HOMILY SUNDAY 33 – A
"Parable of the Talents"
(Proverbs 3110-13, 16-18, 20, 26, 28-32; Psalm 128;
1 Thessalonians 5:1-6; Matthew 24:36; 25:14-30)
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A bishop was testing confirmation candidates by asking questions: What is a mitre? There was silence so he explained that it was a bishop's hat. What is a crozier? Silence. He explained that it was a bishop's staff. What is a pectoral cross? Again silence, so he explained that it was what hangs around a bishop's neck. Embarrassed, the teacher tipped off the next parish as to what questions the bishop would ask. There the students responded enthusiastically to the first two questions. Suspecting they had been tipped off, he changed the last question to "What is a coadjutor?" They all responded that a coadjutor is what hangs around a bishop's neck.

Winston Churchill once said, "We make a living by what we get; we make a life by what we give."

Express yourself through love, and you will live.

According to Flor McCarthy in his commentary on this gospel, one of our greatest needs is the need to express ourselves. Unless we express ourselves, we cannot realize or fulfill ourselves. To express ones self is the way to make ones self whole and therefore holy. Expression is the opposite of repression. To repress is to bottle up; to stifle; to smother, to suppress. Repression inevitably gives rise to depression. On the other hand, to express is to articulate, to reveal, to bring out. Expression may involve pain, but ultimately it leads to joy.

My transition from High School to university did not go that well. I was overwhelmed by the large impersonal classes and the huge number of students on campus. I felt shy, timid and lacked confidence. As a result I spent most of my time in the boarding house studying. I felt so out of place that I actually dropped out during my second year. When I returned the third year, a member of the student council recognized me and asked if I would be open to taking on the vacant position of Social Rep. Hesitatingly, I went to the first meeting, made a few suggestions that were well received, and I was off. I had a terrific year serving my fellow students and immersed in student affairs. Amazingly, my marks were even better than the pitiful first year, and I was brimming with life and vitality. Expressing myself, giving my talents and gifts away, made all the difference.

The parable today refers to the basic law of interaction between God's free gift and our response: a disciple who gives himself fully to the gift God has given him will receive greater grace still. The spiritual life is like the stock market - nothing is gained without risk and effort. God's grace is like our physical ability - exercise brings greater strength; neglect brings atrophy. The atrophied disciple will be punished like the evil - with damnation.

Matthew is describing the nature of the Christian life as a “waiting” for the parousia. The meaning of being “good and faithful” is not mere theological correctness, passive waiting, or strict obedience to clear instructions, but rather active responsibility that takes initiative and risk. In the story, the master gives no instructions as to what is to be done with the money, so faithfulness is not merely obedience to directions. Each servant must decide how to use his time during the master’s absence, how to express themselves.

Being awake means to be ready. Being ready means being faithful to God’s instructions and acting upon them through deeds of love with all the energy we can muster, with all the abilities that God has given to us

John Powell, in his book *Unconditional Love*, tells the story of a young man who was dying of cancer. In the final stages of his illness, he came to see Powell and told him that in class months earlier he had mentioned something that made it easier for him to die young. Powell had said that there were two tragedies in life, and dying young isn’t one of them. The two tragedies are to go through life and not love, and to go through life and not tell those whom you love, that you love them. The young man went on to say that when told of his illness, he realized how much he had been loved and was able to tell his family and others how much they meant to him and how much he loved them. Now when he is asked what it is like dying at age 24, he replies that it is not as bad as being 50 with no values and never having loved.

The Eucharist that we celebrate now is God’s love for us expressed through word, sacrament and community, empowering us to go out to express our faith through creative, responsible love.

So live life to the full. Take courage and express your faith through creative, responsible love.