HOMILY for 33rd SUNDAY in ORDINARY TIME – Year A

This Sunday's Gospel talks about the Last Day, which reminds me of this favorite cute story that I'd like to share with you.

Many years ago, the northern lights were much more brilliant. One night a young man went out & saw them shining brightly. He assumed they signaled the end of time. He ran through his community admonishing the people to wake up. He arrived at the house of an old man & began pounding on the door. "Get up!" he shouted. "The day of judgment has come!"

"Go back to bed," the old man grumbled. "Who ever heard of the Day of Judgment coming in the middle of the night?"

Anyway, most people do not pay attention to the Last Day or realize the gifts that God has entrusted to them. They either do not know what those gifts are or totally oblivious about them. That is why people have claimed that they have succeeded on a project all by themselves, or they would act like the rest of the world by focusing only on their needs & benefits in this life. In case we were one of those folks, this Sunday's Gospel wants to share with us the parable of the talents to remind us about the importance of acknowledging God's gifts & blessings for us & making good use of them. Here is how that parable is told: "A man was going on a journey. He called in his servants & handed his funds over to them according to each person's abilities. To one he disbursed five thousand silver pieces, to a second two thousand, and to a third one thousand. Then, he went away. Immediately the one who received the five thousand went to invest it & made another five. In the same way, the one who received two thousand doubled one's figure. The one who received one thousand went off instead & dug a hole in the ground, where one buried one's master's money."

First, let me ask you, "Do you think God has given you five thousand silver pieces, two thousand pieces, or one thousand pieces?" Second, I want to know, ""Have you done anything with those divine gifts for you yet?" As you are thinking about those questions, I'd like to remind us that everything we have comes from God including our lives. Remember that God created us & continues to sustain us. If God stops loving & sustaining us, we would not be able to exist a minute longer. We owe our lives & everything we have to God. Furthermore, we got to make good use of God's gifts & blessings to us for the sake of God the Father, not for our own sake. We have to discern God's will & use those gifts & blessings to achieve it. Otherwise, we will be held accountable for our misuse of God's gifts & blessings for us on the Last Day.

Once again, this Sunday's parable gives us a warning for that day as following, "…After a long absence, the master of those servants come home & settled accounts with them. The one who had received the five thousand came forward bringing additional five. 'My Lord,' the person said, 'You let me have five thousand. See, I have made five thousand more.' The master said to the person, 'Well done! You are an industrious & reliable servant. Since you were dependable in a small matter, I will put you in charge of larger affairs. Come, share your master's joy!'… Finally, the one who had received one thousand stepped forward. 'My Lord,' the person said, 'I knew you were a hard man. You reap where you did not sow & gather where you did not scatter, so out of fear I went off & buried your one thousand silver pieces in the ground. Here is your money back.' His master exclaimed: 'You worthless, lazy lout! You knew I reap where I did not sow & gather where I did not scatter. All the more reason to deposit my money with the banker so that on my return I could have had it back with interest. You there!

Take the one thousand away from the person & give it to the one with the ten thousand. Those who have, will get more until they grow rich; while those who have not, will lose even the little they have. Throw this worthless servant into the darkness outside, where one can wail & grind one's teeth."

As you can see from the conclusion of today's parable, the master will return to ask everyone to report on what they have done with God's gifts & blessings for them. The ones who were given five thousand or two thousand silver pieces doubled their gifts & blessings & received praises of the master. They were able to gain the trust & admiration of the master as they were entrusted with greater duties. Meanwhile, the person who was given one thousand silver pieces buried them & did nothing good with them. The master was unhappy with the end result & took everything from the person to give them to the one who has produced the most. Meanwhile, the master orders to throw the unproductive person outside to suffer in darkness. That is the consequence of not being able to recognize God's gifts & blessings & make good use of them.

What must we do to have a good knowledge & wise vision of God's gifts & blessings for us? This Sunday's First Reading, the Book of Proverbs, answers that question for us this way as it helps us see & distinguish a good spouse from a bad one. A good spouse is indeed so valuable beyond precious pearls and diamonds. A good spouse is being described as following, "…She brings him good, & not evil, all the days of her life. She obtains wool & flax & makes cloth with skillful hands… She reaches out her hands to the poor, & extends her arms to the needy." The book continues with the following advice, "…Charm is deceptive & beauty fleeting. The woman who fears the Lord is to be praised. Give her a reward of her labors; & let her works praise her at the city gates." So, a good spouse is not about charm & beauty. Rather, it is about bringing good things, not evil things, to one's partner in marriage. A good spouse works hard with one's own hands to produce good things for one's family such as collecting materials to produce cloth for them. But, a good spouse goes beyond one's family & shows one's compassion & care for the needy in one's community. By following a life of virtues, a good spouse shows respect & fear to God. That is the ideal & good spouse, who would surely recognize God's gifts & blessings in one's life & make good use of them.

My dear brothers & sisters, Jesus wants us to recognize God's gifts & blessings in our lives & make good use of them as a caring & devoted spouse. That way we will receive high praises & great rewards on the Last Day. Meanwhile, St. Paul reminds us to follow a life of virtues & be a good & faithful steward of God's gifts & blessings because of this:"…You are not in the dark, brothers & sisters, that the day might catch you off guard like a thief. No, all of you are children of light & of the day. We belong neither to darkness nor to night; therefore let us not be asleep like the rest, but awake & sober!" So, let us always live as children of the light & get ourselves ready for the Last Day.