



ONE MISSION, TWO PARISHES

Saint Timothy's & Saint Luke the Evangelist
Catholic Parishes, Forest Hill & Blackburn South

Parish Office for both Parishes: 17 Stevens Road Forest Hill Vic 3133

Parish Office tel: 03 9412 8499; Presbytery tel: 03 9877 2292

Email: foresthill@cam.org.au | Web: sttimothys.org.au

Email: blackburnsouth@cam.org.au | Web: blackburnsouth.org.au

WEEKLY BULLETIN: SUNDAY 19 NOVEMBER 2023

THIRTY-THIRD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME - YEAR A

BEING THE GOOD NEWS ... BY PROMOTING GOD'S HOSPITALITY



Readings this week: Prov 31:10 – 13, 19 – 20, 30 – 31; Ps 127; 1 Thess 5:1 – 6; Mt 25:14 - 30.

Gospel Reflection ~ Greg Sunter

This week's gospel is a very familiar parable and one that is often used with students and young people. It is generally used as an encouragement to make the most of the gifts and skills that the listeners possess. It is rarely, however, placed in its context as part of the full Chapter 25 lesson about the time of waiting and preparation for the coming of the Lord and the Christian life.

Again, the story is presented as a parable of the Kingdom – a glimpse into the right order of things in the realised Kingdom. A very wealthy master entrusts his considerable assets to his servants to manage in his absence. The three servants were allocated money, 'each in proportion to his ability'. The emphasis of the parable is on what each servant did with the funds they were allotted. They were charged with managing the money in the place of their master; acting in their master's place to further develop his wealth.

Like all of Jesus' parables, this one has a sting in the tail. Although the third servant has done nothing illegal or corrupt, he is very harshly dealt with. His crime is laziness! He was given a great opportunity to demonstrate his abilities and yet he shied away and returned to his master exactly what had been entrusted to him, unimproved. The author of Matthew's gospel uses this parable to shock the audience out of complacency. They cannot rely solely on the promised return of the Lord, they must continue to act on Jesus' message and work to bring about the Kingdom in their own lives. Those who fail to act, leaving everything to the work of God, are as bad as the lazy servant who failed to grasp an extraordinary opportunity.

Gospel Focus – Such a talent! In its original usage, a 'talent' was a measure of weight. It came to designate a weight measure of silver. One talent was roughly equivalent to a labourer's wages for 10 years. It was a huge amount of money! Due largely to the reference in this gospel parable the word eventually came to its more common meaning of a special natural ability. Although in its original use in the gospel, 'talent' meant nothing more than a large sum of money, it is a happy development of language that makes this scripture passage such a favourite of teachers and retreat providers!

Living the Gospel – Bring forth the Kingdom. Like the original audience of Matthew's gospel, we can sometimes rely too much on God to bring about the Kingdom in our world. Like the lazy servant in the gospel, we can fall into the trap of handing the world back to God in exactly the same condition that we received it. We have to make a difference in the world! We are called to change the world and bring it closer to the realisation of the Kingdom. The only way that we can do that it is to live our lives as if the Kingdom is already here.

Different View – 'To everyone who has will be given more.' The parable of the talents is sometimes misused to validate an overemphasis on material wealth in many Western societies. There can be an attitude that says 'more is better'; that possessions are a sign of success. Such advocates point to the favour bestowed on the servants who doubled their money and the punishment dealt to the lazy servant who simply returned to his master what he was given. Proponents of the increasingly popular 'gospel of prosperity' hold that God wants Christians to be materially and financially rich and that their wealth is proof of God's love. This stands in stark contrast to Jesus' vision of the Kingdom.

BEING THE GOOD NEWS

Whitehorse Deanery
Eastern Region
Archdiocese of Melbourne

Rev Father Gerard

Parish Priest

Sonya O'Farrell

Part-time Parish Secretary

Wednesdays,

Thursdays & Fridays

10.00am – 2.00pm

SUNDAY MASS

ST: & SL: Saturday Vigil @ 6.00pm

Sunday ST: @ 9.00am Australian
Vietnamese – 5.00pm

& SL: @ 8.30am & 10.30am

WEEKDAY MASS & SL: ROSARY

ST: Weds. & Thurs. @ 9.15am

Fri. @ 10.00am

1st Wednesday of the month
@ 10.00am Mass of Anointing.

