

Homily Excerpted - - Pope Francis November 15, 2020

On the Servant who buried his talent

It is significant that fully four times those servants who invested their talents, who took a risk, are called “*faithful*” (vv. 21, 23). For the Gospel, faithfulness is never risk-free. “But, father, does being a Christian mean taking risks?” – “Yes, dearly beloved, take a risk. If you do not take risks, you will end up like the third [servant]: burying your abilities, your spiritual and material riches, everything”. Taking risks: there is no faithfulness without risk.

Fidelity to God means handing over our life, letting our carefully laid plans be disrupted by our need to serve. “But I have my plans, and if I have to serve...”. Let your plans be upset, go and serve. It is sad when Christians play a defensive game, content only to observe rules and obey commandments. Those “moderate” Christians who never go beyond boundaries, never, because they are afraid of risk. And those, allow me this image, those who take care of themselves to avoid risk begin in their lives a process of mummification of their souls, and they end up as mummies.

Following rules is not enough; fidelity to Jesus is not just about not making mistakes, this is quite wrong. That is what the lazy servant in the parable thought: for lack of initiative and creativity, he yielded to needless fear and buried the talent he had received. The master actually calls him “wicked” (v. 26). And yet he did nothing wrong! But he did nothing good either. He preferred to sin by omission rather than to risk making a mistake. He was not faithful to God, who spends freely, and he made his offence even worse by returning the gift he had received. “You gave me this, and I give it to you”, nothing more.

The Lord, for his part, asks us to be generous, to conquer fear with the courage of love, to overcome the passivity that becomes complicity. Today, in these times of uncertainty, in these times of instability, let us not waste our lives thinking only of ourselves, indifferent to others, or deluding ourselves into thinking: “peace and security!” (*I Thess 5:3*). Saint Paul invites us to look reality in the face and to avoid the infection of indifference.