

33rd Sunday in Ordinary Time.



The man who received one talent went off, dug a hole in the ground and buried his master's money.

THE GOSPEL. Matthew 25:14-30

*A man going on a journey called in his servants
and entrusted his possessions to them.*

Father,
of the Universe,
you have entrusted this planet to us.
Now let us use all the talents
you have given us
to bring it to its
fullness.

No shirking.
No burying the talents.

Let each and every one of us do our part to
bring healing, and sow beauty
in all creation and so
share in
your
joy.

THE FIRST READING. Proverbs 31:10-13, 19-20, 30-31

She reaches out her hands to the poor and extends her arms to the needy.

Jesus, you have
entrusted your heart to us.
Give us merciful hands to feed the hungry,

and extend our arms to embrace
the poor and needy.
Let us spend our
lives and
gifts
on
others!

THE SECOND READING. 1 Thessalonians 5:1-6

*For you yourselves know that the day of the Lord will come
like a thief in the night.*

Lord,
banish
our fear of you.
Fear, as if you were a thief
in the night!

Birth us into your day.

Children
of the
light,
we
watch
and
wait for you.

(Annie Osdiek)

The Spirituality of the Readings - a Reflection by John Foley S.J.

The Fear Factor

The [Gospel](#) story is pretty simple. A wealthy man leaves his goods for each of three servants to care for while he is gone. He doesn't give them instructions, at least none that we are told of. When he returns, he sees that two of the three servants have invested the money and got back twice the amount. He is delighted. So, at this point, the moral of the story would be: "Make the most of what you have."

God gives to us our own lives with all their rewards and catastrophes, and he says to us, *dive in.*

But we miss the most interesting part of all if we look just at the successful servants. We miss the fascinating and puzzling story of the third servant. This poor soul did not invest the money at all. He buried it. Quite simply, he was afraid of investing it and losing it.

He was right to be afraid, given the owner's attitude. He listened to the fearful servant's story and then had the man thrown into "the darkness outside," where there would be "wailing and grinding of teeth." Quite an overreaction, it seems. The poor guy just wanted to keep the owner's money safe!

Maybe the proprietor was simply a "demanding person," as the parable says. Dark spirited.

But there is much more to it. The monetary unit "talent" in Jesus' time was not a small amount. Even one talent could be worth more than a labourer would earn in a lifetime. And the owner entrusted a lot more than just money to the servants—he left them all his possessions, everything he had. He took a great risk and he wanted them to do the same, not leave the investment mouldering around somewhere.

Ok, now make the switch. Assume that the parable is about God. Maybe God entrusts an even greater amount to you and me! Life, abilities, the gift of love, the living breathing human beings around us, and every so often, real and open acts of unselfish love. God gives all this free of charge, gives to us our own lives with all their rewards and catastrophes, and he says to us, *dive in*. Have your life. Make whatever you will with it because you are my own beloved.

It is wonderful. But then an awful question arises. Does God curse those who are afraid and who bury what they are given? Jesus at least seems to say so.

To everyone who has, more will be given and he will grow rich; but from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. ([Gospel](#))

Ouch. That hurts.

Except that, in the realm of spirituality, there is one thing I know of that will go away if it is buried, but which gets greater if you use it.

Love. If fear closes the door tightly against love, guess where the loveless one will be. In the darkness outside the door, wailing and gnashing those teeth. Without love.

Get this: We are all frightened, and God always has compassion upon us. God waits for ages to see if we will not accept just a bit of the love he offers, and if we will even find just enough courage to invest some of it in other people. God is often disappointed in this risk he takes, and I'm sure he says, "oh no, not again" when we fail.

But this is the disappointment of someone who loves us very well. Let love in.

Love casts out fear.