

My Dear Brothers and Sisters,

This weekend's Gospel speaks to us of the parable of the talents. You remember the parable: a man goes on a journey and entrusts three of his servants with talents (which was a considerable amount of money) – one with five, another with two, and the third with one talent: each according to his ability. Two trade with the talents and double their investments, while the third buries his one talent in the ground.

The first thing I notice about the parable is that each servant is given talents according to his ability. God knows of what we are capable; He will not give us more than we can handle. There is no injustice done to the servants.

At times, though, this parable has bothered me since it seems that this third servant was doing the best he could in a hard situation – after all, he had the talent saved and ready to give back to his master! When we read the parable closely, though, we may see things a bit differently. First, notice that the master never actually takes the talents back – neither what he gave, nor the earnings they brought in. At the end, he says to give the one talent to the one with ten – which shows that that servant still has all ten talents.

Notice also that this last servant insults his master. When he is brought before the master, he says, **“Master, I knew you were a demanding person, harvesting where you did not plant and gathering where you did not scatter.”** What do you call someone who takes what he didn't work for? A THIEF! He just called his master a thief! WOAHH! That's not good. The master recognizes that this servant wasn't really afraid of him – thinking that the master would steal from the servant. Rather, the master can tell that this servant is just plain lazy! He doesn't want to do the necessary work involved in cultivating the gifts that were given to him.

God gives each of us incredible talents. God has given us gifts that are unique to our position in life, our mission. God asks us to use them, cultivate them. With His blessing, the talents we have will grow for His glory! As we approach Thanksgiving this week, it is a great opportunity to examine our lives and how we use and exercise the gifts – the talents – entrusted to us by our God. Here's the truth: each person that God creates has a unique, unrepeatable role in this world. No one else can fulfill that role the same way. God desires for each of us to live to our potential. What does this look like? We don't exactly know. However, I can tell you that we often will miss the forest for the trees, we often will be looking for the overall, huge plan for our lives, and miss God's will right in front of us.

Several years ago, I read a book called *He Leadeth Me* by Fr. Walter Ciszek, SJ, an American priest who had been arrested while in Russia, and then subjected to 5 years in solitary confinement and another 17 years (if memory serves me) of hard labor in the Siberian Gulag. One of the powerful spiritual gems he passed on from his time of imprisonment was this truth: God's will is what is right in front of me right now – the person here with me, the work I have to do, the ditch I have to dig, the struggle I endure in this moment. This is important. I will sometimes be tempted to look for greater gifts than I have, a bigger plan for my life than the person right in front of me right now. But the way to use my gifts, my talents, is in the place I find myself in this moment, with the people to whom I have been entrusted here and now.

And this is something for which we need to be thankful – that's God's will is within our reach! May we take the time, especially this week, to examine the beauty of God's plan for our lives, and ask that we always be faithful to using our gifts, our talents, for His will in this moment: right here, right now.