

The Church of Saint Boniface

November 15, 2020

33rd Sunday in Ordinary Time



"So out of fear I went off and buried your talent in the ground. Here it is back."

(Matthew 25, 25)

FROM FATHER'S DESK

Last week I sent a letter entitled "Beautifying our Church" about the moving of the Tabernacle to the center. I am re-posting that letter this week as the message from Father's Desk, in case some of us missed it. I will speak a little more about this next Sunday on the Solemnity of Christ the King.

I am thankful to all who sent in very good and positive comments. The Bishop has approved the move and has sent us a letter of approval. You will notice we have already started working on things in the Sanctuary.

The best news about this, too, is that all the materials and work is free. A generous person offered the resources and materials for all this.

Have a great week in the Lord.

— Father Anthony

My dear brothers and sisters,

Over the past several months we have been studying ways in which to make our beautiful Church even more beautiful and appropriate for the celebration of the Liturgy, the praying of devotions and private prayer.

One of the elements we have examined is the location of the tabernacle. Some may remember the days when they were younger and the tabernacle was always located on the altar in the center of the church. With the liturgical renewal of the Second Vatican Council the Church decreed that while the tabernacle would no longer be placed on the altar, it should be **in "a part of the church that is truly noble, prominent, conspicuous, worthily decorated, and suitable for prayer."**

There are, then, two appropriate options for placement for reservation of the Most Holy Eucharist: at the center of the Church or in a separate chapel. In order to emphasize the centrality of the Eucharist, I have been considering moving **the tabernacle to the center, where the priest's chair is** presently located. The chairs for the priest and deacon would then be moved to the left side of the sanctuary in a position similar to the Ambo (lectern).

We call the Holy Eucharist is the Most Blessed Sacrament because the Lord is truly present there and our Holy Communion with him is what keeps us going every day of our lives. I think of the expression on the faces of the children receiving First Communion each year and the piety of our older parishioners as they come forward to receive the **Lord's Body and Blood. The Eucharist is the center of our lives, the holy and living sacrifice which makes life livable.**

Having consulted with experts in the Church's teaching on this subject and those with great experience in church design, I am hoping to request Bishop McManus' permission to move the tabernacle to the center. If you have any comments or suggestions, I would be grateful to hear them as we seek, once again, to try to find ways to draw closer to the eucharistic Lord and grow in Holiness.

God bless you,

Father Anthony Mpagi
Pastor



NO SUNDAY 6 PM MASS UNTIL FEBRUARY

Please Note:

Our 6:00 PM Sunday Mass will end for the season effective this weekend, November 15. We will resume it again in the Spring.

MASS INTENTIONS

Nov. 14	4:00 PM	Robert Tremblay , by Claude & Jo-Anne Poirier
Nov. 22	8:00 AM	Anne Rivard , by Mike Rivard

PRAY THE ROSARY every Saturday at 3:30 p.m. in the church, led by members of the Saint Boniface Knights of Columbus.

NO 8:00 A.M. MASSES on November 18, 19 and 20.

THANKSGIVING VIGIL MASS

Wednesday, November 25th at 6:30 p.m.

The FEAST OF CHRIST THE KING is celebrated next Sunday, November 21. Our weekend Mass schedule will be as usual.

We begin the SEASON OF ADVENT on the weekend of November 27/28. Advent is the season of 4 weeks that prepares us spiritually for the Birth of Our Savior Jesus Christ at Christmas.



We will have the Blessing of the Advent Wreath at all Masses. In addition, look for our table of Advent books for Spiritual nourishment reading. Also, as we have done over the last couple of years, at the Saturday Advent 4pm Masses we will have Guest Celebrants and Homilists.

Our Guest Celebrants are:

- Msgr. Jim Maroney, Rector of Saint Paul's Cathedral and Director of the Office of Worship in the Diocese
- Father Dennis O'Brien, Former Pastor of Our Lady of the Lake Parish and Minister to Priests
- Father Enoch, Director of the African Catholic Ministry
- Msgr. John Doran, Former Pastor Saint Leo's Parish, Leominster

These are great priests and great preachers — we encourage you to come and be nourished. We will simulcast the 4 PM Masses downstairs because of limited seating of 50 people in the upper church. You can follow us online too — check the website for links.

Gift Cards for Seminarians

Tags will be available next weekend for you to take if you are able to donate a gift card to a seminarian. Cards should be returned to Saint Boniface by the following weekend, December 5/6. Suggestion for cards: **"A Place Where He Can Have a Good Meal!"**

Giving Tree for Northstar Family Services homeless shelter Tags will be posted on the weekend of December 5/6 and we ask that you return gifts by December 20 to the basket near the statue of Saint Joseph in the church.

