

33rd Sunday of Ordinary Time

There might have been a few men in the congregation who nudged their partner or at least made a mental note at the 1st reading this afternoon which describes the perfect wife. And let me say that I agree with the author. However, this reading came from the last Chapter of Proverbs, chapter 31 and it is really talking about life. In the Hebrew scriptures wisdom is often personified as female, as a woman, referred to as she. This poem is written by a mother to her son, Lamuel, King of Massa. Seeing wisdom as “she”, one of the explanations of this chapter is that it is not about a wife and all her duties which makes her beautiful. Instead, wisdom is seen as a worthy, life-like companion.

All the wonderful features of a loving wife are figured as the true profile of wisdom. The person who possesses wisdom takes Her to his or her heart as a woman or man takes her or his spouse to their loving hearts. True wisdom leads a woman or a man or a young person to reach out beyond themselves and to embrace the poor and the needy who in turn will increase their lives with sensitivity and grace. The works of this cherished gift are to be praised because true wisdom comes from and leads to a worshipping relationship with God. This wisdom is essential to understanding who Jesus is and what his parables are saying.

The 2nd reading also has to be understood in context. When Jesus died and rose from the dead and ascended into heaven, the early church expected that within their life time, Jesus would return in glory and all would be over. By the time Paul was writing to the Thessalonians about 50 AD it had become evident that the return of the Lord might not be as imminent as some had thought. But his words are as important to us today as they were then. We never know when we will die. But we know that some day we will. It is not something that we should worry about; it is not something that should keep us awake at night. St. Paul reminds us that we are children of the light and children of the day. St. Paul is asking us to do our best in Christian living which includes putting our trust in God.

In the Gospel today there is so much depth; using the gift of wisdom, so much to understand. But I would like to leave you with just one thought – something which really grabbed me as I prayed over it. The talent that Jesus referred to was a sum of money – like the denarii or the drachma. But the talent was a huge, huge amount of money. A talent was between 75 and a 100 lbs of silver. For you young people who only know metric, between 165 and 209 kilograms of silver. It would take about 20 years for the average wage earner at the time of Jesus to make 1 talent – 1 talent.

That is if he did not spend a cent of his earnings but saved it all. The master gave to his slaves 5, 2 and 1 talent. And what struck me was the phenomenal generosity of the man. By what it says at the end of the parable we know that this wasn't an image of God. But for me it was an indication of how generous God has been. We have been truly blessed in so many ways. And I don't say this to make anyone feel guilty. But to remind myself and those who will listen that in being blessed, our 1st response is a thankful heart. To give thanks God in all things. St. Ignatius says there is no room for sin in a thankful heart. And to cultivate that habit. If you have children or grandchild and enter into prayer with them, for example at the end of the day.

Asks them what they are thankful for. To see everything as gift. To see everything as God's way of saying “I love you.” To see that the greatest gifts are those seen with the heart. To see God's grace – God's friendship – God's mercy and God's forgiveness – to see God's Spirit dwelling in each one of us as something to be thankful for. That is where the gift of wisdom shines brightest in our lives.

Peter, James and John went up a mountain with Jesus who was transfigured before their very eyes. Divinity shone through him. And Peter said, “Lord it is wonderful for us to be here”.

The word Eucharist means “thanksgiving”. With the eyes of faith, we recognize Jesus present here in our midst. We know that Jesus is present in the Holy Word, in the bread, in the people and in the priest. And so we say with Peter “Lord it is wonderful for us to be here”. Then we go forth and find Jesus also present in the world in which we live.