

# FRATERNITY OF ST. CHARLES

*Passion for the glory of Christ*

## LIFE IS NOT A TALENT SHOW

by Fr. Antonio Anastasio, translated by Claudia Soldini and Miriam Huettner | December 2018

In the many dialogues that I have every day with young people, the centrality of the problem of work often emerges. Among the young adults I meet, there are not only university students, but also many recent graduates and young people who have just started the working adventure. In almost everyone's experience, the reality of work seems to clash with an image of one's own personal fulfillment. Some of them say that in their work they don't learn anything new; others feel compelled to work extra hours, often unpaid, because, as one says, "my colleagues do so and if I do not comply, I will be fired."

Then there is a growing number of people who are uncomfortable living the relationship between work and their own path of affective fulfillment. Questions like this arise: "If I'm offered a job in Paris and my girlfriend and I can never meet, why do I have to be the one to give up my job? Couldn't she do it?" Or, as a girl said in a meeting: "My boss had just appointed as a supervisor for a large sector, but unfortunately, even though I'm recently married, I became pregnant." During a meeting with couples who are young professionals, I reminded them how the vocation in life consists above all in the fact that Jesus chose us: vocation is the relationship with Him. This relationship pervades all of reality, but it becomes particularly concrete through a companionship, an affective place, a sign of His preference for us, which the Lord gives us so that we can regain awareness of the relationship with Him every day. Put in fewer words: work is important, but it doesn't exhaust self-realization; it is certainly an important element, but not the first. On the contrary, the society in which we live, sick with narcissism and individualism, pushes young people to believe that their self-realization is comes to fruition in the workplace.

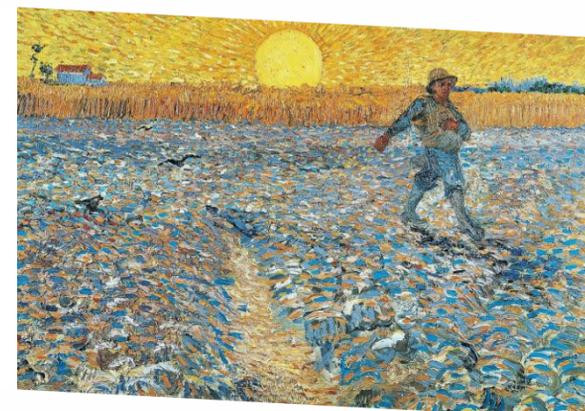
One evening, during a dinner, a young friend formulated an interesting objection: "There are, it is true, risks to focusing only on work. But if God has given me natural gifts, is it not because He wants me to realize them? At the end this is the meaning of the parable of the talents!"

Yet, the meaning of the word talents in the parable doesn't correspond to what is often thought. Modern culture - with a superficial religious reading - has borrowed this word from the Gospel underlining its reference to "natural gifts". However, the talents mentioned by Jesus do not represent the abilities that God has given to each one, but the responsibilities or tasks that are entrusted to each one. In fact, in the parable, it is said that the man leaving for the journey gave five talents to one man, two talents to another, one to a third, each according to their abilities. The natural abilities, as we see, precede the distribution of talents.

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*The Fraternity of St. Charles has long desired to have a house in the town of Milan, where Fr. Giussani started the Movement of Communion and Liberation. In October 2013, with the initiative of Cardinal Angelo Scola, the Fraternity opened a house in the parish of St. Charles at the Ca 'Granda.*



«In Adam we were born to death; now, generated in the water of the Holy Spirit, in Christ we are reborn to life. Let us end our voluntary fast: Christ, our paschal lamb, is sacrificed for us. His body is vital nourishment, His blood is inebriating drink; the only blood that does not contaminate, but gives immortal salvation to those who receive it».

*Easter Praeconium, Ambrosian Liturgy*

The Priestly Fraternity of the Missionaries of  
St. Charles Borromeo is a Society of Apostolic  
Life founded by  
Fr. Massimo Camisasca in 1985.



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On this point Benedict XVI said: “The talent was an ancient Roman coin, of great value, and precisely because of this parable’s popularity it became synonymous with personal gifts, which everyone is called to develop. In fact, the text speaks of “a man going on a journey [who] called his servants and entrusted his property to them” (Mt 25: 14). The man in the parable represents Christ himself, the servants are the disciples, and the talents are the gifts that Jesus entrusts to them. These gifts, in addition to their natural qualities, thus represent the riches that the Lord Jesus has bequeathed to us as a legacy, so that we may make them productive: his Word, deposited in the Holy Gospel; Baptism, which renews us in the Holy Spirit; the “Our Father” prayer that we raise to God as his children, united in the Son; his forgiveness, which he commanded be offered to all; the Sacrament of his Body sacrificed and his Blood poured out; in a word: the Kingdom of God, which is God himself, present and alive in our midst.” (Angelus, 16.11.2008).

The person, therefore, fulfills his/her life by bringing into the world the gift of knowledge of Christ who has changed his/her life. Today, however, everything is made complicated by individualism and a certain culture that we could call “talentism”, well represented by numerous television shows in which the subjects must present themselves before a few experts demonstrating that, with much exercise and study, they developed a certain natural capacity and therefore they are valuable ... or not, depending on the impression aroused in the judges. The goal is to hear the experts say: “You are worthy!” How easy it is for young people today to fall into the deception aroused by this mentality! Are you really worthy only because four “experts” said so? Does my value lie in the mark that I will leave in the world with my specific ability?

And when I will be old, or sick, and I can no longer assert my ability, what will remain? This mechanism pushes me to always live at the highest level of my expression: it is called performance syndrome and it is bringing along with it a permanent condition of anxiety and depression. In short, it’s a great deception. The value of the person consists in having been always desired by God. Each of our young people has been beloved through those talents, those gifts of which Benedict XVI speaks. If we are not proud of it, it is because we think that the capacities that we have in mind are more decisive than the concrete gifts the Lord has given us. The truth is that those abilities blackmail us, they rule us when we do not remember that He has already loved us. Nothing can ever take away His love, not an inadequate performance, nor even our failures at work.

Self-realization consists in the radical relationship with Jesus. The vocation is realized, above all, in the affective place where the memory of this preference of Christ is reborn, without which we cannot live. This affective place is the vocational company: the wife or husband in marriage, the house of the brothers for us as priests of San Carlo or for the consecrated who live together. Otherwise, as Jesus says peremptorily: What is the use of gaining the whole world (your dreams, success, money, career) if you then lose yourself?

The Fraternity of Saint Charles is present in the United States since 1994. Our houses are now in Boston, Denver, Washington and Saint Paul.

