

# **Archbishop Lori's Homily: 33rd Sunday in Ordinary Time; Knights of Columbus Mid-Year Meeting**

*33rd Sunday in Ordinary Time*

*Knights of Columbus Mid-Year Meeting*

*November 19, 2017*

As we approach the end of this current liturgical year, the Scripture readings at Mass call us to reflect on the final judgment when Christ will come “to judge the living and the dead.” The tale of the three servants in today’s Gospel is a case in point. The Master of the household is Jesus and the household in question is the Church. Each of us is represented by the servants to whom the Master entrusted a portion of his wealth. Just so, through the Holy Spirit, the Lord has given each of us “talents” and has given us a lifetime to develop and use those talents. One day, however, the Lord will return in glory to ask us what we did with them. This is the question the Gospel poses to you and me: What am I doing with the “talents” God gave me?

Now, the word “talents” means that share of God’s own goods, the inheritance, if you will, that he has entrusted to each of us. And so it might refer to the natural talents God has given us and we need to ask if we are developing and using our talents or wasting them. The word “talent” can also refer to the material blessings bestowed on us. Are we using those blessings not only for ourselves but also for the good of others? Above all, the word “talent” refers to the spiritual blessings which God, in his mercy, has poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit. Among those spiritual blessings is the call to be a leader in the Knights of Columbus, and the many opportunities for spiritual growth through charity the Order offers us. What are we doing with all these wonderful gifts?

So, let us review what each of the three servants in the Gospel did with the wealth that their Master entrusted to them. Two of them invested it and a third dug a hole and buried it. It’s this latter servant that you and I need to be worried about for he

clearly misread the will of the Master and earned his ire. Far from calling him prudent, the Master condemned him as “wicked” and “lazy” because, while he protected the Master’s assets, he failed to grow them. Anxious as we are not to share this servant’s fate, we need to understand clearly how we could be guilty of burying the gifts God has given us.

At the purely natural level, we bury the talents God gave us when we stop trying to grow and develop as human beings. We might have a special talent in art or technology or an ability to teach. Do we let gifts lie dormant or do we them for others? Or we might be so intent on stashing our money away for a rainy day that we fail to use at least some of God’s largesse for others, especially the neediest. We can also hoard our spiritual blessings. It’s not uncommon to meet good practicing Catholics who are *unwilling* to share the faith with others or to encourage a family member who is inactive to return to church. As one parishioner wrote to me, “Archbishop, you above all should know that religion is purely private matter.” Gosh, I guess I missed class the day that lesson was taught in the seminary! And in the jurisdictions you lead as State Deputies, you struggle at times with councils that are not really open to new members. Even though the members are aging and the numbers are dwindling, they’d rather have the peace and security of a private club instead of the dynamic spirit of service of an Order founded on charity. So, in general, we can say that we dig a hole and bury the talents God gave us when we are completely risk-averse and self-referential, as Pope Francis reminds us.

What, then, does it mean to invest the talents, the assets God has given us? Here we need to recall words that Jesus spoke to us in the Gospel of John; he said: “By this is my Father glorified, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples”(Jn. 15:8). Jesus is not only the Master of the household; he is also the vine and we are branches and without the Lord Jesus we can do nothing. So the first way we invest the talents God has given us is by remaining in Jesus and the way we remain in Jesus is spending time each day in prayer. When we shut out the distractions of the day and come into the presence of the Lord with open hearts and hands, the Holy Spirit is activated in our hearts and the gifts he gave us in Baptism and Confirmation come alive and begin to influence our lives profoundly -how we interact with others, the decisions we make, our readiness to go out of our way for others, especially those in need. So, instead of holding fast to our personal peace and security, we’ll

find ourselves putting the gifts and talents God gave us at the service of others and, in the process, bearing that good and lasting fruit that Jesus expects of us all. For, in the logic of the Gospel, we invest God's gifts by giving them away. As St. Francis of Assisi so masterfully summed up the heart of the Gospel: "It is in giving that we receive, it is in pardoning that we are pardoned, and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life."

When Pope Francis urges you and me to become missionary disciples who bring the faith to the peripheries of unbelief and human suffering, he is urging us to throw off the caution of the wicked and lazy servant, and instead invest our time and talent in spreading the Word of God confident that in the Holy Spirit that there will an abundant return, good fruit! He is urging us to take the mercy God has shown us and extend that mercy to others. The Pope is urging us to put our material blessings at the service of the poor confident that we will be repaid a hundred-fold.

And what does investing the talents God gave us mean for us as the family of the Knights of Columbus? Does it not mean bringing the message of the Knights and the vision of Fr. McGivney to new generations of men and their families who would benefit greatly by belonging to the Knights of Columbus? Does it not mean a newfound generosity in serving the needs of others through the many paths of discipleship offered by the Knights? What we need most of all are generous hearts in which God's gifts are multiplied for the sake of others.

As we return to our respective jurisdictions, let us do so with new resolve to share the gifts God has given us with brother knights and their families and with those in need. If we do so, God will bestow on us even greater gifts, a spiritual wealth that goes beyond our capacity to imagine. Thus do we aspire to hear the Lord Jesus upon his return in glory say to us: "Come, good and faithful servant, enter your Master's joy!"

May God bless us and keep us always in his love. Vivat Jesus!