

Homily of Thirty-Third Sunday in Ordinary Time of Year A, 2020

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

Today's readings continue our reflection on the preparation of the end of time. The readings also teach us the importance of hard work and accountability.

The worthy wife in the first reading 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, appreciation, gratitude, and praise. At the same time, we pray for God's intervention in the life 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 refused to do any work. They went "to sleep." In the reading, St. Paul encourages us not to sleep off but to "stay alert and sober." As in the first reading, the message is, be hardworking; and be God fearing.

The first reading is a parable which 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.

The parable of the talents in the Gospel continues the same message as in the first reading. The servants who worked hard and made profit were congratulated as good and faithful servants, and were rewarded with great responsibilities. The servant who went to 'sleep' by digging a hole in the ground and burying his master's money, his talent was taken away from him and he was severely punished.

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 will give account on two levels. While still alive, accountability is required from us for our duties and responsibilities. Favorable reward or unfavorable reward follows our decisions and actions. Afterlife also, there will be judgement and reward. It is either, "Come and share in your master's joy;" or, "Throw this useless servant into the darkness outside, where there will be wailing and grinding of teeth." 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 "went off and dug a hole in the ground and buried his master's money." Probably he was upset that he got only one talent. Probably he was envious of the servant who received five talents and the servant who received two talents. However, 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. Many big parishes began with a few faithful Catholics. Many great cities began with the settlement of a handful of people. Jesus began his ministry with only twelve apostles. 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.

The message today is important to many in our generation who reject "small matters," humble beginning, hard work, and fear of the Lord. We conclude with a few wise words:

- "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
- "I am a little pencil in the hand of a writing God who is sending a love letter to the world." - St. (Mother) Theresa
- "Whoever is careless with the truth in small matters cannot be trusted with important matters." - Albert Einstein
- "Do small things in a great way." - Napoleon Hill
- "The most successful detectives owe their success to noticing small things." - Robert Baden-Powell

Fr. Martin Eke, MSP