

## Parable of the Talents

Matthew 25:14-30

I grew up in Hawthorne, California, and I attended St. Joseph's Catholic Grade School. I was in one of the two eighth grade classes. There were sixty eighth graders in each one. The teacher in the other class was Sister Barbara Mary and I will never forget her. Sister Barbara Mary, who was very cute, by the way, at least what little I could see of her face, hardly knew me, or so I thought. Yet, she stopped me in the school hallway one day. She said, "Richard Moser, if you don't continue on the path you have chosen, I pity the world," then she gave me a "look" and walked away.

What in the world did "That" mean? I was planning on entering the minor seminary for the Archdiocese of Los Angeles the next school year. So, I guessed that was the "path" she was referring to, but what was this "pity the world" stuff? Now, at 71, I finally think that I understand what she was trying to tell me. In her own cryptic and slightly sarcastic way, she was saying that we all have potential, tremendous potential, for either good or evil. And, evidently she saw something in me that scared her, that is, unless I kept "it" on the "path," or on the "Way." She was telling me that I had an opportunity to do awe-filled things in my life, if I followed Christ, or "awful things" if I chose to follow "my way." You know, that's true of all of us.

Judas Iscariot was called by Christ to follow Him and be an awe-filled Apostle and a great saint. Yet, we all remember him as the history's greatest traitor. Hopefully, his last thought was one of repentance and we will see him in heaven.

St. Paul, who was very learned and intelligent, entered recorded history by persecuting the earliest Christians. Paul, or Saul at that time, was present and complicit in, the martyrdom of St. Stephen, one of the first group of deacons and the first Christian Martyr. Sometime after that, Jesus appeared to Saul on "his WAY" and said, "Enough, Saul, in order to please the Father, you're persecuting the Son." After three days of blindness, Saul accepted that he was wrong and radically changed his direction. Now St. Paul shares his feast day with St. Peter and is a pillar of the Church. St. Paul also wrote 14 of the letters in the New Testament.

I spent nine years of my life in jails. Thank God, I was either in charge or working in them. Yet, I learned many lessons during those years. I learned that "there, but for the grace of God, was I!" I saw tragic lives, some drastically altered by a single mistake, but most of those lives were "lost" by the paths they chose early in life. The goals of those paths were self-centered and certainly not toward God.

Today, we are presently bombarded, on a daily basis, by the news of the failures, the scandals and the sins of the talented. Our politicians, leaders, entertainers, athletes and powerful people misuse their talents in the most heinous and criminal ways.

I, too, have made many mistakes in my life, mostly by following "my own way," Yet, I have also tried to listen to the Holy Spirit and follow His Way. As a result, the world isn't to be pitied because I'm in it. I just hope Sister Barbara Mary realizes that. Yet, I have fallen woefully short of showing the world my awesome potential as well. Hopefully, you will follow the path to which Jesus is calling you and then, you will be "awesome!"

What are your talents?

All your talents, and my talents are given to us by God. And they are given for a special purpose. Ask yourselves, "Why did God put us here? Why did God put us here at this time in history? What talents did He give us to do His will?"

If you don't think that you have talents, let me tell you about a few people who didn't seem to have talents either.

St. Teresa, the Little Flower, entered a convent at age fifteen. Mostly, she cleaned floors, cleaned bathrooms and worked in the kitchen until she died at age of twenty-four. She died of tuberculosis. Teresa is now one of the greatest and most popular Saints - world-wide. She is Patroness of Missionaries, yet she only prayed for the missionaries. She is a Doctor of the Church, one of only three woman. What was her talent? She loved much!

St. John Marie Vianney of France could barely make it through the seminary and would not have without a lot of tutoring. Because of poor studies, he was sent to a small town in France called Ars.

(Sounds like a great town for pirates). Ars was a town with only 230 inhabitants. (Smaller than Clark or Meeteetse); it was a wild town - like Clark and Meeteetse. St. John tamed the town, started orphanages and schools and became internationally famous because of his love and holiness and his ability to read hearts. Up to 20,000 people visited him a year, from all over the world, to visit with him and to go to confession. The Devil hated him. The Devil tried to keep him from sleeping so that he would be too tired to hear confessions. The Devil would throw St. John's bed around the room (with him in it) and even set it on fire. St. John would wake up and look at the Devil and say, "Oh, it's only you," and go back to sleep. There in Ars was a frail, slightly built man with limited knowledge. But he used his talents of kindness and understanding to truly change thousands of lives. St. John Marie Vianney is now the Patron Saint of all parish priests.

One more! Blessed Solanus Casey, who died in 1957, when I was eleven years old. Like St. John Vianney, Solanus had great difficulty with his studies in the seminary. Even though he was ordained a priest, he was not allowed to hear confessions or preach at Mass because of his limited grasp of Theology. He spent most of his priestly life as the Porter in a Monastery, where he answered the door. . Because of his kindness, he had 150 - 200 visitors a day. They came to receive his blessing or just to talk with him. He wasn't allowed to preach but He was sought after to give "talks," or "feverinos," as they were called. He is credited with many miracles. When he died in 1957, 20,000 people passed by his coffin. This old priest from Wisconsin and Michigan was Beatified yesterday, November 18<sup>th</sup> at Ford Field, Detroit, which seats 65,000 people. What great talent did Blessed Solanus have and how did he use it? He loved people.

Every one of us has an "awesome" and an "awful potential." And, each one of us has the free will to choose whichever path to follow.

As we turn now towards the Altar for this Eucharistic Sacrifice, let us take a moment to mentally place our God-given talents on the paten with the bread, and in the chalice with the wine. At the Consecration, when the Holy Spirit, through the actions of the priest, changes the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the offering of our talents will be mingled with His Body and Blood and made holy. Then, when we receive Our Lord in Holy Communion, we will receive our talents back again, sanctified by Our Lord. Then, let us take our God-given talents out into the world and use them according to God's Will.