

BONE SERVE ET FIDELIS

A Homily for the Thirty-third Sunday of the Year (A)

St. Paul's Parish, Gävle, Sweden.

Texts: Prov. 31: 10-13, 19-20, 30-31; Ps. 127; Thess. 5: 1-6; Matt. 25: 14-30.

“***Well done, good and faithful servant;*** you have shown you can be faithful in small things. I will entrust you with greater; come and join in your master’s happiness”. My dear brothers and sisters in Christ, as we come towards the end of the Church’s year, the readings remind us of the end of time, the end of our time on earth and the reality of judgement by the merciful and just God. In the Gospel text of today, the Lord teaches us that we are all gifted people. We do not all have the same gifts. But we all have very important gifts. All, without exception have received wonderful gifts from God. We are therefore called to be aware of the responsibility we have. We are to use the gifts wisely for the good of humanity and the glory of God. We notice that in the parable the master praises both the man who got the five talents and the man who got the two talents for their efforts and rewards them accordingly. If the man who got one talent had traded with what he got and presented a profit of one talent, he too would have been praised. While the Lord’s teaching is for every one on the face of the earth, we who are Christians are called in a special way to teach others by our examples. We should always be mindful of our dignity as Christians and our vocation to be salt of the earth and light of the world. What this means is that in our family, in the Church, in our places of work, in the schools, wherever we may be, we have to live as we are called, as the Apostle says, in the Second Reading of today. If we do this, we should never be afraid of the day of the Lord. The Lord’s coming should be a joyful event: not one that brings fear and anxiety.

This is why we should remember always that our families are Christian families. We should be guided by the teaching of Christ and his Church, not by the ideologies of unbelievers. Love should be the only law, not the principles advocated by anti-family movements. The tone of the First Reading may sound strange in our ears as Swedes – it may appear as if the woman is merely a servant whose sole duty is to please her husband. Yet in a love-filled family, the man and woman serve each other with honour. Is it not true that the woman is the heart of the family – the love of the husband and their children? Every member of the family uses his or her gifts for the good of the family.

In the Church, every member is called to use the gifts he/she has received to serve the one Body of Christ. By our baptism, we have been made one holy family. Our patron teaches us this truth (Cf. 1 Cor. 12). The spiritual gifts that we have received are to be used to serve the Church, the Body of Christ. Our parish will only be what God intends it to be if we all use the gifts we have received wisely and generously to serve the Lord. We are not all ministerial priests. But we are all members of the Church. We are not all organists or choirmasters, but we are all called to sing the praises of the Lord. We are not all lectors or cantors, but everyone is called to proclaim the Gospel of salvation. We are not all altar servers, but we all together offer our prayers and gifts to the Lord through the priest. Most of the people who serve the Church from their hearts do so unnoticed. Do we often remember those who take care of our children during Mass? What about the ones who tend the flowers, who take up the collection, who prepare the bread and wine in the sacristy? But the Lord sees everyone and will reward everyone according how they have used the talents they received.

The Lord who made us knows us as unique individuals. He has blessed each one of us and expects

each one of us to use the talents we have received wisely and productively for the good of the family, the Church and the society at large. Do not then compare yourself with anyone else. You are unique. You are good. You are gifted in a way that is unique. Use the talents you have as the Lord has made you – to the best of your ability. And if you do this, the Lord who will judge the living and the dead, will greet you thus on the last day, “*Well done, good and faithful servant; you have shown you can be faithful in small things. I will entrust you with greater; come and join in your master’s happiness*”.

Fr Damian O. Eze, MSP

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