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Newsletter

The Thirty-Third Sunday of the Year

November 19th 2023

Dear parishioners at St. Mary's and St. Paul's,

We are now in the final few weeks of the church's liturgical year and the readings invite us to sincere reflection on our relationship with Jesus and indeed on our final destiny. Today's gospel is the Parable of the Talents (Matthew 14-30) and Pope Francis offers his own profound reflection on this text:

"This passage from St. Matthew tells of a man, who, before setting off on a journey, calls his servants and entrusts his assets to them in *Talents*, which are extremely valuable ancient coins. The master entrusts five talents to the first servant, two to the second and one to the third. During the Master's absence, the three servants must earn a profit from this patrimony. The first and second servant each doubles the initial value of the capital. The third however, for fear of losing all, buries the talent he receives in a hole. Upon the Master's return, the first two receive praise and reward, while the third, who returned only the coin he received, is reproached and punished.

The meaning of this is clear. The man in the parable represents Jesus, we are the servants, and the Talents are the inheritance that the Lord entrusts to us. What is this inheritance? It is his Word, the Eucharist, faith in his heavenly Father, his forgiveness. In other words, it is so many things, his most precious treasures. This is the inheritance he entrusts to us, not only to safeguard, but to make fruitful! While in common usage the term *Talent* indicates a pronounced individual quality – for example talent in music, in sport and so on – in the parable, *Talent* represents the riches of the Lord, which he entrusts to us so that we make them bear fruit. The hole dug into the soil by *the wicked lazy servant (v.26)* points to the fear of risk, which blocks creativity and the fruitfulness of love, because the fear of the risks of love stops us.

Jesus does not ask us to store his grace in a safe. Jesus does not ask us for this. Instead he wants us to use it to benefit others. All the goods that we have received are to be shared with others, and thus they increase, as if he were to tell us, '*Here is my mercy, my tenderness, my forgiveness: take them and make ample use of them*'. And what have we done with them? Whom have we *infected* with our faith? How many people have we encouraged with our hope? How much love have we shared with our neighbour? These are questions that will do us good to ask ourselves. Any environment, even the farthest and most impractical, can become a place where our talents can bear fruit. There are no situations or places precluded from the Christian presence and witness. The witness which Jesus asks of us is not closed, but is open; it is in our hands.

This Parable urges us not to conceal our faith and our belonging to Christ, not to bury the Word of the Gospel, but to let it circulate in our lives, in our relationships, in concrete situations, as a strength which purifies, which renews. Similarly, forgiveness, which the Lord grants us in the Sacrament of Reconciliation, should not be hidden: let us not keep it closed within ourselves, but let us allow it to emit its power, which brings down the walls that our egoism has raised, which enables us to take the first step in strained relationships, to resume the dialogue where there is no longer communication. Allow these talents, these gifts, these presents that the Lord has given us to be, to grow, to bear fruit for others, with our witness." Pope Francis

I offer here the times of the Liturgy for the coming week:

Monday November 20th: Mass at St. Mary's at 10am

Rosary at 9.40am, Confessions at 6.30-6.50pm; Novena to Our Lady of Perpetual Help at 7pm

Tuesday November 21st: Mass at St. Mary's at 10am

Rosary at 9.40am; the Memorial of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Wednesday November 22nd: Mass at St. Mary's at 10am

Rosary at 9.40am

Thursday: November 23rd: Mass at St. Mary's at 10am

Rosary at 9.40am

November Lists for the Faithful Departed: one of our lovely customs is to write down the names of our deceased relatives and friends on one of the November Lists available at the back of the church. Many include an offering (which you do not need to do) and these will be shared between two very good charities, Mary's Meals and Friends of the Holy Land. *Thank you.*

Annual Mass for the Faithful Departed on Wednesday 29th November at 6.30pm; please join us to pray for all who have died since last November and to pray also our own deceased relatives and friends. *Please come to the hall afterwards for some light refreshments together.*

Catholic Education Week: We will celebrate Catholic Education Sunday next week, November 26th: representatives from our three schools will join us for the 10.30am liturgy; *a second collection will be taken up next week to support the Catholic Education Office.*

Thank you to all who came around to the hall for the Coffee Morning last Sunday; everyone seemed to enjoy the gathering after Mass and a donation of £500 was given to the Hamilton Foodbank;

The next Coffee Morning and Christmas Card Sale will be on Sunday 3rd December: the parish stall and Fairtrade are holding a joint coffee morning in the parish hall after the 10.30am Mass. Christmas Cards, Nativity Sets, Advent Calendars (including Fairtrade chocolate ones) Christmas ornaments etc will be on sale. A small selection of Fairtrade food and crafts will be available. Holy Cross High School will also be selling Christmas Cards. *Toast and home-baking will be served.*

CREDO: the parish faith-sharing group meets this Tuesday at 1pm in the parish meeting room; there is some tea and cake after the meeting; new members are always welcome.

Advent Faith-Sharing Group: Mr. Ronnie Boyd has offered to lead an evening group on the Wednesdays of Advent, December 6th, 13th and 20th, between 7-8pm in the parish meeting room. Please contact Ronnie on ircboyd@hotmail.co.uk if you would like to take part.

The Parish has purchased a Defibrillator, to assist should an emergency take place here in the church; it is easily located on the wall in the confessional at the back of the church. Training to use the Defibrillator will be offered in the New Year.

Recently Deceased: Archie McNeill, James Fletcher, Peter Hall, Margaret Joyce, James McClafferty, Tommy Selfridge, Billie Dunlop, Margaret McGhie, Andrew Quigley, Elio Ferraccioli

Special Remembrance: Joseph McMenemy, Geraldine and John McCarthy, George Stewart, Daniel and Margaret McGinnes, Paul McGinn, and all our deceased relatives and friends and the benefactors of St. Mary's and St. Paul's.