

[Readings: Prov. 31: 10-13, 19-20, 30-31; Ps. 128, 1-5a; 1 Thess. 5:1-6; Matt.25:15-30]

Jesus is talking to us in a parable today. He tells a story to make a point, to teach us something. His point? "Take the risk!"

Matthew uses the term "talent" to describe the monetary unit the wealthy man is giving his servants. What is a "talent?"

Depending on which biblical commentary you read, it is an amount of money equal to one year's salary, or a half-year's salary. Think about this for a moment. What is your annual income? How much money is that? Now, multiply that amount by five. Or multiply it by two. For most of us that would be our entire life's savings.

To one servant the wealthy man gives five year's worth of his salary, another, two year's worth, and to the third, one year's worth.

Another way of looking a "talent" is that special gift or ability God gives us. Why is life like that? We are all equal in the eyes of God, right? We are all guaranteed equal rights under the Constitution.

But when it comes to our talents and abilities, God simply did not make us all the same. There are some people who can handle five talents; there are some who can handle only one or two. Some work with their academics; others work with the skill of their hands.

There are some who are musical or artistic, or handy in the repair shop, in the kitchen or in spiritual direction. There are some who have physical athletic ability and attractive looks, and there are some who do not. My talents are my love for words and my humor.

The important thing to remember is that each of us, servants of the Lord like the three men in the Gospel, is given something. No one is rejected or forgotten. You may not be a five-talent person, but you have some talent. I think that there are a whole lot more one- and two- talent people in this world than there are five-talent people. Take the risk and use them. Don't be "lazy and wicked" and bury them!

A mother was afraid when her little girl said that there were tryouts for the kindergarten play. She knew her daughter couldn't remember her lines or sing well, or pretend to be something she wasn't. Imagine Mom's surprise when her little girl comes home from school skipping with a big smile. Mom asks, "What is YOUR talent, honey, in the play?" The little girl jumps up and down and says, "My teacher said that at the end of the play, I get to jump up and down and clap and cheer!"

Regardless of the number of talents you and I have, all of us Catholic believers are called to be "church cheerleaders!"

What are we doing with our talents? Are we taking the risk?

In our First Reading we hear about the blessing of worthy wife and mother. These words we hear today are, in the Orthodox Jewish religion, to be said by a husband every week at Sabbath prayer, and are sung on the day of her funeral. So, husbands, take the hint! Tell your wife all the beautiful things about her that you love about her at least once a week. Don't wait until the day of HER funeral!

What talents are needed to be a good parent or a good spouse? We can boil it down to three things: the talent of Faith, the

talent of Hope, and the talent of Love. We have been given all three.

First, the Talent of Faith. A daily life without God is a life without sunshine, without true meaning. We will look for that meaning in all the wrong places and never find it. St. Augustine once said, "Our hearts are restless until they rest in You." Share your faith.

Secondly, the good parent, the good spouse is a person of Hope. In today's Second Reading, Paul reminds us that the Lord is coming. In this letter, Paul thinks Jesus is coming back soon. In time, he will learn to think in God's time, not in our time. The person of hope learns about the Catholic faith and passes it on to their spouse and children. Share your hope.

Finally, a good spouse and parent is a person of Love. Do you know that there are some people who light up a room just by walking into it? Unfortunately, there are also people who light up a room right after leaving it! Glowing with the love of Jesus means that people can turn to us in their need. They can become friends with us. They can trust us and we can trust them. Share your love.

Our best friends help to get us into Heaven, and we help them to get into Heaven. Faith, Hope and Love are three talents God gives to all of us. We just need to tap into them and use them, with the help of our friends on earth, and our oldest and newest friends in Heaven. AMEN!