

Homily (adapted): 33rd Sunday in Ordinary Time – Year A (15/11/2020)

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Ask the Lord to help you identify the talents you need to go through Lockdown

My dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,
Happy Sunday.

Let me tell you a story that happened 508 years ago. On 1st November 1512 Michelangelo Buonarroti's magnificent fresco paintings on the ceilings of the Sistine Chapel in Vatican City were revealed to the public. It took place during a Mass celebrated by Pope Julian II. Many of the people who attended noticed something remarkable. Michelangelo had used everyday people on the streets as his characters to paint the ceiling decoration of the nine scenes of the Book of Genesis. The best of them was the Creation of Adam. Michelangelo used his talent to create something beautiful to glorify God and to give us hope. 508 years later, his artwork is still beautiful, relevant, and continues to inspire many.

In the gospel reading of today (from Matthew 25: 14-30), Jesus gives us a parable - a story - that can help us understand the kingdom of God. Jesus tells us of three different servants given different numbers of talents by their master. Two of them used their talents wisely to create even more talents. One of them did not. He simply wasted his talent by doing nothing with it to prove a point. The two servants who used their talent wisely were entrusted with even greater talents because they have shown that they could be trusted in little things.

Now we are in our second national lockdown as a country. You may have asked yourself, what can I do to keep active? How can I make good use of this time? You may have done a great deal of thinking about how this year has gone and how the pandemic may have affected you personally. You may have thought about how the year is now ending. How would it feel like when we move into the next season of Advent, into the colder winter months, and of course you may have also thought about how Christmas would feel like for you and your family this year? So many thoughts may be racing through your mind that you may be struggling to find a meaning to everything. All the readings today - from the First reading, through to the Psalm and to the Second reading points us towards hope for something better to come. The readings invites us to realise that even this challenging time would pass someday, and even Covid-19 pandemic would become history one day - and we all pray this happens soon.

In the meantime, whilst we live in uncertainty, fear for our family and friends, worried, with some degree of trepidation and anxiety about the future, I want us to return to Michelangelo. He was only asked to paint the twelve apostles, but he went further. For four years, Michelangelo worked so hard, lying on his back to paint the ceiling, cramped in a small space between a high scaffold and the ceiling. Warm and cold paint splattering on his face. He was also under so much pressure to get the work done quickly. Another famous artist Giorgio Vasari said: "When the work was thrown open, the whole world could be heard running up to see it, and, indeed, it was such as to make everyone astonished and dumb." Michelangelo painted this most remarkable work during one of the most challenging times of his life. He translated his frustrations and worries into beauty and joy to glorify God.

We have all got talents in us that we can use to glorify God. We have all been given talents that could inspire, bless, and give hope and joy to many. When we were created by a loving God, the prophet Jeremiah (29:11) reminds us that God said: "I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." The talent God has given you to create something good for the world has not changed. In the creation of Adam painting by Michelangelo - from the book of Genesis - we

are reminded that God created all of us after his own image and likeness. This should fill us with great joy. Again, in the second reading - from 1st Thessalonians 5 we are reminded that we should behave as children of the light.

I therefore invite you my dear brothers and sisters to carry out three assignments this week, and then often. Give yourself some time to reflect about something good you have done that you are happy about? Then think about something good somebody has done for you that really moved you to joy. Finally, I want you to go to the Lord Jesus in prayer and ask him to help you identify the talents - the gifts - he has given to you that you can use to go through lockdown. Whatever that gift is, ask the Lord to inspire you to create something that would focus your mind, bless others and glorify God.

In everything you do, something you must never lose is prayer. Say the Rosary to our Mother Mary every day. Use lockdown to create a new habit - one of being in constant prayer with God. Use this time to ask the Lord to give you talents to use during this lockdown to create something good; and whatever talent God gives you, be like the wise servants in today's gospel - use it wisely, use it to glorify God, use it to bring joy to many, use it to prepare for a future after Covid. Use it simply to move from one day to the next - gracefully.