

33rd Sunday in Ordinary Time

- There are so many things going on in our readings this week!
 - There is the end of the world in our 2nd reading...
 - I talked about that last week.
 - The 1st reading focuses on the role...of an ideal wife...
 - and did you happen to notice...that the Psalm...
 - it speaks a bit about the role of a husband and father?
 - I saw the first reading...in a spiritual sense...
 - as referring to the Church - that's my bride - well, and also Christ's!
 - So we could talk about the different vocations.
 - And then there are the talents...
 - how we invest them...
 - that determines our eternal life.
- But what stood out for me...was actually the notion of fear.
 - There are two types of fear in our readings today...
 - and they are very different from one another.
 - There is the fear mentioned in our first reading and psalm:
 - *"the woman who fears the Lord is to be praised."*
 - *"Blessed are those who fear the Lord."*
 - But then there's the fear of the man with one talent.
 - He was paralyzed...as he stood in the presence of the Lord:
 - *"I knew you were a demanding person...*
 - *so out of fear...I buried your talent..."*
 - So why does one kind of fear...
 - lead to being *'praised'* and *'blessed'*...
 - while the other...well...it lands the man in hell?
- The first kind of fear...
 - is better expressed...along the lines...of a reverential wonder and awe.
 - God is holy...He is wholly other...
 - He is so far beyond us mere mortals...
 - that we just can't help but be overwhelmed.
 - This kind of fear...
 - it's going to make us feel small...
 - but at the exact same time...
 - we should also feel...
 - His protection and His love.
 - And every now and again...
 - we'll have an experience like this in prayer.

- I remember a few years ago...when I was on my 30 day silent retreat...
 - I had a very vivid image in prayer...of myself...
 - resting in the Palm of God's hand.
 - I was alternating between...
 - sitting with my back against His thumb...
 - and being gently wrapped up...in the folds of His skin...
 - as He cradled me there.
 - I felt really small in comparison...
 - but in a way that made me feel...so very protected and loved.
 - I didn't want to stop praying with that image!
 - I didn't want to stop being in His palm!
 - So that's one type of fear...a reverential wonder and awe.
- And the other type of fear...
 - it's also going to make us feel small...
 - but in a way that makes us turn in on self...
 - and pull away from the Lord.
 - He's just so overwhelming...that we want to run and hide...Adam & Eve.
 - *"Master, I knew you were a demanding person....so I buried your talent."*
 - It's almost sounds like shame doesn't it?
 - What good is so little? I may as well give up.
 - This is the kind of fear that we might experience...
 - in the face of this world right now...
 - that just seems to be joyfully jumping off of a cliff...
 - rather than humbly following the Lord.
 - What good are my efforts...in the face of such a mess!
 - But what was it that Christ said about faith...the size of a mustard seed?
 - It can move mountains!
 - That's the power of one Rosary...said from the depths of your heart...
 - That's the power of your family...fasting from some temporal pleasure...
 - and offering it with great love...for the conversion of souls.
 - Don't focus on the little you've got...
 - focus on the power of God's love.
- So there are two different types of fear in our readings...
 - and the experience of them....it's light years apart isn't it?
 - God is always going to be big and overwhelming to us...
 - and that's just because He is!
 - But how do we go from cowering in His presence...
 - to rejoicing in the fact...that we are so small?
- I think the answer is in our Gospel.
 - Because there is only one difference...
 - between those who had 2 or 5 talents...and the man who had one...
 - they risked everything...while he hung on.
 - I think that's key.

- I remember back when I was vocation director for the diocese...
 - one of Archbishop Chaput's biggest pet peeves...
 - was just how many guys came through my door...
 - who just couldn't decide...
 - am I called to the priesthood or not?
 - They were paralyzed by the fear...of making the wrong choice.
 - So they ended up...making no choice at all.
 - But then there were other guys...
 - some who were willing to risk everything...and right up front...
 - some were even disowned by their parents...
 - and they weren't even sure if the Lord was calling them...
 - but they had to try.
 - Now...a few of these guys stayed...while others left...
 - but none of them ever regretted...
 - what they risked for the Lord.
- Whether it's discerning a vocation...
 - recommitting to your marriage as you go through a rough patch...
 - trying to figure out what to do with your job...
 - or maybe it's something like...
 - stepping out of your shell and sharing your faith...
 - in all these things...there is going to be fear.
 - But what can help us turn that corner...from one fear to the other...
 - is having more faith in His ability to lead and guide us...
 - than we have faith...in our own ability to mess things up!
 - And boy can our faith in that be strong!
 - Will we still make mistakes? You better believe it!
 - But that just gives us...another opportunity to grow in humility...
 - and Him...another opportunity to save.
- What I've found in my own life...
 - is that the more I risk...and the more I step out in faith...
 - the more miraculous things I get to see the Lord do as a result.
 - And where do you think that leads me?
 - Back to that reverential wonder and awe...
 - that the Lord...would do such incredible things...
 - and all through the likes of me!
- My brothers and sisters...no matter what our vocation in life...
 - no matter what our gifts and talents...
 - we are called to invest our life in the lives of those around us...
 - and we don't have 2 or 5...or even the proverbial 9...
 - we've just got one life to live...
 - so don't bury it out of fear...but be courageous...and go all in.