

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

The Lord said: I think thoughts of peace and not of affliction.

You will call upon me, and I will answer you, and I will lead back your captives from every place.

GLORIA

Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace to people of good will.

We praise you,
we bless you,
we adore you,
we glorify you,
we give you thanks for your great glory,
Lord God, heavenly King,
O God, almighty Father.

Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son,
Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father,
you take away the sins of the world,
have mercy on us;
you take away the sins of the world,
receive our prayer;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father,
have mercy on us.

For you alone are the Holy One,
you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

COLLECT

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.

FIRST READING Prov 31:10-13, 19-20, 30-31

A reading from the Book of Proverbs

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.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

PSALM

Psalms 127

Response:

O blessed are those who fear the Lord.

1. O blessed are those who fear the Lord
and walk in his ways!
By the labour of your hands you shall eat.
You will be happy and prosper. (R.)

2. Your wife like a fruitful vine
in the heart of your house;
your children like shoots of the olive,
around your table. (R.)

3. Indeed thus shall be blessed
the man who fears the Lord.
May the Lord bless you from Zion
in a happy Jerusalem
all the days of your life. (R.)

SECOND READING 1 Thessalonians 5:1-6

A reading from St Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians

You will not be expecting us to write anything to you, brothers, about "times and seasons", since you know 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 not way for anybody to evade it.

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

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia, alleluia!

Even if you have to die, says the Lord,
keep faithful, and I will give you
the crown of life.
Alleluia!

GOSPEL

Matthew 25: 14-30

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew.

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 when 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 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 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'."

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

PROFESSION OF FAITH

I believe in one God,
the Father almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all things visible and invisible.

I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ,
the Only Begotten Son of God,
born of the Father before all ages.
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made, consubstantial with
the Father;

through him all things were made.
For us men and for our salvation
he came down from heaven,

(all bow during the next three lines)

and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the
Virgin Mary,
and became man.

For our sake he was crucified under
Pontius Pilate,
he suffered death and was buried,
and rose again on the third day
in accordance with the Scriptures.

He ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory
to judge the living and the dead
and his kingdom will have no end.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord,
the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son is adored
and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.

I believe in one, holy, catholic and
apostolic Church.

I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness
of sins
and I look forward to the resurrection of the
dead
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Grant, O Lord, we pray,
that what we offer in the sight of your majesty
may obtain for us the grace of being devoted
to you
and gain us the prize of everlasting happiness.
Through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

To be near God is my happiness,
to place my hope in God the Lord.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

We have partaken of the gifts of this sacred
mystery,
humbly imploring, O Lord,
that what your Son commanded us to do
in the memory of him
may bring us growth in charity.
Through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**



SETTLING THE ACCOUNTS

One of the temptations of anyone who has to preach is to reduce the meaning of the biblical text to telling people what they should do. This is known as *moralising*.

It is also the easy way out, as it can enable the preacher to avoid the hard questions which the text may be asking, or uncomfortable things which we should all think about from time to time.

One easy way of applying the parable of the Talents is to urge people to *use your talents to the best of your ability*. This is commonplace advice from schoolteachers or sports coaches and appropriate in those settings. But the Bible is concerned about God and our relationship to the Lord: it is not a self-help manual designed to show us how to improve ourselves in a purely human fashion. The servants in the story represent different reactions to the coming of the master and the reckoning which will follow. Two apply themselves responsibly to the task in hand: the third claims that he has done nothing constructive out of fear, but the master accuses him rather of simple laziness and even wickedness. Matthew is telling us that the Son of Man will return and that we should live our lives with that in mind. The purpose of the master in the story is not just to find out the capabilities of the servants but also to decide who should share with him in his joy.

There are two extremes which we might try to avoid: one is becoming so fearful of encountering the Lord that we become paralysed and do nothing, like the *lazy and wicked* servant in the parable; the other is that we try to do so much that we end up exhausted but still feeling that we could - and should - have done more. The first two servants act responsibly in anticipation of their master's return and are rewarded: it is that aspect of the parable that we might keep in mind and trust in the mercy of our Lord who came among us as one of us and understands our human condition. ■

SAY

With the Lord there is mercy, and fullness of redemption.

REFLECT

It is never comfortable thinking about the four last things: death, judgment, heaven and hell. But at this time of the year, the Church in her liturgy asks us to do just that. We can all slip into a complacent, sleepy way of living and thinking. There has always been the possibility of falling into an attitude of trusting in the Lord's mercy, no matter how we have lived (presumption) or of giving up and saying something like *I'll never be good enough, so what's the use?* (despair). Or, we can think that everything depends on our own efforts or that we can leave everything to God. As usual, the truth lies somewhere in the middle. We have all been redeemed by Christ: but we are not all necessarily saved. For that we have to co-operate with Lord's grace by living responsibly in anticipation of meeting him some day. ■

LEARN

The original meaning of the word *talent* is a vast sum of money:

The use of the word *talent* to describe a natural ability seems to have come from this parable.

The word *parousia* which occurs in other contexts means the final coming of the son of Man.

DO

In November, we think in a special way about the Holy Souls. When you visit the cemetery, ask for the grace to make the best use of your time, day by day, living as a disciple of Jesus.

