

**Thirty-Third Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle A**  
Sunday, November 19, 2017  
**Readings & Background**



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**This Sunday's Readings**

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**First Reading** : *Proverbs 31:10-13,19-20,30-31*

The virtues of a good wife are extolled.

**Responsorial Psalm** : *Psalm 128:1-2,3,4-5*

Blessed are those who walk in God's ways.

**Second Reading** : *1 Thessalonians 5:1-6*

Paul warns the Thessalonians to stay alert because the day of the Lord cannot be predicted.

**Gospel Reading** : *Matthew 25:14-30*

Jesus tells the parable of the talents, in which he teaches about the importance of using the gifts that God has given to us in service to the Kingdom of Heaven.

**Background on the Gospel Reading**

This week's Gospel speaks of how Jesus' disciples are to conduct themselves as they await the Kingdom of Heaven. In the preceding passages and in last week's Gospel, Jesus taught that there is no way to predict the coming of the Kingdom of Heaven. His disciples must, therefore, remain vigilant and ready to receive the Son of Man at any time.

Jesus' parable talks about Christian discipleship using economic metaphors. Before he leaves on a journey, the master entrusts to his servants a different number of talents, giving to each according to their abilities.

A *talent* is a coin of great value. Upon the master's return, he finds that the first and second servants have doubled their money, and both are rewarded. The third servant, however, has only preserved what was given to him because he was afraid to lose the money. He has risked nothing; he did not even deposit the money in a bank to earn interest. This servant is punished by the master, and his talent is given to the one who brought the greatest return.

Read in light of last week's parable of the wise and foolish bridesmaids, this parable teaches that God's judgment will be based on the service we render to God and to one another in accordance with the gifts that God has given to us. Our gifts, or talents, are given to us for the service of others. If we fail to use these gifts, God's judgment on us will be severe. On the other hand, if we make use of these gifts in service to the Kingdom of Heaven, we will be rewarded and entrusted with even more responsibilities.

This Gospel reminds us that Christian spirituality is not passive or inactive. Our life of prayer helps us to discern the gifts that have been given to us by God. This prayer and discernment ought to lead us to use our gifts in the service of God and our neighbor. God's grace allows us to share in the work of serving the Kingdom of Heaven.

# Thirty-Third Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle A

## Making the Connection (Grades 1, 2, and 3)



### Gospel Reading

Matthew 25:14-30

Jesus tells the parable of the talents, in which he teaches about the importance of using the gifts that God has given to us in service to the Kingdom of Heaven.

Young children are eager to help others. We can help to foster this desire by helping them to identify ways in which their particular talents can be used to serve others.

### Materials Needed

- A rubber band
- A cup
- A play dollar bill
- A paper bag

### Preparation for Sunday Scripture Readings

1. Divide the class into three groups. Have each group choose a leader. Ask each leader to choose an item from the bag in which you have placed a rubber band, a cup, and a play dollar bill. Give the groups one minute to brainstorm all the things that they could do with the item that their leader chose. When time is up, ask each leader to tell the class the uses his or her group thought of. Then collect the items and put them back in the bag. Ask the children to discuss how useful these items would be if we buried the bag in the dirt.
2. Ask: **What are some special things that you can do?** Distribute paper and pens or pencils, and allow time for each child to prepare a list or draw pictures of these things.  
  
Ask: **How good would it be if you never used these abilities that God gave you—if you buried all your abilities by not trying your best?** (Allow all reasonable answers.)
3. Introduce today's Gospel: **God tells us in the Gospel that he expects us to use the gifts he has given us. Today's Gospel uses the word talents. When Jesus used this word, he was referring to a kind of coin. Today we use this word when talking about a person's special abilities.**
4. Read aloud today's Gospel, Matthew 25:14-30.
5. Ask: **Why were the first two servants rewarded by the master?** (They used the talents that they were given and returned more money to the master than they were given.)  
**Why was the third servant punished by the master?** (He buried the talents that he was given and returned to the master only the money he had received.)  
Say: **Jesus wants us to use the gifts and talents that he has given to us to help other people.**
6. Invite each person to share with the entire group one of the special things that he or she listed in step 2. For each talent named, invite the entire group to try to name at least two ways in which a person might use this talent to help other people.
7. Conclude in prayer together, thanking God for his gifts and asking for his help in using these gifts to serve others. Pray together the Prayer to the Holy Spirit.

