

Catechumenate Session

APPRENTICES IN FAITH: A Resource for the RCIA
Thirty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time • Year A • November 15, 2020



*God our Creator,
every good comes
from your hand.
We flourish
with your help.
May we share
in your goodness so that
the ministry of the Church
may continue to thrive.
Amen.*

Sunday Word

Proverbs 31:10–13, 19–20, 30–31
Psalm 128:1–2, 3, 4–5
1 Thessalonians 5:1–6
Matthew 25:14–30 (or 25:14–15, 19–21)

A Great Wife

The Book of Proverbs extols a great wife, painting a picture of she who works hard, helps the poor, and fears the Lord. A great wife is the woman to whom her husband entrusts his heart.

A Great Community

In view of the imminent coming of the day of the Lord, Saint Paul advises the Christian community in Thessalonica to stay alert and sober. We are to be children of light and act accordingly.

A Great Responsibility

This parable of Jesus illustrates for us the great responsibility we have as his disciples. We are given many good gifts, and with these gifts comes great responsibility—a responsibility to honor God for all that he has bestowed upon us.

Church Teaching: Stewardship

Giftedness in Life

The ancient Latin term *talentum* means “balance” or “weight” or “sum of money.” In many areas of the Roman Empire, a single talent denoted the usual daily wage. In the 1400’s the Latin word *talent* passed over directly into Middle English usage to indicate a special natural ability or aptitude. Etymologists believe that this term came into English usage through the biblical parable from today’s Gospel.

God gives us many gifts. He is generous with his blessings. He lavishly endows us with personal talents. We believe that every opportunity and situation for growth and prosperity comes from God. The point of today’s parable is clear. We are to be good and faithful servants of God by exercising our talents, gifts, and abilities responsibly—not for our self-aggrandizement—but to build up the Kingdom of God.

Servants in the Household

The overarching biblical term we use to indicate our responsibility for putting to good use the many gifts we have been given by God is *stewardship* (see Luke 12:42, 16:2, 16:8, 1 Corinthians 4:1–2 and 1 Peter 4:10). We are servants in the household of God. As his servants, we will be accountable to our Lord and Master upon his return to show how we have run that household and served his kingdom.

Interdependence

Our Gospel task to fulfill the integral commandment of stewardship takes concrete form according to the conditions of people in the world. We strive to reverse exploitation of individuals and groups. We feed the hungry, clothe the naked, house the homeless, care for the sick, and so on. Such activities are called the Corporal Works of Mercy. We are to emulate the generosity of God by being generous to our neighbors. Love of God and love of neighbor are inseparable, as Jesus taught us.

Responsibility for sharing our time, talent, and treasure stems from the way God has fashioned everything. He has built interdependence into the very fabric of creation. The resources of creation are immeasurably diverse and do not function in isolation. Even the sciences point to this truth in creation. We depend on the natural resources to sustain us, just as the natural resources depend upon us to tend to creation's care. God has truly blessed us with the abundance of Earth. He has also charged us with the great responsibility to care for his creation.

Distinctiveness of Church Teaching

Underlying the concept of stewardship is the acceptance that our following of Jesus leads us to a reverence for creation. This reverence is based upon our belief that we are given dominion over creation. This is to be understood as our responsibility over creation. God entrusts to us the goodness of creation for our wellbeing. Stewardship demands a religious respect for the integrity of what God has created. Our work and efforts are to show this reverence for creation and are always to support justice and a right ordering of all things.

Key Terms

CREATION

The totality of what exists as well as the act by which God gives a beginning to what exists outside himself (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 290).

CORPORAL WORKS OF MERCY

Loving actions that care for the physical needs of others and ourselves: feed the hungry, clothe the naked, visit the sick and imprisoned, shelter the homeless, and bury the dead (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 162).

TIME, TALENT, AND TREASURE

Denotes the basic gifts we have been given by God, which each Christian holds for the common good (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 952).

Voices of Faith

In the future, what excuse will we have if we are negligent and fail to gain a hundredfold in place of the little we have, the future in place of the present, the eternal in place of the temporary? What excuse will we have if we heedlessly lock our money behind doors and barricades, and we prefer to leave it idle? Instead, we should make it available to the needy now, so that in the future we may count on support from them.

—Saint John Chrysostom

These days there is a lot of poverty in the world, and that's a scandal when we have so many riches and resources to give to everyone. We all have to think about how we can become a little poorer.

—Pope Francis

Further Reading

Catechism of the Catholic Church: 951 (communion of gifts), 1878 (fraternity), 1911 (interdependence), 1912 (progress), 1937 (talents)

United States Catholic Catechism for Adults:

Chapter 34, especially the section entitled "To Be a Christian Steward," pages 450–454

Compendium—Catechism of the Catholic Church:

56 (collaborators with God), 64 (bond between all creatures), 420 (follow promptings of charity)