

Homily for 33rd Sunday

This Sunday's Theme is Fidelity. Two interesting but contrasting figures appear in this Sunday's Reading 1 and Gospel readings. The Book of Proverbs is a compendium of moral and religious instruction as given to Jewish youth by professional sages in the post-exile period. Proverbs is the most typical example of a "wisdom" book in the Old Testament with its emphasis on: moral high probity (adherence to the highest principles and ideals) based on religion, its teaching that reward and punishment follow in this life, its appeal to the lessons of experience rather than to revelation, and its exploration of the nature of wisdom and of wisdom's relation to God. In Proverbs (Reading 1), the wife and mother, with all her domestic duties, finds time to develop skills and to dedicate herself to the needs of others. In Matthew's Parable of the Talents (Gospel), the unproductive servant is totally devoid of an enterprising spirit. In the Gospel, harmful fear of the master of the house paralyzes this servant. In Reading 1, the reverential and worshipful fear of the Lord is what motivates this woman. We are told in these readings that the fruitful use of God's gifts enter into the final assessment of our lives. So In Reading 2, Paul urges vigilance in the light of the uncertainty of the time of the Second Coming of Jesus.

What we do in life and how we do it, must be done with the fidelity of our relationship to God, to each other, to our Church fellowship, and to the neighbourhood and world in which we live and work. We are all gifted with some strength. By using our talents and developing new skills, not only do we reap greatness, we can change the world and make it a better place as the wife in the first reading makes her home a better place to live in. *Luke is 32 years old and he is still single. One day a friend asked, "Why aren't you married? Can't you find a woman who will be a good wife? Luke replied, "Actually, I've found many women I wanted to marry, but when I bring them home to meet my parents, my mother doesn't like them." His friend thinks for a moment and says, "I've got the perfect solution, just find a girl who's just like your mother." A few months later they meet again and his friend says, "Did you find the perfect girl? Did your mother like her?" With a frown on his face, Luke answers, "Yes, I found the perfect girl. She was just like my mother. You were right, my mother liked her very much." The friend said, "Then what's the problem?" Luke replied, "My father doesn't like her." We have choices in our lives too . You can be a faithful servant of the master or a servant with a harmful fear of the master. Bernard Malamud, an American Author says: There comes a time in a man's life when to get where he has to go, if there are no doors or windows he walks through a wall.*

You are like the tree that is destined to grow tall, the bird that soars high, and the water that flows with new life to quench the thirst of others. Vince Lombardi a football Coach says: The quality of a person's life is in direct proportion to their commitment to excellence regardless of their chosen field of endeavour". The two servants who had done well are not told to sit back and rest. But, they are given greater tasks. One talent was taken away from the man who hid it, and was given to the one who had received five talents. At our work place, at home or at the parish, when we do something good, we are given more responsibilities, instead of being grateful we grumble and complain. We fail to recognize that it is the recognition of the effort we put in. The man with one talent did not lose it; but he simply did nothing with it. We are like the one who hid the talent given to him. The unfortunate part of life is as Oliver Wendall Holmes said, "Most people go to their graves, with music still in them." Feed a tree. Water it, fertilize it, keep it where there's sun, and your tree will bear fruit. Deprive the tree and it dies. Deprive your mind of new ideas and positive reinforcing statements and you'll be much like a robot stuck in a rut. In an English exam. There's an essay writing. The title was "What is laziness?" One student left 3 pages blank and wrote in the end - THIS IS LAZINESS. If you want to soar like an eagle you have to learn the ways of an eagle. Let us keep in mind the words of St. Francis of Assisi, "Start by doing what is necessary, then what is possible and suddenly you are doing the impossible." Let us discover our special talents. It may be to sing, to dance, to draw, to write, to do farming, to sympathize with others, to be a good listener, to teach or to serve. When we earnestly try to cultivate them and use them for the good of our brothers and sisters, God will tell, "Well-done good and faithful servant, come and enter into the joy of your master."