## Thirty-Third Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle A Making the Connection (Grades 4, 5, and 6)



### Gospel Reading

Matthew 25:14-30

Jesus tells the parable of the talents, in which he teaches about the importance of using the gifts that God has given to us in service to the Kingdom of Heaven.

Older children are beginning to exhibit proficiency in different skills and abilities. We can help them to identify ways in which these abilities can be used in service to others.

### Materials Needed

- Paper and pencils
- A basket

### Preparation for Sunday Scripture Readings

1. Distribute a sheet of paper and a pencil to each person in the group. Ask: ***What are some things that you have learned to do well?*** Allow time for each person to think about this question and to make a list of at least five things.
2. Say: ***We all have particular skills and abilities, and each person's combination of skills and abilities is unique. Our skills and abilities are among God's many gifts to us.***
3. Ask: ***What are we to do with the skills and abilities that we have been given?*** Allow time for students to answer the question and then say: ***Jesus taught about what to do with our abilities in a parable that we hear in this Sunday's Gospel. Today's Gospel uses the word "talents." When Jesus used this word, he was referring to a kind of coin. Today we use this word to describe a person's special abilities. Let's listen carefully to what Jesus teaches.***
4. Invite one or more volunteers to read aloud Matthew 25:14-30.
5. Ask: ***Why were the first two servants rewarded by the master?*** (They used the talents that they were given and returned more money to the master than they were given.) ***Why was the third servant punished by the master?*** (He buried the talents that he was given and returned to the master only the money he had received.) ***What do you think this means about what Jesus wants us to do with our talents?*** (Jesus wants us to develop and use the gifts and talents that we have been given.)
6. Say: ***One of the things that Jesus would like us to do is to use our gifts and talents to help others. Look back over the list of skills and abilities that you made earlier. Make a list now of all of the ways that you can think of to use your skills and abilities to help others. Try to identify at least 10 things.*** Allow time for them to complete this activity. If necessary, suggest that they work in pairs until each person has identified 10 ways to help others.
7. Say: ***Jesus does not want us to bury our talents. Choose one thing from your list that you will do this week. Write that one thing on a slip of paper. We will place these slips of paper in the basket during our prayer as a sign of our commitment and offering to God.***
8. Conclude in prayer together, thanking God for his gifts and asking for his help in using these gifts to serve others. Invite each person to place his or her slip of paper in the basket. When all the papers have been collected, pray the Prayer to the Holy Spirit or the Prayer for Vocations.

## Thirty-Third Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle A Making the Connection (Grades 7 and 8)



### Gospel Reading *Matthew 25:14-30*

Jesus tells the parable of the talents, in which he teaches about the importance of using the gifts that God has given to us in service to the Kingdom of Heaven.

Young people at this age are aware that in just over a month, they will be celebrating a new year. This is an opportunity to teach them about the Church year, which is coming to an end soon.

#### Materials Needed

- Small pieces of paper
- Pencils or pens
- A basket or bowl

#### Preparation for Sunday Scripture Readings

1. Tell the young people that there is just a little over a month left in the current year and that soon they will be celebrating a new year.  
Say: ***For New Year's Day, many people make New Year's resolutions—promises to themselves that will improve their lives.***
2. Ask the young people to share their New Year's resolutions.
3. Say: ***We are also fast approaching the end of another kind of year—the Church year. Next Sunday is the last Sunday of the Church year. The following Sunday, the First Sunday of Advent, marks the beginning of a new Church year. In this Sunday's Gospel, Jesus gives his followers some advice that might serve as inspiration for resolutions to improve our lives.***
4. Ask a volunteer to read aloud the Gospel, Matthew 25:14-30.
5. Ask: ***What do you think Jesus was trying to teach?*** (how to best use our talents and gifts)
6. After discussion, ask the young people if they think they might have a gift from God that they could be using, but are not. Tell them that this is a question that they should answer silently in their hearts.
7. Invite the young people to write on their piece of paper a promise to Jesus about how they will use their talents most fully. When they are ready, invite them to come forward and place their folded paper in the basket or bowl.
8. Tell them that you will not read what they have written, but you will save the basket to place on the prayer table during Advent. This will remind the young people of their resolutions to God during the season when we await the fullness of God's promise to us—the birth of Christ.
9. Conclude by praying this Sunday's psalm, Psalm 128.