COLLECTION REPORT

Week of November 8	
– Sunday Offering	\$2,605
– Fuel/Maintenance	526
– All Saints/All Souls	88
– Other	35
Total	<u>\$3,254</u>

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT

Many parishioners have been making their weekly offerings online. It's secure, convenient and easy to make one-time or recurring donations at www.stboniface-lunenburg.org

GIFT BASKET & LOTTERY TICKET RAFFLE DRAWING NOV. 30!

Baskets will be on display and tickets will be on sale after Masses through November 29 ...
and don't miss our lottery ticket "Scratchenstein"!

CARE NET. Pregnancy Resource Center of North Central Massachusetts, Inc.

At Care Net PRC in Fitchburg we come alongside women and men who are experiencing an unplanned pregnancy. We offer confirmation of pregnancy, education on options, and support that follows from the first visit through pregnancy, delivery and parenting. Please join us in prayers of HOPE this month to pray for our Clients and Community.

*We ask for your support on
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www.carenetfitchburg.net

Good Fear, Bad Fear

Along with the Prodigal Son story, the parable of the Talents is one of those stories of Jesus that most people **feel pretty sure they understand**. “**Get off your behind and practice your piano. Some day you’ll be judged on how you used your talents,**” says a mother to her plugged-in child, confident that she has the backing of the Lord **himself on this one. And I am confident she’s right in that application.** That dimension of the parable is so obvious that the Gospel word *talanton* (Greek for a huge monetary unit of silver coinage amounting to something like a lifetime’s earnings) has entered our languages with the meaning “**God-given ability.**” (Besides our English word, I find *le talent* in French, *das Talent* in German, *il talento* in Italian, and *el talento* in Spanish.)

The story, then, is a wake-up call for Christians who **think they are doing the Lord’s will ...**

And yet the parable is about much more than using our **native abilities. The parable, in Matthew’s context, is Jesus’ last major speech, and is addressed to Christian disciples.** The charge of the master of the servants is nothing less than the whole mission of the Church—living and spreading the Gospel, making other communities of disciples. The wherewithal for conducting the mission is symbolized by these huge cash amounts—**five lifetimes’ earnings, two lifetimes’ earnings, one lifetime’s earnings** (all huge amounts). The servants are mandated to “**work with**” those amounts **until the master returns.**

Two of the servants double what they have been given and are rewarded upon the master’s return. The third does what seems, on the face of it, to be a pretty responsible thing. He keeps the talent safe by burying it securely in the ground and, at the time of accounting, returns it intact to his master. Knowing that the master expected more, the servant tries to justify his action by citing his fear of the master. (Apparently he did not fear the consequences of disobeying the master.) Maybe he figured it was better to risk that consequence than to risk losing the original deposit by “**working with it**” in ways that just might fail.

The story, then, is a wake-up call for Christians who **think they are doing the Lord’s will when they simply preserve intact what they have been given rather than venturing it in ways that will enable the talents (the faith?) to grow.** The fear of the third servant has led him to opt for security first.

Is there something wrong with this picture? Not really. **In the Hebrew Scriptures, “fear of the Lord” is a positive, even essential quality to be in right relationship with the Lord. Indeed, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge” (Prov 1:7; see 15:33).** In the context of Israel’s Wisdom literature, ...the first and second servants were acting obediently according to that healthy fear, whereas the third servant was hobbled by a lesser, craven fear.

Pope John XXIII said: “We are not on earth to guard a museum, but to cultivate a flourishing garden of life.” I suspect that such a sentiment was rooted in a fear of God nurtured in a long life of prayer and service. At a moment when many were preoccupied with keeping the deposit of faith secure, Pope John called for a venture of renewal and dialogue in our life of Christian discipleship and mission.

— Dennis Hamm, SJ

Saints of the Week

November 16.

SAINT MARGARET of SCOTLAND

Saint Margaret of Scotland was Scottish because her family was rescued by the King of Scotland as they fled William the Conqueror. She married the King and introduced him and his country to more cultured life. They had six sons and two daughters.



November 17.

SAINT ELIZABETH of HUNGARY

She died before her 24th birthday, but in those few years Saint Elizabeth was a wife, mother, queen, widow, the founder of a hospital, and did other charitable works of mercy. For the last three years of her life she was a Secular Franciscan and worked tirelessly for the poor.

Saint Elizabeth of Hungary is the Patron Saint of Bakers, Catholic Charities, Secular Franciscan Order.



November 18.

DEDICATION of CHURCHES of SAINTS PETER AND PAUL

St. Peter Basilica is probably the most famous church in Christendom and the largest in the city of Rome. St. Paul Outside-the-Walls is **second in size only to St. Peter’s.** Built over the presumed graves of these two saints, they are attractive places of prayer for the faithful.



