



a Kendall Hunt Company

Thirty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A, Catechist - RCLB Lectionary



Catechist Background and Preparation

To prepare for this session, read all the readings.

Proverbs 31:10-13, 19-20, 30-31

Psalms 128:1-2, 3, 4-5

1 Thessalonians 5:1-6

Matthew 25:14-30 [or (short form) 25:14-15, 19-21]

Spend a few minutes reflecting on what these readings mean for you today. Is there a particular reading that appeals to you? Is there a word or image that engages you?

RCL Benziger
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Read the following **Word in Liturgy** and **Catholic Doctrine** sections. Read the Word in Liturgy and Catholic Doctrine sections. These give you background on what you will be doing this session. Read over the session outline and make it your own. Check to see what materials you will need.

The Word In Liturgy

The Book of Proverbs, although it contains material that is much older, dates in its present form to the fifth century before Christ. The author seeks to reassure the post-exilic Jewish community of the abiding desire of God to offer guidance to the people of the covenant—a guidance that would be on a par with the “wisdom” available among the pagan nations. Previous generations had found in the Davidic dynasty such a guarantee, but the events of the exile had shaken the faith of many. Proverbs includes material obviously borrowed from pagan neighbors, but the process of assimilation has also thoroughly imbued the material

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with the theological vision of Israel. Today's passage has a clear parallel in the Egyptian wisdom text on women, the Instruction of Ani, but the ideal offered in Proverbs is of a praiseworthy wife who "fears the Lord" (v. 30).

The industrious woman described in this text is both mindful of the poor and an economic asset to her husband. As an example of wise stewardship of one's God-given gifts, the reading is a perfect match to the gospel parable. The psalm refrain ("Happy are those who fear the Lord") picks up on the notion of obedience to God's will, while the verses of Psalm 128 echo Proverbs' recognition of the blessings that accrue to a man with such a wife.

Today's gospel passage contains the third in a series of parables on the coming judgment that Matthew has linked together at the conclusion of his Eschatological Discourse. Like last week's parable of the bridesmaids, Jesus' original parable of the talents has undergone a process of allegorization and has been given a strong eschatological orientation in the process of oral transmission and incorporation into Matthew's written gospel. The owner has become a figure for Christ, away for a time on a (heavenly) journey, until he returns (at the parousia) to settle accounts with his servants (early Christian believers). The settling of accounts has become an image of final judgment, and the servants' rewards and punishments are meant to remind Matthew's audience of the importance of using their gifts wisely

and well.

Catholic Doctrine

Stewardship

The Anglo-Saxon term *stigweard*, or "hall keeper," meant the person responsible for feeding the entire manor. The corresponding scriptural term is *oikonomos*, or household manager, the one responsible for managing the resources and essential functions of the whole estate or household (*oikos*) and who was accountable for this management to the *kyrios*, the lord or master/owner. Thus, in general, as theologians use the scriptural term to arrive at a concept of Christian stewardship, what is meant is the care or good management of the entire household of God, all that God gives us in creation and all of God's plan of salvation, the divine economy. Jesus himself is the model for good Christian stewardship, for Jesus

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illustrates in his life and ministry the obedient servant of God who gives totally of himself to effect humanity's wholeness and communion with God. What does it mean for Catholics to assert that they follow Jesus in giving totally of themselves as good stewards of God's creation?

First, Catholics understand from the gospel message and the life of Jesus that they have a responsibility for others. (See Doctrine section for the thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time.) We have been commanded to love God and our neighbor. Loving our neighbor is inseparable from loving God. Our gospel task in faithfulness to this commandment takes concrete form, given the needy conditions of people in the world. We strive to reverse exploitation of individuals and groups and to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, house the homeless, care for the sick, and so on, activities that in traditional Catholic teaching are called the corporal works of mercy (CCC 2447).

Second, Catholics understand that this responsibility stems from the way in which God has fashioned everything, that is, interdependence is built into the very fabric of creation. The panoply of creation is immeasurably diverse and does not exist or function in isolation (CCC 340). Indeed, given advances in science and technology that facilitate the "global village," the Second Vatican Council spoke of an increase in human interdependence in the contemporary world (GS 25). The Council then called upon existing international and regional organizations to assist in the Church's mission "to alleviate the enormity of human misery" (GS 84).

Third, there is a Catholic assumption that in following Jesus the believer develops a deep personal spirituality that funds a reverence for creation. This reverence is based in the biblical view where humanity is given dominion over creatures. But this dominion is not absolute and demands a religious respect for the integrity of what God has created (CCC 2415).

Finally, the way we Catholics understand holding property and goods reflects the notion of Christian stewardship. Thus, the Second Vatican Council taught that all property is held by individuals for the common or universal good. The Council affirmed, "God destined the earth and all it contains for all [individuals] and all peoples so that all created things would be

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shared fairly by all . . . under the guidance of justice tempered by charity. No matter what the structures of property are in different peoples, according to various and changing circumstances and adapted to their lawful institutions, we must never lose sight of this universal destination of earthly goods" (GS 69). Catholics see this world as transitory and believe that ultimately all things will be summed up in Christ. Jesus, in inaugurating the kingdom, proclaimed a world that is being transformed and that will one day, in God's good time, reach harmony and wholeness in Christ. To be a good steward means that the very way we hold property and utilize the limited resources of this world assists in building toward the fulfillment of God's kingdom.

