

## Thirty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time

Dear Parishioners and Friends,

The parable of the talents which we encounter in this Sunday's gospel is the one which has made a huge difference to many lives. It is one which has been vital in the life-choices many Christians have made down the generations. Moreover, it is one with a powerful message for so many people today who have had to recalibrate their lives in tackling the challenges of extended lockdown. The story of the property owner going on a long journey and entrusting investment capital to three of his employees is too well known to bear repetition. We have all received from God the gift of life, but all of us also have been given abilities, capacities, talents or particular gifts which add greatly not only to the richness of our own lives but to what of ourselves we can share with others. Some children discover a talent at playing a musical instrument, others an ability to learn cookery or baking skills from their mother, others a liking for football, tennis or swimming which, with training and coaching, they bring to a very high level. Others wake up to their particular gifts later: interest in scientific research, inspiration to write poetry, aptitude for learning foreign languages or a mastery of their own native tongue, etc.

The parable of the talents makes a lot of sense when we think of the variety of gifts and abilities we can detect in any random group of people, young or old. When we see our talents as *gift*, many are motivated to put those gifts at the service of others: many talented businessmen create employment for countless others, many skilled teachers empower the children entrusted to them to discover their own talents and develop them to achieve success and independence in their own lives, and some men discover they have the talents that are required to be a good priest. The apostle Paul was aware of the wealth of talents in the small Christian communities which he visited and to whom he ministered in the early days of the Church: some are teachers, some prophets, some organisers/managers, etc. What we have discovered in lockdown is that all of us are capable of doing many things, or of applying the gifts we already possess, to positive effect in new circumstances.

I have been a parish priest long enough to know the diversity of gifts that people have been given and have always felt it my duty, in response to this parable, to use the few gifts God has given me and to harness the diversity of gifts I find in my parish community to furthering the parish's mission. And it is good to know that it is all for the greater glory of God. What is sad, of course, is those in every community who are so slow to recognise the gifts God has given them, who are so apprehensive about making mistakes and who do not trust the God, who bestowed their talents on them, that he will help them to blossom. Perhaps as we return to the "new normal" and gather again as a community, we might reflect on the challenges the parable of the talents puts before us. It would be such a shame to miss this great opportunity.

**Father Patrick**