

## Friday Nov 8, 31<sup>st</sup> Week OT, Year 1

You know one of things I've noticed now that I'm out of seminary and, if you will, back in the real world – is that there's been a lot things that have to be figured out, things you have to think about - that while in seminary you didn't think too much about, because you didn't have to.

And I'm not even talking about things specifically related to the priesthood or priestly ministry. I mean personal things that all of a sudden need to be considered or taken care or dealt with.

And most of these things, one way or another, revolve around getting your financial affairs in order. Because now that you're a priest and working for the diocese – certain things change.

Like for example, now that I'm no longer a student – I can no longer keep deferring my student loans, which means I finally have to confront them and deal with them.

Or my new favorite hobby, trying to understand and wrap my head around the wonderful world of taxes – because, as it turns out, that also changes when you become a priest.

Suddenly you have an entirely different tax status – because priests, come to find out, are considered self-employed. And so that affects how you file your taxes, what you claim or don't claim, what's actually considered income, what can be written off, what can't.

And then on top of all that – immediately upon being ordained, you have to start thinking about and planning for your retirement.

So there's just a lot of things that kind of just suddenly emerge, that you have to take care of and deal with and learn about rather quickly. And they're important things – things that really affect you. And so it's important to be responsible about them.

Because you want to make sure, right, that you're doing everything your supposed to do and should do - whether it's meeting your legal obligations, or paying back the debt you owe, or just overall being responsible about your money and your financial future.

And so you do everything you can to learn about these things, to educate yourself, and to make the right choices - choices that will serve you the best both in the short term, but also in the long term.

And so you do your best to be diligent, prudent, disciplined, educated, prepared – so that you can be financially secure ad you go about your life.

And so here's the point I'm trying to make, my brothers – I think what the Lord is trying to say to each of us today through this parable of the steward – is that in the same way that we have learn to be responsible and to deal wisely and prudently with our temporal concerns – whether they be our financial affairs, or our education, or even our family life...

...so too we also need to be responsible and prudent and wise when it comes to our spiritual affairs. We have to make sure that we are dealing with and taking care of our spiritual obligations, and always taking advantage of opportunities for spiritual growth.

You know, I used to work at Blockbuster Video. And just like with any retail store, every once in a while, we had to take an inventory of the store. Which meant breaking out these giant coiled extension cords that attached to the cash register scanners, which were hooked up to computers that were older than God, and we had to scan *every single movie* in the store and *every single* piece of candy and bag of popcorn, everything that we had.

If we sold it, we scanned it.

But as tedious and painful a process as it was – it was important, for the business, to periodically step back and take an account of all the product in the store – in order to meet the customer demands, keep track of what was selling and not selling, limit loss and theft, and bottom line – most importantly – increase the profitability of the company.

Well, in a sense, that's what the Lord calls us to do in our spiritual life – right? To every once in a while take a spiritual inventory of ourselves, to assess our growth or lack of growth.

To see what is that's missing in our spiritual life, what's been lost, where are we struggling, what do we need more of or less of in our life. OR, on the other hand - what's going well for us, where are we succeeding, where are we profiting?

And this is obviously especially important for all of us, who are all striving and seeking to be good and holy priests. Now or in the future.

And you know the saying – you can't give what you don't have.

The bottom line is, If we're not taking the time to allow God to spiritually restock us or replenish us – then it's going to be really hard to lead others into a deeper faith, into a deeper relationship with the Lord.

And this is why – as I'm sure you hear it a lot – confession, spiritual direction, spiritual reading, and a consistent and disciplined prayer life before the Blessed Sacrament is so crucial to the seminarian and to the priest.

These are the tools God gives us for our ongoing spiritual inventory – so that we can continue to grow and to be formed and to profit from his grace - which is the single most important product for a priest to make sure He's stocked up on – God's grace.

Because, my brothers, if we don't allow God's grace to continually renew us, strengthen us, purify us – then the truth of the matter is – our priesthood will have a very short shelf life.