taken away from him, and he was severely punished. Jesus says, "To anyone who has, more will be given and he will grow rich; from anyone who has not, even what he has will be taken away" (Matthew 13:12).

Again, in the parable, the master is God. We are the servants. There is always a time of reckoning; a time we are required to account for our actions. We give accounts on two levels. While still alive, accountability is required for our duties and responsibilities. Afterlife also, there is judgement and reward.

An important question for our reflection is, what are we doing with the talents, gifts, positions, duties, responsibilities, opportunities, and blessings God has entrusted to us? Are we like the hardworking worthy wife and the good and faithful servants; or, are we like those who go to sleep and the wicked and lazy servant?

The wicked and lazy servant "went off and dug a hole in the ground and buried his master's money." When it was his turn to give account, he launched a ferocious verbal attack on his master. We see this happen so often around us; whereby someone engages those whom he/she is supposed to render account to in a fight. I guess that the servant was not only wicked and lazy, he was also angry and envious. He was angry that he was given only one talent. He was envious of the servants who received five and two talents.

It is striking what the master said to the good and faithful servants, "Since you were faithful in small matters, I will give you great responsibilities." This is an invitation to us to be faithful in small matters. Many great people rose from humble beginnings. Many big establishments began in a small way. Jesus says, "If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move" (Matthew 17:20). Jesus began his ministry with only twelve apostles (Luke 6:12). Jesus fed the multitude with five loaves and two fish (Mark 6:41). A small seed germinates and grows into a huge tree. Every animal, even the mightiest ones, begins as a tiny fetus. Therefore, no one should say, "I can't start. It is too small." To take such a stance is like accepting defeat even before the battle begins.

To conclude, let us ponder on the following words of wisdom:

- "We can make heaven through the small good things we do." - St. Theresa of Child Jesus
- "Be faithful in small things because it is in them that your strength lies." - St. (Mother) Theresa
- "The most successful detectives owe their success to noticing small things." - Robert Baden-Powell
- "The person who is trustworthy in very small matters is also trustworthy in great ones; and the person who is dishonest in very small matters is also dishonest in great ones."- Luke 16:10

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