



1) Opening prayer

Father,
help us to seek the values
that will bring us enduring joy in this changing world.
In our desire for what you promise
make us one in mind and heart.
We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

2) Gospel Reading - Matthew 25,14-30

Jesus said to his disciples: 'It is like a man about to go abroad who summoned his servants and entrusted his property to them. To one he gave five talents, to another two, to a third one, each in proportion to his ability. Then he set out on his journey.

The man who had received the five talents promptly went and traded with them and made five more. The man who had received two made two more in the same way. But the man who had received one went off and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money.

Now a long time afterwards, the master of those servants came back and went through his accounts with them. The man who had received the five talents came forward bringing five more. "Sir," he said, "you entrusted me with five talents; here are five more that I have made." His master said to him, "Well done, good and trustworthy servant; you have shown you are trustworthy in small things; I will trust you with greater; come and join in your master's happiness." Next the man with the two talents came forward. "Sir," he said, "you entrusted me with two talents; here are two more that I have made." His master said to him, "Well done, good and trustworthy servant; you have shown you are trustworthy in small things; I will trust you with greater; come and join in your master's happiness."

Last came forward the man who had the single talent. "Sir," said he, "I had heard you were a hard man, reaping where you had not sown and gathering where you had not scattered; so I was afraid, and I went off and hid your talent in the ground. Here it is; it was yours, you have it back."

But his master answered him, "You wicked and lazy servant! So you knew that I reap where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered? Well then, you should have deposited my money with the bankers, and on my return I would have got my money back with interest. So now, take the talent from him and give it to the man who has the ten talents. For to everyone who has will be given more, and he will have more than enough; but anyone who has not, will be deprived even of what he has. As for this good-for-nothing servant, throw him into the darkness outside, where there will be weeping and grinding of teeth."

3) Reflection

• Today's Gospel presents to us the parable of the talents. This parable was between two other parables: the Parable of the Ten virgins (Mt 25, 1-13) and the Parable of the final Judgement (Mt 25, 31-46). These three parables clarify and orientate persons concerning the coming of the Kingdom. The parable of the Ten Virgins insists on vigilance: the Kingdom may arrive at any moment. The Parable of the final Judgement says that in order to possess the Kingdom it is necessary to accept the little ones. The Parable of the talents orientates on what to do to make the Kingdom grow. It speaks of the gifts and the charisma which persons receive from God. Every person has qualities, knows something that he/she can teach others. Nobody is only a pupil, nobody is only a teacher. We all learn from one another.

A key to understand the parable: one of the things which has greater influence on the life of the people is the idea which we have of God. Among the Jews who followed the Pharisees, some imagined that God was a severe judge, who treated persons according to the merit they had gained through the observance of the Law. That produced fear in the persons and prevented them from growing. And, especially, prevented them from opening a space within them, to receive and accept the new experience of God which Jesus communicated. In order to help these persons, Matthew tells the story of the talents.

- Matthew 25, 14-15: The door of entrance in the parable. Jesus tells the story of a man, who before going abroad, entrusted his goods to his servants, giving them five, two and one talents, according to the capacity of each one. One talent was equal to 34 kg. of gold, which is not something small! In last instance, each one receives the same amount, because he receives "according to his capacity". Anyone who has a big cup, receives a full cup. The man went on his journey, abroad where he remained for a long time. The story produces a certain moment of suspense. One does not know for what purpose the man entrusts his money to the servants; neither does one know the end.

- Matthew 25, 16-18: The way of acting of each one of the servants. The two first ones work and make the money produce a double amount. But the one who received one talent buried it so as not to lose it. It is a question of the goods of the Kingdom which are given to persons and to the communities according to their capacity. Everyone receives

some good of the Kingdom, but not all respond in the same way!

- Matthew 25, 19-23: Rendering an account of the first and the second servants, and response of the master. After a long time, the man returned. The first two servants say the same thing: "Sir, you entrusted me with five/two talents, here are five/two more that I have made". And the master gives the same response: "Well done, good and trustworthy servant, you have shown you are trustworthy in small things, I will trust you with greater; come and join in your master's happiness".
- Matthew 25, 24-25: Rendering of account of the third servant. The third servant comes and says: "Sir, I had heard you were a hard man, reaping where you had not sown and gathering where you had not scattered, so I was afraid and I went off and hid your talent in the ground. Here it is!" In this phrase we have a mistaken idea of God which is criticized by Jesus. The servant considers God as a severe master. Before such a God, the human being is afraid and hides behind the exact and narrow-minded observance of the Law. The person thinks that acting in this way, the severity of the legislator will not punish him. In reality, such a person does not believe in God, but believes only in self and in the observance of the Law. This person closes up in self, separates herself from God and cannot be concerned about others. This person becomes incapable to grow and develop like a free person. This false image of God isolates the human being, kills the community, puts an end to joy and impoverishes life.
- Matthew 25, 26-27: The response of the Master to the third servant. The response of the master is ironic. He says: "Wicked and lazy servant! So you knew that I reap where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered; you should have deposited my money with the bankers and on my return I would have got my money back with interest!" The third servant was not coherent with the severe image which he had of God. If he imagined that God was severe, he should have, at least, placed the money in the bank. Then, he is condemned not by God but by the mistaken idea that he had of God and which makes him more immature and fearful than what he should have been. It was not possible for him to be coherent with the erroneous image which he had of God, because fear dehumanized and paralyzed life.
- Matthew 25, 28-30: The last word of the Lord which clarifies the parable. The master orders to take the talent from him and give it to the man who has the ten talents. For to everyone who has will be given more, and he will have more than enough; but anyone who has not, will be deprived even of what he has." This is the key which clarifies everything. In reality, the talents, the "money of the master", the goods of the Kingdom, are love, service, sharing. It is everything which helps the community to grow and reveals the presence of God. Anyone who closes himself in self out of fear of losing the little that he has, at the end will lose even the little that he has. But the person who does not think of self, and gives herself to others, grows and receives in turn, in an unexpected way, everything which she has given and even more. Anyone who loses his life will find it, and anyone who has the courage to lose his life will find it".

- The different money of the Kingdom. There is no difference between those who have received more and those who have received less. All have their gift according to their capacity. What is important is that this gift be placed at the service of the Kingdom and make the goods of the Kingdom grow. These gifts are love, fraternal spirit, sharing. The principal key of the parable does not consist in making the talents render something, but rather in relating with God in a correct way. The two first servants ask for nothing, they do not seek their own good, they do not want things for themselves, they do not close up in self, they do not calculate. In the most natural way, almost without being aware and without seeking their own merit, they begin to work, in such a way that the gift received from God may render for God and for the Kingdom. The third servant is afraid, and because of this does nothing. According to the norms of the ancient law, he acts correctly. He responds to the exigencies. He loses nothing and gains nothing. And because of this he loses even what he had. The Kingdom is a risk. Anyone who does not want to run risks will lose the Kingdom!

4) Personal questions

- In our community, do we try to know and value the gifts of each person? Is our community a place where persons are able to make known their talents and make them available to others? Sometimes, the gifts of some generate envy and competitiveness in others. How do we react?
- How is the following phrase to be understood: "For anyone who has will be given more and will have in abundance; but anyone who does not have will be taken away even what he has"?

5) Concluding Prayer

We are waiting for Yahweh;
he is our help and our shield,
for in him our heart rejoices,
in his holy name we trust. (Ps 33,20-21)