

33rd Sunday Ordinary Time Year A.
November 14-15, 2020

You are not in darkness

Readings: Proverbs 31:10-13, 19-20, 30-31; 1 Thessalonians 5:1-6; Matt 25:14-30

I suspect all of us have had the experience of hearing a joke to which we did not understand the punchline. Everyone laughs except us. It can be an embarrassing situation; we feel left out in the cold, out in the darkness. A joke is one thing, but no one wants to be left out in the darkness with respect to matters of faith. We desire to be knowledgeable, alert and engaged. In order to do this, St. Paul tells us that we must stay alert.

The letter to the Thessalonians says that to be a child of the light means to dedicate oneself to the Lord, actively seeking to engage the saving message of Jesus. If we are not grounded, we will falter. If the roots are not deep, the faith may flourish for a time, but it will wither. If we sit back passively, we are like the servant who buried his talent in the ground, doing nothing with it whatsoever.

Another sign of burying our talents is the degree to which some people today are shy about witnessing to their Catholic faith. In fact, shy may be too gentle of a word. They are downright afraid of how it may affect their relationships, their employment, etc. I have heard this firsthand. Though it pains me to say, it is not *in vogue* to be a practicing Catholic today. Whether through our own self-inflicted wounds as clergy or the societal changes that set aside and ridicule people of faith, it is much easier to stay beneath the radar and do your own thing, and to do so quietly.

Brothers and sisters, that does not cut it. I urge you and challenge you to resist this tendency. Now is the time to step up, to be part of the solution. The laity plays an indispensable role in making the name of Jesus known and loved, and your input and participation in the Church is critical to our mission. That cannot happen if people are not engaged. There is actually a freedom that comes with being unapologetic about your faith. It does not mean waving your arms on a street corner, but it does mean that you ought not be ashamed or embarrassed to be Catholic.

Despite the many challenges in the Church, and yes, even the doctrinal confusion at times that is as frustrating as it is inexcusable, rest secure in the knowledge that living the fullness of your faith is not only possible, but transformative. It provides you the greatest sense of freedom you have ever experienced. You may even stop worrying about what others think.

Today's Gospel reminds us of our need to utilize our talents for the good of the Church, community and family. We could begin with the full and active participation at Mass, whether in person if at all possible, or by means of technology. That is your bread and butter. Read the daily readings if you are unable to attend a daily Mass or two during the week. Seek out the Lord in the Sacrament of Penance.

Not everyone can volunteer regularly as an RCIA sponsor every Thursday evening. However, there are plenty of ways that we could be involved more actively. Consider a daily Mass, even once per week at 7:30 a.m. Join a That Man is You! Virtual group. Volunteer to serve as a lector. While opportunities are understandably more limited right now due to the pandemic, the day will come when things will open up.

Giving back to the Church has the effect of magnifying, bringing to light the spiritual growth that you will begin to see, slowly, but surely. Almost imperceptible as it may be, growth happens, and we are transformed. We are not in the darkness anymore. Let us live our faith in the light and allow that light to shine through our daily lives, serving as leaven for a world so in need of God's love and His truth.