

Singing Our Faith
25th Sunday in Ordinary Time – September 22, 2019

With Gifts That Differ by Your Grace



1. With gifts that dif - fer by your grace Your Spir - it fits us
2. And yet, be - cause our faith is frail, We bur - y gifts you
3. Come, Spir - it, build your Church a - new, That all may do their



all, That Chris - tians in each time and place May
give. A - fraid to risk, a - fraid to fail, We
part, To - geth - er find - ing life in you, Di -



an - swer when you call. You strength - en some to
are not free to live. At times we use your
verse, yet one in heart. So may your peo - ple



take a stand, To proph - e - sy or preach, While
sa - cred gifts For on - ly self - ish ends. Our
seek your will, Trans - formed in all our ways. We



oth - ers give with o - pen hand, Or heal the sick, or teach.
pur - pose fades, our fo - cus shifts, And con - flict soon at - tends.
of - fer bod - y, mind, and skill, A sac - ri - fice of praise.

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Sunday's gospel contains many phrases that, at first hearing, could distract us. "I tell you, make friends for yourselves with dishonest wealth..." WHAT DID YOU SAY, JESUS??? Amid the many points and layers of this gospel reading, stewardship remains prevalent. The most basic definition of steward is "someone who takes care of something." In the case of the gospel, the steward is "someone who is taking care of something that belongs to someone else." Stewardship, a word we hear often in the context of the Christian life, is simply that—God gives us gifts to manage. Today's gospel speaks of a situation we **never** want to find ourselves in! The steward (us) has been squandering (wasting or misusing) his master's (God's) possessions (gifts); he gets caught and needs to prepare an accountability report. Uh oh.

If we had to prepare an accountability report for God, what would it look like? How many of our talents would be used for the benefit of God's kingdom? How many hours would be logged for service to the Church? How many hours and dollars would be allocated for serving the poor? In other words, would we be scurrying to make up for lost time like the steward in Sunday's gospel reading? Hopefully not. And it's (almost) never too late to change our ways, so our accountability report comes out favorably.

The hymn above leads us to reflection on our stewardship. The first stanza reminds me of St. Paul's first letter to the Corinthians (12:4-7): *"There are different kinds of spiritual gifts but the same Spirit; there are different forms of service but the same Lord; there are*

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different workings but the same God who produces all of them in everyone. To each individual the manifestation of the Spirit is given for some benefit.” The hymn text affirms us in our gifts and helps us recognize that the Spirit inspires us in these gifts.

As we reflect on what our accountability report might look like, the poignant words of stanza two ask us if we’ve been stingy with our gifts, or if we’ve only used them for self glorification or self pleasure. Even in parish ministries, we need to continually keep ourselves in check as to whether we’re truly serving to serve, or if it’s for a variety of selfish reasons. *“Our purpose fades, our focus shifts, and conflict soon attends.”*

Stanza three refocuses us on the life-giving Holy Spirit who unites our very diverse universal Church. Each member of Christ’s Church has gifts to share. Every Sunday, we come to worship and adore the Lord who in turn nourishes us in body, mind, and soul. In the great sacrifice of the Eucharist offered to God the Father, we too “offer body, mind, and skill, a sacrifice of praise.”

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