

33rd Sunday of the Year A

*The Lord says: my plans for you are peace
and not disaster; when you call to me,
I will listen to you. (cf. Jr 29:11f.)*



First Reading

Proverbs 31:10-13.19-20.30-31

A perfect wife – who can find her? She is far beyond the price of pearls. Her husband's heart has confidence in her, from her he will derive no little profit. Advantage and not hurt she brings him all the days of her life. She is always busy with wool and with flax, she does her work with eager hands. She sets her hands to the distaff, her fingers grasp the spindle. She holds out her hand to the poor, she opens her arms to the needy. Charm is deceitful, and beauty empty; the woman who is wise is the one to praise. Give her a share in what her hands have worked for, and let her works tell her praises at the city gates.

Second Reading

1 Thessalonians 5:1-6

You will not be expecting us to write anything to you, brothers and sisters, about "times and seasons", since you know very well that the Day of the Lord is going to come like a thief in the night. It is when people are saying, "How quiet and peaceful it is" that the worst suddenly happens, as suddenly as labour pains come on a pregnant woman; and there will be no way for anybody to evade it.

But it is not as if you live in the dark, my brothers and sisters, for that Day to overtake you like a thief. No, you are all children of light and children of the day: we do not belong to the night or to darkness, so we should not go on sleeping, as everyone else does, but stay wide awake and sober.

Jesus spoke this parable to his disciples: "The kingdom of heaven is like a man on his way 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. Now a long time after, 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 faithful servant; you have shown you can be faithful in small things, I will trust you with greater; come and join in your master's happiness.'"

Meditation

Again this Sunday we hear the insistence on the active vigilance and bold risk required of those who await the Lord. Matthew clearly has in mind a smug community without zeal. He describes as a "worthless, lazy lout" the servant who is satisfied with burying his talent and carrying out in a servile way what he thinks are his orders. Matthew has so consistently urged believers to outdo themselves that we should not be surprised when the servant who takes the greatest risk reaps the greatest reward.

Matthew does not mince words. What is at stake is the eternal relationship between Christ and the Christian, that "master's joy" which we are called to share. On the last day we will have the judge that we deserve. Jesus is neither harsh nor arbitrary. What he expects of us is in proportion to his love. He asks us to risk everything in order to be open to receive all he has to give. The capital which the Lord entrusts to us is first and foremost his word: it opens our lives to infinite horizons.

Have Christians failed to proclaim the word for fear of risk, for lack of imagination and of initiative in the face of the world's needs? We must not miss our rendezvous with history because of an excess of that caution that has too long confined us.

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Gospel

Matthew 25:14-30

Jesus spoke this parable to his disciples: "The kingdom of heaven is like a man on his way 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.

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 after, 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 faithful servant; you have shown you can be faithful in small things, I will trust you with greater; come and join in your master's happiness.' Next the man with 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 faithful servant; you have shown you can be faithful 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 one talent. 'Sir,' said he, 'I had heard you were a hard man, reaping where you have not sown and gathering where you have 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 recovered my capital with interest. So now, take the talent from him and give it to the man who has the five talents. For to everyone who has will be given more, and he will have more than enough; but from the man who has not, even what he has will be taken away. As for this good-for-nothing servant, throw him out into the dark, where there will be weeping and grinding of teeth.'"

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