

Homily Helps for Stewardship Renewal 2011

"Shares these gifts in love of God and neighbor"



November 6th, 2011 32nd Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A

Gospel Reading: Matthew 25: 1-13 The Parable of the Wise and Foolish Bridesmaids

Background of the Gospel:

Ancient streets were narrow and dark at night. It was the duty of the "best man" to haggle with the father of the bride over the dowry. When the contract was sealed, word was sent to the groom to come and take his bride. Bridesmaids then light the way of the bridal procession through the dark and narrow streets to the home of the groom.

It was obvious the foolish virgins did not count on the procession in the middle of the night for they were left out in the cold and dark. Wisdom might be described as "putting everything in its proper place as ordered toward a goal." The foolish virgins lacked this wisdom.

Homily Thoughts on Stewardship:

1. A contrast could be made between the "wise" and the "foolish" where the two are distinguished by good deeds and the lack of them, and such deeds may be signified by the oil of this parable. Stewardship is a response, action, not just good intentions.
2. Were the wise bridesmaids being selfish? Not sharing their gifts in love of God and neighbor? Another application could be in knowing one's limited resources and understanding being a good and faithful steward begins with meeting the needs (not always wants) of one's family and parish community. A steward is a disciple of Christ, struggling with life just like everyone else, but wise enough to know when to give and to whom!
3. All the bridesmaids fall asleep, but only the wise are satisfactorily prepared for the task when awakened. C.S. Lewis wrote, "A person whose hands are full of parcels cannot receive a gift." The same could be said of a person unprepared to receive a gift. The Stewardship Way of Life prepares us to recognize and realize our Gifts given by God, thereby preparing us to share them when asked or awakened... even if a bit drowsy!
4. Practical Application and tie-in to a Lay Witness talk:
 - a. What specific opportunities does your parish provide for parishioners to share their gifts? Perhaps target a ministry or two, such as the Saint Vincent de Paul Society or Adoration Chapel.
 - b. Lay Witnesses could speak about how they did not think a particular gift of theirs would ever be used and how pleased and thankful they were to be able to share it.



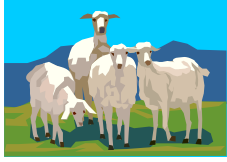
November 13th, 2001 33rd Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A

Gospel Reading: Matthew 25: 14-30 The Talents

Background of the Gospel: The first reading, from Proverbs, is the classic biblical description of the perfect wife. She brings her husband good all the days of her life. She weaves and sews and provides garments for her household. She takes care of the poor. The beauty of the woman who fears the Lord is beyond all earthly beauty. The reading is intended to recall the Church as the bride of Christ, always reflecting the glory of Christ in everything. The gospel is the parable of the talents. The “talent” varied in value, but would be considered a very large amount. Those who receive the talent(s) were to work and gain more value. In the longer form of the parable, the man who buried his talent was condemned for not working to increase the value. The second reading urges us to watch and pray, but not to worry. We are children of the light, so we should not sin. Nor should we worry about mundane things.

Homily Thoughts on Stewardship:

1. From the first reading, a comparison could be made between a spousal relationship between a husband and wife and that between a Christian steward and our Lord. It is our Lord who has “entrusted his heart” to us, our response must be likewise!
2. In the game of baseball, an easy, down the middle, across the plate pitch is called a “meatball.” Today’s Gospel is a “meatball” to talk about the Stewardship Way of Life. In order not to “whiff” at the pitch, you might avoid the following:
 - a. Talking about money or needs of the parish. Speak of the generosity of our God and how He wants us to use our gifts, not bury them. Example of these gifts could be an outgoing personality (hospitality), lots of time (service), curiosity (adult formation), or desire to know God better (prayer).
 - b. Equating stewardship with solely promoting the mission of the parish, whether that mission is education or a food pantry. Stewardship is about recognizing and receiving God’s gifts and sharing them in love of God and neighbor. Our parishioners belong to a parish, not a mission of the parish.
3. Practical Application and tie-in to a Lay Witness talk:
 - a. Parishioners seek the parish as a primary community to serve. When a parishioner finds they can serve and be ministered to in their parish, they have little need to search elsewhere. Lay witnesses could speak about how they found their parish such a place, and some practical ways to seek service opportunities.
 - b. Lay Witnesses could speak about how they too were afraid of what little gifts they felt they received from God, but how through service in the parish, they recognize they have more gifts than first realized.



November 22nd 2011 Solemnity of Christ the King Commitment Sunday

Gospel Reading: Matthew 25: 31-46 Separation of the sheep from the goats

Background of the Gospel:

The parable provides comparisons not only of sheep and goats, but humility and pride, and their implications at His Second Coming, the Parousia. This parable is one of four in which Matthew makes the point that the end of time is unexpected, a time of separation of good and bad, and the only hope is that of readiness. While many of the details are similar to the standard Jewish Apocalyptic expectation, many details are different such as judgment coming from Jesus Himself. The separation between “right” and “left” reflects the ancient world’s understanding of associating evil and the left hand, and power at the right hand.

Homily Thoughts on Stewardship:

1. From the first reading, the homilist has a wonderful opportunity to speak personally about the Stewardship Way of Life and how by “tending His sheep,” a priest too practices stewardship. Lines such as the lost I will seek out, the strayed I will bring back, the injured I will bind up, the sick I will heal...” are great opportunities to explain how the ministry and life of a priest shares God’s gifts out of love of God and neighbor.
2. The Gospel reading again is a “meat ball” pitch in explaining the importance of putting our gifts at the service of others. Almost too easy of a Gospel that we might whiff! Personal testimony of how a priest accomplishes the corporeal works of mercy and is a steward of God’s gifts is a powerful way to end the liturgical year and Stewardship Renewal 2011.
3. Practical Application and tie-in to a Lay Witness talk:
 - a. Lay witnesses could speak answering the following questions:
 - i. What opportunities does the parish provide in serving others through the corporeal and spiritual works of mercy?
 - ii. What surprised you the most in participating in a parish ministry?
 - iii. How by serving others outside the parish do you see yourself serving the parish?



Gospel on Five Fingers

Mother Teresa always told her sisters to remember the “Gospel on Five Fingers.” She would say the words, “You did it for Me,” as she held up each finger of her hand. These words come from the Judgment of the Nations (Matthew 25:31-46) where Jesus tells us that we will be judged by how we treated those who were thirsty or hungry or sick.

When Mother Teresa began her work with the poor she cared for thousands of people who were truly thirsty, hungry, or sick, but later in her life as she became world famous and was invited to travel to the United States she began to teach that even people who have food and clothes and lots of material possessions can be poor because they are lonely or do not know God. She began to encourage all people to know who the poor were in their own corner of the world.

Found at <http://archstl.org/category/stewardship-categories/stewardship-seeds/stories?page=1>