



Christ in Our Neighborhood

33rd Sunday in Ordinary Time

Prayer

Grant us, we pray, O Lord our God, the constant gladness of being devoted to You, for it is full and lasting happiness to serve with constancy the author of all that is good. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, Your Son, who lives and reigns with You in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Commentary

1st Reading: Proverbs 31:10-13, 19-20, 30-31

We are coming to the close of our Church year and in a few weeks, we will begin a new Liturgical cycle with the 1st Sunday of Advent.

As we near the end of this year, this week and next (the Feast of Christ the King) provide us with a theme of closure. The truth is that this world is not our final destiny. Our final destiny is through the gates which lead to God in heaven.

Often, people think that we will be tested when we arrive at the gates of heaven. On the contrary, it is here on Earth where we take our final exam. It is at the gates where we are graded. There, we will be graded for our life of virtues of faith, hope, and love.

For example, the virtuous woman in Proverbs is to be rewarded: "Give her a share in the fruit of her hands and let her works praise her at the city gates." This theme is also found in today's Gospel parable of the talents: The profitable servants are given a share in their earnings.

The end of our Church year reminds us that we too have an end to our life here on earth. How we live out the virtues of faith, hope, and love for God will determine how we are greeted at the gates of heaven. Now is our final exam!

Question

How would I grade myself? Am I a virtuous person?

Commentary

2nd Reading: 1 Thessalonians 5:1-6

Have you ever been in a classroom where the teacher handed the class a surprise exam? Of course, the purpose of the exam is to test our readiness for the final exam — and final grade.

Staying on top of our studies in class is like life itself. If we fall behind in work, we have to work double-time to catch up. For this reason, many find it hard to take a vacation from their work.

Our Final Exam!

When it comes to the Christian life, there is no vacation from our vocation to be virtuous. To live our faith, to hope in God, and to love Him with our whole heart, soul, and strength is the life of a virtuous disciple of the Lord.

Thankfully, we have St. Paul and other Christian writers to give us the push to stay on track and to remember our Christian calling while here on Earth.

St. Paul is saying, "no nap today," because the day at which we must give a flawless account is unknown to us. We don't know when we will be graded for our exam here on earth.

However, it isn't as if the Lord hasn't given the answers to our final exam. Our Christian life is an open-book examination. We aren't in the dark. We are "children of the light and of the day." Anyone who strives in the Christian sense is always ready for the final grade. The day of the Lord cannot take a Christian "by surprise like a thief."

Question

Am I ready for my final grade?

This is the first of a two-part series,

Our Final Exam

Information: dphx.org/Christ-in-our-neighborhood

Commentary

Gospel: Matthew 25:14-20

God, the Creator, has entrusted His possessions to the creatures. The Savior has entrusted His possessions to the redeemed, each according to his abilities. In other words, in a very tailored fashion.

In ancient times, talents were valuable sums of money but today we understand talents as intellectual abilities and skills given to individuals. God has entrusted these talents to us in order to give glory to God.

In our Gospel parable, the owner disappears and the servants remain behind with all of his assets. These gifts are to produce something in return.

The lazy servant has eyes only for the Lord's strictness, not his kind generosity; he confused himself with contradictions. "You harvest where you have not planted; so out of fear I went off and buried your money in the ground."

Of course, if the servant really viewed the talent entrusted to him as a measure of the landowners' sternness, the servant should have worked even harder, knowing that the owner would return.

In school, some classes may be easy, while others may be difficult. In life, some gifts from God come easy, while others may appear to be crosses. Our talents and gifts can be blessings and curses. What we do with them before the Lord returns depends on our willingness to serve the Lord.

Question

What will I have to give in return when the Lord comes?

This Week's Task

Journal a list of your talents. Consider the easy ones, but don't forget the ones you have to work at.

In what way have you used your talents for the greater glory of God and His Kingdom?

In what way are you using your talents to serve God's people on Earth?

Group Prayer

The group prays the following Prayer:

Loving Father, You alone are the source of every good gift. We praise You for all Your gifts to us, and we thank You for Your generosity.

Everything we have, and all that we are, comes from You. Help us to be grateful and responsible.

You have called us to follow Your Son Jesus without counting the cost. Send us Your Holy Spirit to give us courage and wisdom to be faithful disciples.

We commit ourselves to being good stewards. Help us to be grateful, accountable, generous, and willing to give back with increase. Help us to make stewardship a way of life.

Amen.

Continue with Psalm 128

“For
to
everyone
who has,
more will
be given
and he
will grow
rich.”

Psalm

Blessed are those who fear the Lord.

Blessed are you who fear the LORD,
who walk in his ways!
For you shall eat the fruit of your handiwork;
blessed shall you be and favored.

R. Blessed are those who fear the Lord.

Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine
in the recesses of your home;
Your children like olive plants
around your table.

R. Blessed are those who fear the Lord.

Behold, thus is the man blessed
who fears the LORD.
The LORD bless you from Zion:
may you see the prosperity of Jerusalem
all the days of your life.

R. Blessed are those who fear the Lord.

Conclude with an Our Father