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Meditations: Wednesday of the Thirty-Third Week of Ordinary Time

Some reflections that can assist our prayer during the thirty-third week of Ordinary Time. The topics are: putting our God-given gifts to work; called to redeem our own time; not distrusting our talents.

- Putting our God-given gifts to work
- Called to redeem our own time
- Not distrusting our talents

AS JESUS went up to Jerusalem, when He was nearing the holy city, He told the parable of the talents to the group accompanying Him (cf. *Lk* 19:1-27). A king went to a distant country, entrusting his possessions to a handful of servants and asking them to make a profit in his absence. Each servant received the same amount of money: a talent, equivalent to about half a kilogram of silver. He gave them all the same instruction: *Trade with these till I come* (*Lk* 19:13). Each of these servants had a gift in their hands, which the master asked them to put to good use so they would give fruit.

Reflecting on our own talents helps us understand God's trust in us. They are our unique and personal way of participating in God's mission. Our talents are gifts that contribute to the Church, the world, and society. Furthermore, alongside all our personal characteristics, we have

received the great gift of faith in Christ and the possibility of living his life through the sacraments, which are “infinite treasures of love, mercy and affection.”[1] Christ *has granted to us his precious and very great promises, that through these [...] you may become partakers of the divine nature* (2 *Pt* 1:4).

In the parable, the king trusts his servants, leaving them a lot of room for initiative. He doesn't provide detailed instructions, telling them exactly what to do; instead, he leaves everything in their hands. Two of them quickly understood: they knew how to act freely and generously within their master's broad plans. They experienced that gesture of trust as a call to put their talents to work and to open themselves to their fellow citizens: *As each has received a gift, employ it for one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace* (1 *Pt* 4:10-11).

WHEN HE returned, having received the kingly power, he commanded these servants, to whom he had given the money, to be called to him, that he might know what they had gained by trading (*Lk* 19:15). The first two servants received a generous reward for their work: they had made the treasure entrusted to them yield abundant fruit. The king rejoiced and said to both of them, *Well done, good servant! [...] You have been faithful in a very little* (*Lk* 19:17).

"The talents God has given you are not yours; they have been given to you for your use, for the glory of God," St. Teresa of Calcutta said. "Be great and use everything in you for the good Master."[2] Most often, we will do this in normal life, in everyday tasks and relationships, insignificant as they may seem in the eyes of the world. "Whatever you do,

even if you help somebody cross the road, you do it to Jesus. Even giving somebody a glass of water, you do it to Jesus."[3] "God also counts on our daily response, made up of small things that grow through the strength of his grace."[4]

"What does man have to offer God?" one of the Fathers of the Church asked. "Faith and love: that is what God asks of man. [...] God gives his gifts, but he also asks for man's contribution."[5] The fact that God gives us the opportunity to carry out good works instead of simply doing them Himself is a mysterious gift. This parable shows how He wants us to use our abilities to help care for others and transform the world with his grace. God's trust in us is the source of the rich variety in our world. As St. Josemaría said, "Every generation of Christians needs to redeem, to sanctify its own time."[6]

THE THIRD servant in the parable did not consider the king's interests. He did not want to invest the money; he only thought about his own security and hid everything in a napkin in order to return it intact. He gave it back: *Lord, here is your pound* (*Lk* 19:20). Unlike the other two, he "opted irresponsibly for the easy way out. He will simply give back what he has received. From now on he will just kill time, minutes, hours, days, months, years, his whole life!"[7] He compared himself to his companions, believed that the task was beyond him, and chose a risk-free path. He missed out on the great adventure that would have come with acting on his valuable talents.

When the king returned, he criticized this servant's negligence harshly, calling him a *wicked servant* (Luke 19:22) because he didn't make the

inheritance entrusted to him bear fruit. Hiding the money, St. Bede commented, “is tantamount to burying the gifts we have received under the laziness of a soft idleness. […] He is called a ‘wicked servant’ because he was lazy in fulfilling his duty.”[8] Between the fear of failure and the desire to avoid complications, the servant buried the happiness to which he was called, which was much greater than he imagined.

“A great task awaits us,” St. Josemaria reminded us. “We cannot remain inactive, because our Lord has told us clearly, "Trade till I come." As long as we are awaiting the Lord's return, when he will come to take full possession of his kingdom, we cannot afford to relax.”[9] Our Blessed Mother hurried to share her joy with her cousin; she didn't bury God's grace for even a second. We can ask her for the same

audacity to put our God-given talents into action.

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[1] St. Josemaría, *Christ is Passing By*, no. 162.

[2] St. Teresa of Calcutta, *No Greater Love*, chapter 5.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Msgr. Fernando Ocáriz, *In the Light of the Gospel*, “Putting God First,” pg. 52.

[5] Origen, *Homilies on the Book of Numbers*, no. 12, 3.

[6] St. Josemaría, *Christ is Passing By*, no. 132.

[7] St. Josemaría, *Friends of God*, no. 45.

[8] St. Bede, commentary on this passage in Catena Aurea.

[9] St. Josemaría, *Christ is Passing By*, no. 121.

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