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Photo by Sr. Karin Nürnberg, CSJ, from the Abbey St. Hildegard in Eibingen, Germany

ENTRUSTED GIFT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

By Sr. Jane DeLisle, CSJ

An Excerpt from Today's Gospel

Jesus told his disciples this parable:

"A man going on a journey called in his servants and entrusted his possessions to them. To one he gave five talents; to another, two; to a third, one -- to each according to his ability. Then he went away.

Immediately the one who received five talents went and traded with them, and made another five. Likewise, the one who received two made another two. But the man who received one went off and dug a hole in the ground and buried his master's money."

MATTHEW 25:14-18

Reflection

The Gospel today is taken from the end of Matthew's Gospel. In the weeks

ahead the readings will speak of end times. This seems appropriate before the Church propels us into Advent, the time of waiting and preparation for the celebration of the Incarnation, the coming of Jesus.

The text above is excerpted from Matthew 25:14-30 and tells a whole story of entrusted gift, responsibility, and accountability.

I know myself as uniquely blessed, given grace upon grace, to live and serve out of the abundance given me by God. Today I must ask, how well do I make use of the entrusted potential for which I am responsible to tend and develop? I have decades of God's abiding grace within me that, when fostered and integrated, shapes me to be more of who God created me to be. I am blessed with so much goodness and guidance: I have been well educated, I experience myself as loved by family, friends, and community. Energy and health sustain me. I have all I need and in this I am privileged. I have had ample opportunities to serve God's people in many different capacities. I am gifted and called to integrate, appreciate, and use all that I have been given for the sake of others, building up the Kingdom of God.

Praying over these blessings and opportunities, I reflect on all the good that has been done and I rejoice, like the first two servants. Yes, we are invited to take stock of our lives and give thanks for the many ways we have integrated and shared all that God has given us to do and to be. The temptation is to delight and be self-satisfied.

And still, I suddenly realize that I have all three servants within me. The story causes me to pause and consider the times that I have failed to reach out, take a risk, or give of myself out of fear of what is asked of me; or when I freeze out of perceived inadequacy, self-doubt, and hesitancy to be intrusive; or when I'm just not up to the invitation to venture into the unknown relationship or situation.

I am painfully aware that I sometimes hesitate to respond in stressful circumstances, because I am more focused on myself than the need before me. I hold some more difficult aspects of life at bay, ignore the reality, or bury my head to the need of another person in my circle of relationship. Self-doubt causes me to hold back, and I do not reach out and come to the aid of another.

When self-focused, I am like the servant who received the coin and buried it, rather than allowing the talent to flourish by the grace of the Holy Spirit. I now see anew that I must rely on the grace of God's abiding presence to alleviate my seeming lack. Being self-protective out of fear blocks grace.

However, rather than gnashing my teeth and hiding in the darkness, I am

invited to claim this lesson learned! Grace of insight received; at the next challenging opportunity, I desire to ask for the grace to take the risk, to stretch myself, and reach out, rather than hide in my fear, doubt, and anxiety. These self-defeating emotions are never from God. These emotions block the profound grace of God doing the work in me. Relying on the mercy, love, and compassion of God, I can step out, engage the other, be a supportive, listening, and companioning presence. It is not too late! New opportunities to stretch are always around the corner.



Woman Wearing White Top
Photo by Garon Piceli

For Pondering

- Recall the times when you rose to the occasion of assisting another in a difficult situation. Rejoice and give thanks.
 - When has self-doubt, fear, or anything else kept you from responding to the need of another? Pray for the grace of recognition of your vulnerability and weakness.
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For Prayer

Psalm 128

Adapted by Nan Merrill

*Blessed are you who reverence the Beloved,
Who walk in Love's way!
You radiate an inner joy and peace wher'er you go.
Compassion draws you to the gates of those in need.*

*Families and friends gather upon your doorstep.
Children run to greet you with open arms.
Yes, blessed are you who reverence the Beloved!*

*Strangers feel at home in your presence.
The oppressed are comforted by your support.
Blessed indeed are you who reverence the Beloved!
Peace be within you.
Amen*

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