

The 33rd Sunday in Ordinary Time November 15, 2020

Karl was a young man who was passionate about getting teenagers involved in their faith. When he was in his early twenties, he accepted a job as a youth minister in a diocese far away from where his family and friends were. As you can imagine, it was very lonely at the beginning not knowing anyone.

Soon a young couple befriended him and would have him over their house for dinner. They treated him like a member of the family and it gave him so much joy to spend time with them.

Since they had done so much for him, he wanted to show them how grateful he was. While he was on a pilgrimage to Israel, he stopped into a shop that was famous for making beautifully designed porcelain tiles. Karl decided he would buy one for the couple. He saw one he thought would be perfect to hang in their family room - a painting of the Holy Family. Though it cost more than he was planning to spend, he knew they would love it.

When he got back from his pilgrimage, Karl was excited to give it to them and see their reaction. When they opened it, they were delighted with it, which made Karl very happy.

About two weeks later, Karl was at their house for dinner. As they were setting up, Karl saw the husband place the tile he had bought for them on the table. He thought that it was strange but didn't say anything. What happened next horrified him. The wife put a big bowl of mashed potatoes on the tile.

Karl didn't know what to do. At first, he said to himself, "Do they think I spent all that money to buy them a trivet?" At the same time, he didn't want to embarrass them, so he let it go. But, during the course of the meal, the weight of the bowl pressed down on the tile, until it broke in half.

Then Karl felt heartbroken. He told the young couple that the tile he had bought for them was meant to be hanging on the wall not to be used to put hot plates on. They were very apologetic and said they didn't realize that. Still, Karl felt hurt that the gift he had put so much thought into was now broken.

I think we can all relate to Karl's feelings. We may have given someone a gift that meant a lot to us only to see it go unappreciated or misused. At the time, it seemed as though they were rejecting not only the gift but our friendship. We may have regretted ever giving the gift to them in the first place.

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In today's gospel, Jesus tells a parable about a king who gives talents to his servants. He is not giving them out of love or gratitude, he expects to have those talents back with interest. He will not tolerate the servants if they misuse those talents or if they fail to give them back to him with interest.

Through this parable, Jesus is teaching us something about God. He has showered us with many gifts. He does so because He is good and because He loves us. Still, all those gifts are not ours to keep. They are on loan. And God expects us to put them to use not only for our good but for the good of others. Like Karl, He will be hurt if we take those gifts for granted, if we misuse them, or if we break them. On the other hand, He will be pleased if we show gratitude for those gifts, if we put them on display, if we share them with others, and if we make something beautiful out of them. Of course, there are talents that each of us have that make us unique. We are responsible for developing them and putting them at the service of others.

Today, let us take a look at a gift that we all have in common - a gift that God has given to all of us that we must take care of and use for His glory. That gift is the gift of life. All of us were created by God. No matter what the circumstances of our birth were, none of us is a mistake or an accident. Each one of us was intended by God to exist. He created us so that we could not only enjoy this lifetime but that we could spend eternity with Him in heaven. Our lives are precious because we are made in the image and likeness of God.

We have a duty, then, to take care of this life we've been given. That means we must take care of the bodies and souls which make up our lives. We have to nourish our bodies with good food and with exercise. We must also nourish our souls with prayer, with meditation on God's word, and with frequent reception of the sacraments.

We also have a duty to take care of the lives of others. None of us are born simply as individuals. Rather, we are born as part of a family and part of a community. We are all brothers and sisters if not by blood then by our common human nature. We cannot stand by when the lives of others are threatened whether it be the life of the unborn, the life of the poor, or the life of prisoners. All those lives matter to God and they should matter to us.

We gather here today as a people who have been richly blessed by God. It pleases God that we take the time today to stand in His presence and thank Him for all He has given us. At the same time, Jesus reminds us that those gifts are on loan to us and that He is expecting them back with interest. If we have buried those gifts, there is still time for us to dig them up and put them to use. If we have broken those gifts

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through misuse, there is still time for us to bring them to Jesus to fix them. If we have put those gifts to use and seen them grow, we can offer them to God and ask Him that they continue to grow.

At some point we will run out of time and have to stand before God to give an accounting of the use we have made of the gifts we were given. Which servant will you be like?