

Introit - Jeremiah 29: 11, 12, 14

Prophecy - Proverbs 31: 10-13, 19-20, 30-31

A worthy wife

Responsory - Psalm 128

Epistle - 1 Thessalonians 5:1-6

Danger of deception in the end times

Acclamation - John 15:4a, 5b

Gospel - Matthew 25:14-30

Parable of the talents

Communio - Psalm 73:28 / Mk 11:23, 24

Qualification:

A quality or accomplishment that makes someone suitable for a particular job or activity.

In the military, just about every aspect of life is addressed by “qualifications.” In the Navy, we would refer to them as “quals.” You had to work on your “quals” to make the next rank or pay grade. This meant reading big, thick books and then answering questions to see if you remembered any of it. If you were lucky, and nobody was paying much attention; you could go right from reading to taking the test - hopefully without forgetting much of it. In the field, every tactical position in a unit or squadron had “quals.” Certain things that you absolutely needed to know - sometimes points of information, sometimes particular responsibilities. Even if you pulled guard duty - you had to have passed the “quals” for walking around and looking important.

Everywhere in our lives we run into qualification. Teachers have to be certified. Doctors have to have so many hours of follow-on education. Factories and processes are certified. Mechanics and computer technicians have certifications.

If you take your car to a non-certified repair shop, you might void the warranty.

Today’s readings deal with qualifications. In the Old Testament reading, we hear about the value of a worthy wife. And while the text comes across as quaint or old-fashioned; Who hasn’t heard the old saying that “behind every successful man is a good woman.”

In the past century, women have been stepping outside of traditional roles and oftentimes getting in-front of men in terms of qualifications, education, and job success.

In the letter to the Thessalonians, Saint Paul admonishes his readers (and us as well) not to get too wrapped up in qualifying details. Just like in our own time’s recent headlines about the impending end of the world - in the first century, there were people trying to qualify the day of Christ’s return. And Saint Paul reminds them (and us as well) that what is important is not when these things happen - but rather who we are in Christ.

In the Gospel we hear the familiar parable of the Talents. Three servants are entrusted with three sums of money according to their abilities.

Three things to remember, though: (1) the money wasn't a gift, and it wasn't a loan - it wasn't earned or deserved. Rather, the three individuals were entrusted with it for safe-keeping; (2) even the smallest amount was a large sum of money - something like 10-20 years wages; (3) not one of the three individuals was qualified to handle these large sums of money - they weren't bankers; they weren't financial experts.

And then, of course, we all know how the story ends. But what does it mean?

It would seem to me that the money represents Faith. Faith is a supernatural virtue - something that we are given at Baptism - so for those of us baptized as infants, we can easily see how, like the servants in the parable, we didn't earn it. Yet, while Faith is a free gift given to us through Grace - it is a precious gift. Faith isn't ours to play with or modify at our whim or fancy. We even refer to "the deposit of Faith" which refers to the teaching of Christ handed on for over 2,000 years. And finally, while we may feel qualified - the supernatural virtues: Faith, Hope, and Love - bestow on us the ability to transcend our natural abilities to believe, expect, and relate - to supernatural levels - so that we might go forth and live lives that shine with the Gospel message as servants of Jesus Christ.

This week, let us reflect on how we have "invested" our own Faith. Have we buried it in a field - that is, kept it to ourselves? Have we squandered it in ways that are unprofitable for God's Kingdom? Either way, we can be assured that in God's plan there must certainly exist a happy medium.

Let us be open to receive, through the infinite graces in this Eucharist, the wisdom and power to be capable stewards of Faith - of the deposit of Faith - the Faith which we have all received in Baptism; the Faith which is strengthened through the action of the other Sacraments; and use our Faith for the Glory of God, for the building up of God's Kingdom, and for the "profit" of a world hungry for the truths of the Faith.