

33rd Sunday Ordinary Time Year A

November 19, 2017

Readings: Proverbs 31:10-13, 19-20, 30-31; 1 Thess 5:1-6; Matt 25:14-15, 19-21

In today's Gospel, we hear the familiar parable of the talents. The spiritual lesson of course is fairly straight forward- what do you do with the talents that you have been given? The parable concerns how we take our gifts and put them at the service of others, and as importantly, help those talents to grow.

We all have different talents. Like all my siblings, I was offered piano lessons as a small boy. I'll spare you the details, but suffice it to say I was stuck on the same simple piece for a couple of months. My teacher, who happened to double as my great-aunt, arrived for my lesson one day, but she was holding a rather good-sized case.

She broke the tough news gently and diplomatically. "John, piano is not your gift...try this instead!" My introduction to the alto saxophone had begun, and I played in concert and jazz bands well into college and beyond.

Using our gifts is a response to God's goodness, and as disciples, it is not an option- it is a command. Thankfully, those with artistic and musical gifts have enriched the life of the Church.

As the Church spread in the early centuries, new churches sprang up everywhere. St. Augustine was an early 5th century bishop, and as one might suspect, preached at many Church dedications. Yet only a few of those homilies remain.

One such sermon probably took place sometime towards the end of his life, after 420 A.D. In that homily, he briefly mentions music. He was quoting from a psalm, "Sing to the Lord a new song, sing to the Lord every land." (Ps 95)

His sermon continues:

What it said there, 'a new song;' this the Lord said, a new commandment. For what has a new song unless a new

lover? To sing is a ‘characteristic’ of a lover. The voice of this singer, is the fervor of holy love.¹

The singing of the Church comes ultimately out of love. “*Cantare amantis est*” – “Singing belongs to one who loves,”² as we read in one of St. Augustine’s sermons. The Second Vatican Council taught: “The musical tradition of the universal Church is a treasure of inestimable value, *greater even than that of any other art*. The main reason for this pre-eminence is that, as sacred song united to the words, it forms a necessary or integral part of the solemn liturgy.”³

How do we reach God? How do we encounter Him? The answer to that question is many and varied, but one significant way is not a new proposal at all. It is through the gifts of sacred art and music.

If the Church is the reflection of Christ, then the Church must reflect the beauty and truth of Jesus Christ. Obviously, prayer is the best means by which we act in truth and goodness, and so too when we reach out to help others in need, just as Jesus would do. But there are varied ways in which we build up the Body of Christ.

Do people today really have the ability to see that when they act in service to others, their own spiritual life grows? I think the answer has to be a resounding “Yes.” We instinctively see this to be the case– when we live our lives with others in mind, we are happier, more fulfilled and most certainly less selfish.

How can we give more when we can’t get done that which is already on our plate? We must trust that God will give us the grace, that He will enliven us and strengthen us to make the right choices. Perhaps

¹ Augustine, Sermon 336.1

² Ibid., Quod ibi dixit, *canticum novum*; hoc Dominus dixit, *mandatum novum*. Quid enim habet canticum novum, nisi amorem novum? Cantare amantis est. Vox huius cantoris, fervor est sancti amoris.

³ *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, para. # 112

it is time to let go of some things, some activities, in order to make room for others, ones that truly make use of our gifts.

I urge each of you to prayerfully consider how you may be more involved in the life of the Church, in the life of this parish, or your home parish, as the case may be. You could serve as lectors, Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion to name just two.

Even if you belong to another parish and come here as a regular visitor, there are volunteer opportunities here that will occupy only a small amount of time, such as our twice-yearly Church cleanings, for example. They come each year without fail- this is the way they wish to contribute and it is wonderful and much appreciated.

Giving back to the Church has the effect of magnifying, bringing to light the spiritual growth that you will begin to see, slowly, but surely. Please prayerfully consider your involvement here at the Cathedral, for we value your presence, your commitment and your prayers on behalf of our parish.