

Saturday 21st in Ordinary Time

Gospel text (Mt 25,14-30): Jesus told this parable to his disciples, «Imagine someone who, before going abroad, summoned his servants to entrust his property to them. He gave five talents of silver to one, then two to another, and one to a third, each one according to his ability; and he went away. He who received five talents went at once to do business with the money and gained another five. The one who received two did the same and gained another two. But the one with one talent dug a hole and hid his master's money.

»After a long time, the master of those servants returned and asked for a reckoning. The one who received five talents came with another five talents, saying: ‘Lord, you entrusted me with five talents, but see I have gained five more with them’. The master answered: ‘Very well, good and faithful servant, since you have been faithful in a few things, I will entrust you with much more. Come and share the joy of your master’. Then the one who had two talents came and said: ‘Lord, you entrusted me with two talents; I have two more which I gained with them’. The master said: ‘Well, good and faithful servant, since you have been faithful in little things, I will entrust you with much more. Come and share the joy of your master’.

»Finally, the one who had received one talent came and said: ‘Master, I know that you are an exacting man. You reap what you have not sown and gather what you have not invested. I was afraid, so I hid your money in the ground. Here, take what is yours’. But his master replied: ‘Wicked and worthless servant, you know that I reap where I have not sown and gather where I have not invested. Then you should have deposited my money in the bank, and you

would have given it back to me with interest on my return. Therefore, take the talent from him, and give it to the one who has ten. For to all those who have, more will be given, and they will have an abundance; but from those who are unproductive, even what they have will be taken from them. As for that useless servant, throw him out into the dark where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth'».

«Someone, before going abroad, summoned his servants to entrust his property to them»

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Today, we contemplate the parable of the Talents. Here, we can appreciate something like a change of style in Jesus' message: the announcement of the Kingdom is no longer limited to point out its nearness but to the description of its contents through stories: it is the time of the parables!

A great man sets out to start a long trip, and entrusts his assets to his servants. He might have distributed them equally, but he preferred not to. He gave each one according to his abilities (five, two and one). Each servant could capitalize with that money the beginning of a good business. The two first servants did well administering their deposits, but the third one —through fear or laziness— preferred to hide it away and eluded any investment: he chose the comfort of his own poverty.

The master came back... and asked for a reckoning. He rewarded the courage and foresight of the two first servants that were able to duplicate his entrusted deposits. But the treatment to the “cautious” servant was very different.

Two thousand years later the message of this parable is still very much applicable. Modern democracies are moving towards a progressive separation between Church and State, which is not bad; rather on the contrary. However, this global and progressive mentality hides a secondary effect, which may be dangerous for us Christians: to become the living image of that third servant whom the master (biblical figure of God Father) scolded to with great severity. Without any malice, just out of comfort or fear, we are running the risk of hiding away and reducing our

Christian faith to the private environment of our family and intimate friends. The Gospel should not be limited to a reading and sterile contemplation. With courage and risk, we have to manage our Christian vocation in our own social and professional environment, while proclaiming the figure of Christ with words and examples.

St. Augustine cites: «Those of us who preach the word of God to the people are not so far away from human condition and from the thinking supported by faith that we may not realize our own dangers. But we are consoled by the fact that where our risk lies because of our Christian ministry, we have the help of your prayers».