

**Homily for the 33<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of the Year - Cycle A**  
**Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception**  
**November 15, 2020**  
**† Most Reverend Thomas John Paprocki**  
**Bishop of Springfield in Illinois**

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

Three years ago this month, our diocese concluded our Fourth Diocesan Synod. Representatives from each of our 129 parishes voted overwhelmingly to declare that the “mission of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Springfield in Illinois is to build a fervent community of intentional and dedicated missionary disciples of the Risen Lord and steadfast stewards of God’s creation who seek to become saints. Accordingly, the community of Catholic faithful in this Diocese is committed to the discipleship and stewardship way of life as commanded by Christ Our Savior and as revealed by Sacred Scripture and Tradition.”

To further this mission, the Synod also declared that the Diocese of Springfield in Illinois is committed to implementing the Four Pillars of Discipleship and Stewardship, namely: Hospitality, Prayer, Formation, and Service.

We will not accomplish this mission overnight, and so we need to keep coming back to the declarations of our Fourth Diocesan Synod to assess the progress we are making and to determine what further steps are needed to implement our mission “to build a fervent community of intentional and dedicated missionary disciples of the Risen Lord and steadfast stewards of God’s creation who seek to become saints.”

Today’s scripture readings have much to tell us about the discipleship and stewardship way of life. In the first reading from today’s Mass, the Book of Proverbs gives us a snapshot of the ideal woman and man. Saint Paul’s First Letter to the Thessalonians reminds us that we are children of the light. Of course, that light is Jesus Christ, who is the Light of the World. There is no reason to fear the darkness of the Evil One.

In our Gospel today from Saint Matthew, Jesus tells the story of three servants to whom a rich man entrusted his fortune. Imposing loans on people was common in ancient times as a profitable way to deposit cash. Two of his employees were delighted to have such trust placed in them. After all, a talent was a coin of value, and he had lent them five and ten talents apiece. Eager to please him, they showed enterprise in their use of his

money, unlike the third servant, who wanted to save himself any trouble or anxiety. He simply dug a hole and buried it.

In this parable, it is important to note that a “talent” is a unit of money – not a skill, ability, or aptitude, as we may commonly think of it. The exact monetary worth in modern calculations could be about \$6,000. In this sense, when we think about sharing our talents, we are asked to share our money as well as our skills, abilities, and financial resources for the glory of God and the good of others. This is often referred to as sharing our time, talent, and treasure.

Jesus, however, was not a financial advisor. He was interested in a different kind of treasure. Our greatest treasure is our faith in Jesus Christ as Our Lord and Savior. This great gift of faith is not meant to be a buried treasure for our own private benefit, but must be shared for the benefit of others. God is rich in kindness and we are distributors of that grace. What God bestows is not meant to be hoarded. God gives us wisdom and skills that we may be of service; God forgives us that we might treat other people generously. Such is the “commerce” of God’s kingdom: God invests in us with no certainty of return, other than to increase the circulation of love in this world.

Jesus had harsh things to say of the servant who buried his one talent. All of us have some talent to share, however modest, and to hide it away or use it only for ourselves is more than laziness. What we have is not gifted, but loaned to us: we are trusted stewards of a grace intended for everyone.

It may feel risky to enter the “marketplace” of other people’s lives. Offering friendship and talking about our faith can make us vulnerable. It was fear, perhaps, that kept the lazy servant from trading his one talent. Fear that we might get nothing in return can sometimes make people hesitant to give. The servant assumed his master to be a hard-nosed businessman who expected too much of people, and it may be that we have grown up with the same idea about God. Jesus shows us what our heavenly Father is really like: God’s happiness is in sharing. And so is ours. Good stewardship of God’s creation is to share it with gratitude for what belongs to God.

As we approach Thanksgiving Day in less than two weeks, these closing days of the church year are a good time to make an audit of just how indebted we really are. Maybe we, too, have some gift buried within us which might yet be consecrated to God’s service.

There is no greater gift that we can receive than the gift that our Lord gives us, the gift of Himself in Holy Communion. For this sacrament nourishes and strengthens us to live as Christ's disciples in the midst of the world today.

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ, the Holy Eucharist is for the spiritual life what food is for our physical lives. Just as food strengthens us and prevents weakness and death, so too does the Holy Eucharist strengthen us for our lives of faith. Through frequent or daily communion, the spiritual life becomes fuller and the soul is enriched with the many virtues that are needed to bear witness to Christ in our daily lives. In our reception of Holy Communion, may our thirst for union with God be quenched.

As we now continue our celebration of this Mass, may we bring to the Lord our gratitude for all of the gifts that we have been given. May the Lord expand all of our hearts through the reception of the Eucharist so that we might willingly and joyfully commit ourselves to living as Christ's disciples each day of our lives, thus continuing to build on the firm foundation which has been established for us.

May God give us this grace. Amen.