

Commentary on the Readings for November 19, 2023

The 33rd Sunday in Ordinary Time

As we come closer to the end of the liturgical year, the readings zero in on subjects like preparedness (today) and accountability (next Sunday). Collectively, all of these readings lately are encouraging us to think about our own end time and ask us the question: "Are you prepared for you will be held accountable and judged?" This need not be a time of fear. Rather, it should be a time for reflecting on how we have used our time, talents and treasure, and then consider making whatever changes are necessary while there is still time.

The **First Reading** is from the ***Book of Proverbs (31:10-31)***. These verses are the very ending of the **Book of Proverbs**. They give us an example of a prudent and faithful wife who is well known and praised for her abilities in serving her family and others. It is not saying that all women should be wives and mothers; rather, it is an example of how one woman used her gifts and talents wisely and productively. Serving others is the epitome of Christian love whether it is family, friends or even strangers.

The **Responsorial Psalm (128:1-5)**. In this beautiful prayer, the psalmist is praising the person who has been faithful to God and used his or her talents and resources for the betterment of everyone. The biblical use of the word "fear" in this case means "honor" or "respect."

The **Second Reading** is from ***St. Paul's First Letter to the Thessalonians (5:1-6)***. This teaching from Paul should hit many where they are today because of the many terrible disasters in recent months. However, Paul is talking about the Second Coming of Christ, which was thought to be in his lifetime. We should look at this as referring to our eventual death, which can come without any warning. We have been told over and over about being prepared for death by living according to the teachings of Christ and His Church. "Therefore, let us not ignore the warning signs as many do, but let us stay alert and be watchful," spiritually speaking, that is.

The **Gospel Reading** is from the ***Gospel of Matthew (25:14-21)***. Here, we have a familiar parable, or story, which hardly needs explanation. God is the "man going on a journey" who gives each of us, his servants, certain talents or assets, which are to be used to increase the wealth of the rich man and his family. Obviously, we are the servants and we will be held accountable at some point over the use of our time, talents and treasures. Will you be found wanting?

Stewardship is a moral obligation for every one of God's People. For those who have used their gifts or talents for the betterment of all, "more will be given to them;" but for those who have not used them wisely "what he has will be taken away from him." Keep in mind this simple axiom "What you are and what you have are God's gift to you. What you do with them is your gift to God." Something to think about during your prayer time this week!

MFB