November 19.

SAINT AGNES of ASSISI

Often confused with Saint Agnes of Bohemia to whom Saint Clare wrote her famous letters, Saint Agnes of Assisi was **Saint Clare’s younger biological sister** as well as first follower in the way of poverty.



November 20.

SAINT ROSE PHILIPPINE DUCHESNE

Saint Rose Philippine Duchesne, a Sister of the Society of the Sacred Heart and French by birth, was an early missionary to the United States. There she and her sisters faced formidable difficulties, but finally settled in Missouri and built the first free school west of the Mississippi in the town of St. Charles.



The Peasant View

This parable explaining how the rich get richer follows quite naturally upon the rewards of being a clever teenage participant in a wedding celebration (Matthew 25:1-1). But note well that the parable does not begin with the usual: **"The reign of God is like ..."** As we review the text, ask yourself if this indeed is how you would like God to behave toward human beings.

The Problems of Wealth

A very rich person about to set off on a journey entrusted very large sums of wealth to three slaves, each according to his personal ability. In no time at all, the first two slaves doubled their trust. The third slave buried his trust in the ground. Now we understand that the first two slaves did not simply serve their rich master; they imitated him.

On the day of accounting, the master applauds and rewards the two clever slaves but punishes the third slave whom he calls **"wicked and slothful"** (Matthew 25:26). **He takes the third slave's trust and gives it to the first slave.**

This parable is a favorite with American capitalists (interested in profit) and fundamentalist guidance counselors (focusing on the unintended and textually unsupported meaning of the word talent). Jesus' listeners, of course, were neither capitalists nor committed to self-improvement. They were peasants. Would these interpretations bring good news to a peasant?

In first-century Mediterranean culture people believed that all goods already exist and are already distributed. There is no more where this came from, and the only way to get more is to defraud another. Anyone who suddenly acquired something **"more"** was automatically judged to be a thief.

Wealthy people were especially under suspicion. How could they honorably increase their wealth? They commissioned slaves to handle their affairs. Everyone knew slaves were shameless, and dishonorable behavior was all one could expect from them.

A Greedy Master

The very rich man in this story sounds like an honorable person at the outset. It is only at the conclusion that we learn that he is dishonorable. As the third slave states, the **very rich master is "a hard man," reaping what he did not sow and gathering where he did not scatter seed** (Matthew 25:24). Putting a good face on his behavior, we modern Westerners would call him a clever, industrious, and enterprising entrepreneur.

Others, like our Middle Eastern ancestors in the faith, may call him arrogant, opportunistic, greedy, and rapacious. **The master agrees with the slave's description of him (!);** (see Matthew 25:26) and confirms it by saying the slave should at least have put his money in the bank at usury.



Now we understand that the first two slaves did not simply serve their rich master; they imitated him. Why not? If you **can't beat the system, join it.** Any human being can be as greedy as the next, and joining forces with a ruthless and unconscionable but successful master gives one a leg up on others like that pitiful third slave.

Actually, the third slave did what the rabbis would later commend as the safest and therefore most honorable course of action for a freeman. But was it proper behavior for a slave?

Alternate Meanings

A peasant audience hearing Jesus' parable and reflecting on their own life wouldn't find this good news at all. The rich get richer, and we continue to be abused (see Matthew 25:29). If God behaves no better than the rich master, who needs God?

The church historian Eusebius saw the problem in Matthew's text quite clearly and reported a different version of this same parable familiar to him in the Gospel of the Nazoreans (now lost). In this version, the master throws the first slave into prison, scolds the second slave, but welcomes the honorable third slave with joy. Was this the version Jesus told?

Matthew's version offers advice to his community around the year 80 CE about how to behave in the period after Jesus' resurrection and ascension while they await his imminent second coming. They should not be lazy and worthless but rather should imitate the cleverness but not the greed of their masters. In other words, when it comes to the kingdom, the risk of cleverness is preferable to the numbing security of doing the proper and honorable thing, or **"playing it safe."** Jesus' own life manifested similar risky choices.

Believers who can suspend their view of this parable as presenting strategies for fund raising or developing personal abilities and adopt instead the peasant view will have much to think about.

Our parish's COMMUNITY SERVICE DAY was a huge success this year. Over twenty parishioners raked and cleaned four properties in Lunenburg on Saturday, November 7.



A heartfelt thank you for the wonderful job the cleanup crew did in my yard. God Bless You All!

~ Louise Nadeau

Stewardship

The three parables in the twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew are about the end times, the end of the world, the end (intent, purpose, and upshot) of our lives. Whatever is given to us—money, talent, opportunity—is meant to bear fruit for the kingdom, for the glory of God and the salvation of souls. As the parable immediately following the one about the talents makes clear, the entire judgment of history and of each individual is based upon our service to the least of our brothers and sisters.