# Thirty-Third Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle A

## Family

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### Gospel Reading

*Matthew 25:14-30*

Jesus tells the parable of the talents, in which he teaches about the importance of using the gifts that God has given to us in service to the Kingdom of Heaven.

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### Family Connection

In today's Gospel, Jesus talks about the correlation between faithfulness and responsibilities. Family life provides many opportunities to illustrate this connection for children. As children prove themselves trustworthy, they can be trusted to take on greater responsibilities. Jesus teaches us in this parable that when we show ourselves to be trustworthy in small matters, we can be trusted to participate in greater matters of responsibility.

As you gather as a family, take some time to recall how each child in the family has matured and can now be trusted with greater responsibilities.

Say: ***In today's Gospel, Jesus talked about how our trustworthiness in small matters shows that we can also be trusted to share in the work of serving the Kingdom of Heaven.*** Read Matthew 15:14-30.

Say: ***We share in the work of serving the Kingdom of Heaven when we use our talents to help and serve others.***

As a family, choose one thing to do this week to serve others. Conclude in prayer together, asking God's help so that your family may serve others more faithfully. Pray together the Prayer to the Holy Spirit.

## Prayer to the Holy Spirit

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful.  
And kindle in them the fire of your love.  
Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created.  
And you will renew the face of the earth.

Lord,  
by the light of the Holy Spirit  
you have taught the hearts of your faithful.  
In the same Spirit  
help us to relish what is right  
and always rejoice in your consolation.  
We ask this through Christ our Lord.  
Amen.

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### About the Prayer to the Holy Spirit

There are very few prayers to God as the Holy Spirit. This prayer was developed from the Pentecost liturgy. The first two lines are the verses sung with the Alleluia before the Gospel on Pentecost. The third and fourth lines are a quote from the Latin translation of Psalm 104, verse 30. It was part of a chant written for Pentecost. The rest of the prayer, which follows “Let us pray” (when it is prayed publicly), is adapted from the former opening prayer of the feast. The feast of Pentecost now has a new opening prayer. The former prayer is the opening prayer for a Mass of the Holy Spirit such as might be celebrated at the opening of a school year.

This prayer is a good example of how a popular prayer to the Holy Spirit came to be composed by the faithful, using verses they heard sung and prayed at the Pentecost liturgy.

### The Holy Spirit

In art the Holy Spirit is often depicted as a dove. This is probably because in the New Testament we first meet the Holy Spirit at the baptism of Jesus. Some of the passages that depict the Holy Spirit as a dove include the following:

. . . and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove [and] coming upon him. (Matthew 3:16)

. . . and the Spirit, like a dove, descending upon him. (Mark 1:10)

. . . and the holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form like a dove. (Luke 3:22)

### Holy Spirit Memory

The Holy Spirit reminds us; he reminds us of all that Jesus said. He is the living memory of the Church, and when he reminds us, he helps us understand the words of the Lord.

This remembrance in the Spirit and by virtue of the Spirit . . . is an essential aspect of Christ’s presence within us and within his Church. The Spirit of truth and charity reminds us of all that Christ said and helps us enter ever more fully into the meaning of his words. We all have this experience: one moment, in any situation, there is an idea and then another connects with a passage from Scripture. . . . It is the Spirit who leads us to take this path: the path of the living memory of the Church. And he asks us for a response: the more generous our response, the more Jesus’ words become life within us, becoming attitudes, choices, actions, testimony. In essence the Spirit reminds us of the commandment of love and calls us to live it.

A Christian without memory is not a true Christian but only halfway there: a man or woman, a prisoner of the moment, who doesn’t know how to treasure his or her history, doesn’t know how to read it and live it as salvation history. With the help of the Holy Spirit, however, we are able to interpret interior inspirations and life events in light of Jesus’ words. And thus within us grows the knowledge of memory, knowledge of the heart, which is a gift of the Spirit. May the Holy Spirit rekindle the Christian memory within all of us! And there, that day with the apostles, was Our Lady of Memory, who from the beginning meditated on all those things in her heart. Mary, our Mother, was there. May she help us on this path of memory.

—Excerpted from *Walking with Jesus: A Way Forward for the Church* by Pope Francis