

JANUARY 29, 2023: 4TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME



In our last column we continued to address how we embrace our baptism through a correct attitude of tithing and stewardship. Tithing and stewardship are about having the right attitude of dependence, thanksgiving and desire to serve God's will. It is the desire to be an instrument of God by sharing his bounty with the world. It is about wanting to be that disciple whose very life proclaims the Kingdom of God in how we make use of material goods. This attitude must inevitably lead to a stronger and proper relationship with God, and a daily desire to deepen that relationship. But again, stewardship and tithing are not simply about our material gifts but also about our time and talents: how they must be put into service for the

Kingdom of God.

In the Gospel of Matthew Jesus teaches us about stewardship through the parable of the talents. Jesus says, "It will be as when a man who was going on a journey called in his servants and entrusted his possessions to them. To one he gave five talents; to another, two; to a third, one—to each according to his ability. Then he went away. Immediately the one who received five talents went and traded with them, and made another five. Likewise, the one who received two made another two. But the man who received one went off and dug a hole in the ground and buried his master's money.

"After a long time the master of those servants came back and settled accounts with them. The one who had received five talents came forward bringing the additional five. He said, 'Master, you gave me five talents. See, I have made five more.' His master said to him, 'Well done, my good and faithful servant. Since you were faithful in small matters, I will give you great responsibilities. Come, share your master's joy.' [Then] the one who had received two talents also came forward and said, 'Master, you gave me two talents. See, I have made two more.' His master said to him, 'Well done, my good and faithful servant. Since you were faithful in small matters, I will give you great responsibilities. Come, share your master's joy.'

"Then the one who had received the one talent came forward and said, 'Master, I knew you were a demanding person, harvesting where you did not plant and gathering where you did not scatter; so, out of fear I went off and buried your talent in the ground. Here it is back.' His master said to him in reply, 'You wicked, lazy servant! So, you knew that I harvest where I did not plant and gather where I did not scatter. Should you not then have put my money in the bank so that I could have got it back with interest on my return? Now then! Take the talent from him and give it to the one with ten. For, to everyone who has, more will be given and he will grow rich; but from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. And throw this useless servant into the darkness outside, where there will be wailing and grinding of teeth.'"

I am amazed by how many people tell me that they do not get involved in Church activities beyond going to Mass. The excuses they give is that they are too busy, or not sure what they can do, or the worst one: no one has asked me to get involved. These excuses and so many others are just that—excuses. Jesus makes clear in the parable above what He expects of his disciples; through our baptism we have a duty and responsibility to get involved in promoting the Kingdom of God. If we do not actively make use of our time and talents, Jesus will hold us personally responsible at the end of our lives. And He will not accept any excuses for why we decided not to engage in his command. If you are waiting to be asked, Christ has already done so.

This brings to mind an incident in my own life when I was working as a software engineer at Digital. I had been in my position for about a year and a half when Steve, one of my colleagues, came to talk to me. He said that if I didn't make some changes, I would probably, in the next few months, be in danger of losing my job. He explained that I was not taking enough initiative in my work. I told him that I did whatever my supervisor asked me to do and I thought that was enough. He made it very clear to me that it was not. I needed to figure out ways to make myself a more valuable contributor to the project and to start taking on tasks without being asked. I thanked him for his insight and then started to look at what more I could do. I decided to volunteer to take on an important part of the project called The Build, and from there things began to change quickly for me. After about a year my role in the group dramatically changed and I was given a

14% raise. Steve didn't tell me what to do. I needed to look at my own talents and figure out what more I could do to benefit the work my group was doing.

In the same way, the parish needs each and every person to take the initiative and put their time and talents to work for God's kingdom. It is not always possible for someone else to figure out exactly what you should be doing. Steve didn't tell me exactly what I should do, only that I needed to be doing more. He gave me a wakeup call. We need to find out for ourselves what we can and should be doing for the parish to reach its potential in Christ.

If you have any questions about anything, please do not hesitate to ask me directly, or send your questions to me at fr.brian@theholyrood.org , or if easier please call or text me at (978) 254-0560.

Please keep me in your prayers.

In Christ,

A handwritten signature in purple ink, appearing to read "Fr. Brian". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the "Fr." and "Brian" clearly distinguishable.

Fr. Brian