In its most fundamental sense, the image of the talent represents the bounty of life itself, as well as the preeminent gift of faith. If we are among those fortunate enough to reach the maturity required for personal responsibility and to have the opportunity to use the talents of life and faith, it is incumbent upon us to invest our gifts, not hide them out of fear or laziness.

The parable is not about the stock market or entrepreneurship, commendable as those activities might be. It is about what we do with our gifts, financial or otherwise. If anyone thinks that amassing wealth is somehow a good in itself, that person is seriously mistaken. Do not take it from me, but from the **twelfth chapter of Luke: “Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; for one’s life does not consist in abundance of possessions.”**

I do not think that one can find either a recommendation or a rejection of capitalism in the gospels, although it is quite clear that the amassing of money for oneself is considered not only foolish, but evil. There are more warnings in the gospels about the dangers of money than about any other earthly good, so a successful Catholic capitalist is well advised to be most vigilant in stewardship.

The goods of the world and the wealth derived from our labor must be used for God’s glory and human assistance. If a Christian would defend the benefits of capitalism, it ought to be based on the argument that capitalism is most effective in the service of God and ministry to the poor, homeless, and hungry.

The trustworthiness of the profitable servants ensures their **share in the “joy of the Lord.” This is not because money is made.** It is, rather, because the wealth of life and talent given them had been invested to bear fruit in labors of faith, hope, and charity.

Whether we are millionaires or paupers, it is upon this criterion that we will be judged.

— John Kavanaugh, SJ

Saint Boniface Church

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Parish Office: 978-582-4008 email: stbonifaceparish@verizon.net

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Parish Office Hours

Monday / Wednesday / Thursday 9:00 AM – 5:00 PM (closed 12:00 – 1:00 PM)

The Celebration of the Eucharist

Sunday: 8:00 AM, 10:30 AM, 6:00 PM

Saturday Vigil: 4:00 PM

Summer Sunday Mass schedule: 9:00 AM
(Memorial Day weekend through Labor Day weekend)

Weekday Masses: 8:00 AM, Wednesday/Thursday/Friday

SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION (Confession) Saturday 3:00 - 3:30 p.m. or by appointment.

SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM Adults are baptized at the Easter Vigil as part of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA). Infant and child Baptisms are by arrangement.

FIRST EUCHARIST Preparation begins in grade one and includes classes, retreats, and home instruction. Children receive First Eucharist in grade two.

CONFIRMATION Our Confirmation program begins in the 9th grade; students are confirmed in the spring of the 10th grade. For young adults who have been baptized but not yet confirmed, contact the parish office.

SACRAMENT OF MATRIMONY It is the policy of the Diocese of Worcester that a couple should contact the parish at least one year prior to the anticipated date of their wedding to allow sufficient time to carry out the various steps of the marriage preparation process. It is important that arrangements be made with the church before plans are made with reception halls, caterers, etc.

ANNOINTING OF THE SICK Please call the parish office 978-582-4008 or email Fr. Anthony at stbonifaceparish@verizon.net or Nancy Cieri 978-582-6983 nancycieri@comcast.net to arrange these visits.

PRAYER LINE MINISTRY If you or someone you know needs prayers or if you would like to be a part of this ministry of those who pray for the needs of neighbors, please contact Sue Cote 978-582-0404 sj33@msn.com.

KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS COUNCIL #16480 *In Service to One. In Service to all.* Members meet in the Parish Hall on the first Wednesday of each month at 7 PM. Any Catholic men over 18 who are interested in joining the Knights should contact Grand Knight Peter Bak (978-403-5119) or Deputy Grand Knight Claude Poirier (978-660-3202), or email kofc16480@gmail.com.

PARISH STAFF:

	<i>phone</i>	<i>email</i>
Rev. Anthony Mpagi, Pastor	978-582-4008	stbonifaceparish@verizon.net
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Louise Nadeau, Sacristan		
Ministry Schedule	978-582-4008	stbonifaceparish@verizon.net
Nina Charpentier, Dir. Early Childhood/PreK	978-582-7110	

Newcomers to St. Boniface are invited and encouraged to formally register as members of the parish so that we may stay in touch with you with faith formation news, notices of special events, volunteer opportunities, and more.

Registration forms are available at the doors of the church, the parish office, or on our website.

Please note that you must be registered for at least six months before we can issue any verification of your status as a parishioner for godparent or sponsor letters.

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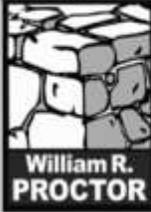
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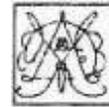
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