

Homily for the 33rd Sunday of the Year

When I was a governor of Holy Family Secondary School in Selby I discovered another meaning for the letters G&T. I always thought of a gin and tonic when someone said G&T but in the context of the pupils it meant 'gifted and talented'. In the story a talent was a very large amount of money, so the person giving them away was taking a huge risk, because there was a possibility that the money would be lost by one or more of the three different people who were given different amounts of money.

Two of those receiving the talents also took risks and doubled the amount they had been given, much to the owner's delight on his return, as we heard. The third did not take a risk but buried the money in the ground and incurred the wrath of the owner and his own future expulsion.

In applying this parable to ourselves we think of the talents, not as amounts of money but as our God given giftedness and abilities. Perhaps the first thing to acknowledge is that God distributes different gifts to different people. Sometimes we can find ourselves wishing that God had given us different gifts, we can even be envious of another person's ability to play the piano, paint a beautiful portrait, excel at some sport or other. But this is to miss the point because what really matters is what we do with the gifts and talents we have been given. Are we prepared to take risks, even if sometimes we fail, or do we bury our gifts and talents and leave things to other people. We can be overawed at how talented other people are and compare ourselves badly, believing that life isn't fair, and again bury our own gifts and talents.

We were prepared for this gospel by the first reading from the book of proverbs. I have to confess that I wondered how wives or indeed unmarried women would react on hearing it. Would they be wondering if the reading described them? Would they feel a little patronised? Would they be saying to themselves, 'there is a lot of emphasis here on what I am doing with my hands, sowing, knitting, ironing, and so forth. Don't I have other gifts and talents?' Would they be asking why doesn't the Church use my talents in a way that it uses men's talents?

Next month Kamala Harris will be sworn in as the first black female vice president of the United States. Women hold positions of authority in work places, from banking to building throughout the world. So called glass ceilings have been broken again and again except in one institution, namely our own Church. Pope Francis has established a group of men and women to look into the ordination of women to the diaconate, which some see as progress, but until this actually happens, many women will continue to feel frustrated by an Institutional Church seen to be patriarchal and which is failing to use the many and different talents that women have and would willingly share. Is it a risk raising this issue in a homily? Possibly, but if this is not addressed the Church could be charged with repeating the mistake of the person in the gospel who buried the talent in the ground, failing to benefit from the talents and abilities of gifted women.

Bidding Prayers for the 33rd Sunday of the Year

Celebrant:

As children of the light and of the day we lift up our prayers in confident hope.

Reader:

For the Church – that the Church will use the talents of all its members to the full in the service of the Gospel of truth.

Lord in your mercy

For leaders and Governments – that they will work for a fairer distribution of the world's resources so that all people can have sufficient on which to live.

Lord in your mercy

For those women and men who use their talents to promote justice throughout the world – that their ministry among those denied justice will be rewarded.

Lord in your mercy

For our families – that our homes will be places where each person is encouraged to use their God given gifts for the good of all.

Lord in your mercy

For those who have died, all victims of violence, accident, natural disaster and the Coronavirus pandemic, and Michael Doran, Honorah Kenyon, Harold Huston, Herbert Ward, Nicholas Hans Friedrich, Ann Whalley, Anthony Yeadsley, Farrell Brooks and Betty Gregson whose anniversaries occur this week – that they and all who have died may rest in peace and rise in glory.

Lord in your mercy

Either aloud or in silence we pray for our own special intentions...pause...then

Lord in your mercy

We ask the prayers of Mary as we say, Hail Mary...

Celebrant:

All loving God you call us to use wisely the gifts you have given to each one so that your kingdom may come in its fullness. Keep us alert for the coming of your Son and may these prayers be a sign of our love for you. Through Christ our Lord. Amen