



33rd Week of the Year and Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary – 19-21 November 2023

Reflection: Mgr Daniel McHugh

“The Almighty has done great things for me and holy is His name”
(Responsorial Psalm for the Presentation)

There can be little doubt that one of our greatest concerns as a country at this time is the success or otherwise of the economy. It has always played a key part in the run up to elections because, of course, it affects the wellbeing of all of us. Jesus in his parables chose stories that would reflect everyday life to make a point about His Kingdom. On the 33rd Sunday the Parable of the Talents is about being ready for the coming of His Kingdom; his disciples – our good selves – must stand ready, be vigilant for the coming of Our Lord. The parable talks about Christian Discipleship using an economic metaphor. Before he leaves on a journey, the master entrusts to his servants a different number of talents, giving to each according to their abilities. A “talent” is a coin of great value. On his return he finds the first and second servants have doubled their money and both are rewarded. The third servant, however, has only preserved what was given to him – digging a hole in the ground to bury it rather than take any risk. These days we hear of people keeping money under the bed, which is I suppose the equivalent. In the parable the man did not even put it in the Bank where it could gain interest, and was punished for it. We might well be sympathetic to the third servant – given that we live in times when we might indeed lose by putting our money in the Bank, and have to pay to keep it there!

Read in the light of last week’s parable of the wise and foolish bridesmaids, the parable teaches that God’s judgement will be based on the service we render to God and to one another in accordance with the gifts that God has given to us. ‘Sunday Connection’, published by Loyola Press, has this comment: *“This Gospel reminds us that Christian spirituality is not passive or inactive. Our life of prayer helps us to discern the gifts (talents) that have been given to us by God. This prayer and discernment ought to lead us to use our gifts in the service of God and our neighbour. God’s grace allows us to share in the work of serving the Kingdom of Heaven.”* I must say, I really like that final sentence: Jesus gives us talents for expanding the Church on earth – bringing God’s Kingdom into people’s lives and into the life of society. This parable is a reminder to be vigilant, not to let the business of life and its distraction take us away from what is most important. I was watching a TV programme recently where a very famous star was being interviewed: she has had so many successes on stage and screen, but has put it all aside to focus on her family before it’s too late, and she misses out on her family and grandchildren growing up. In this month of November when we think of loved ones –

Monsignor Daniel McHugh

Co-ordinator for Ethnic Chaplaincies in the Archdiocese



now departed - we may well join her in making a wise decision, a decision for love and family.

On the Feast of the Presentation of Our Lady this coming week, we reflect on Mary's Dedication. It is one of the Feasts most loved in the East where it has been celebrated since the 6th century. It came into the Roman Calendar later; the 14th century. In preparing our Vlog: Burning Bush, for this weekend we have been able to find a great picture by Fr Lawrence Lew, O.P. of a stained glass image of the Presentation, in Washington DC. The origin of the Feast is linked to the dedication of the new Church of Saint Mary in Jerusalem in 543. Mary, having "*found grace in the eyes of God*" (of Luke 1:30) became Mother and a powerful Help of Christians. In the Document on the Church (L G 65) we read that the Church looks to her to help conceive Christ in the hearts of the Faithful. Every Christian, like Mary, finds grace before God in the Holy Spirit through Christ. We are blessed to have this Memorial of the Presentation/Dedication of Mary at this time of year when we look to the coming again of our Lord our Saviour. In her we have the model of a Christian Life, which began with our Presentation/Dedication at Baptism. Are we using our talents, the gifts we have received, to build the Kingdom of God?

With Mary we pray "*The Almighty has done great things for me and holy is His name*". In the Holy Eucharist we are strengthened to play our part in the building of the Kingdom of God. Our Lady of the Presentation be with us on our journey.

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