SL: Tues. @ 5.00pm

Weds. & Fri. @ 9.30am

Thurs Funeral @ 11.00am

Sat. @ 9.00am

RECONCILIATION

SL: Saturday 9.30am – 10.00am &
5.30pm – 5.50pm

SL: EXPOSITION & BENEDICTION

The Blessed Sacrament is exposed
for Adoration Wednesday
Start: 7.00pm | End: 8.00pm

MACS Catholic Primary School
21 Stevens Road, Vermont, 3133 Vic
Tel: (03) 9878 4188

Ms. Anne Maree Jones Principal

Email: principal@sttims.catholic.edu.au

Website: <https://sttims.catholic.edu.au/>

MACS Catholic Primary School

46 Orchard Grove,

Blackburn South Vic 3130

Tel: (03) 9877 4023

Mrs. Clare Ryan: Principal

Email: principal@slblackburnstn.catholic.edu.au

Website: slblackburnstn.catholic.edu.au

Prayer to Saint Timothy

O God, who adorned Saint Timothy
with apostolic virtues, grant,
through his intercession that, living
justly and devoutly in this present
age, we may merit to reach our
heavenly homeland. Through our
Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who
lives and reigns with you in the
unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for
ever and ever. Amen.

Patron Saint of stomach and
intestinal disorders.

Prayer to Saint Luke the Evangelist

O St. Luke, you were chosen to
reveal in preaching and writing
God's love for the poor. Moved by
the heavenly Spirit of Love, you
detailed the life of Jesus, showing

His divinity and His genuine
compassion for all human beings.

Help those who already glory in
God's name to persevere in one
heart and one mind and inspire all
people that they may hear the Good
News of Salvation. Amen

Patron Saint of artists, physicians,
surgeons, students and butchers.

WE REMEMBER IN PRAYER this weekend all who are sick, especially
Caratha McKerrow, Tony Keaney, Kathryn Holmes, Therese O'Donoghue,
Stewart Davis, Trevor Stowe, Jerry Donoghue, Veronica and all those
Parishioners unable to be among us this weekend. For all who have died
recently especially John Fulton, for the casualties of war in Ukraine, Israel and
Gaza and for those whose anniversaries occur about this time especially
Yoon Seng Ch'ng, Daniel Curtain, Bruce Gemmell, Eloide Leonardi,
Maria Casano, Francesco, Ninetta and Vita Boccaccio, Nell Sullivan,
Angelo Isola, Jean Holgate, Paul Lazzari, Phero Pham Van Dong, Peggy Battle,
Francis Fernandez, Cecilio Abadilla, Pat Howe, William Gibson and
Frank Searle. May they rest in peace.

LITURGICAL CALENDAR THIS WEEK: **Ordinary Time ~ Tuesday:**
The Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary; **Wednesday:** St Cecela, virgin,
martyr; **Thursday:** St Clement I, pope, martyr or St Columban, abbot; **Friday:**
St Andrew Dũng-Lac, priest and companions, martyrs; **Saturday:** St Catherine
of Alexandria, virgin, martyr or Saturday Mass of the Virgin Mary. **Masses this
weekend:** Eucharistic Prayer for use in Masses for Various Needs I; Eucharistic
Acclamation No. II.

ST RITE OF BAPTISM for Magnolia D'Sylva, daughter of Ralston & Charmaine,
in our Parish this weekend. Our congratulations to the Family! Magnolia will become
our newest member to God's Family here and our Parish Family of Families too.

SL FUNERAL FOR JOHN FULTON is next Thursday morning at 11.00am.
Morning Mass that morning will also be at that time.

SL SUNDAY MORNING MASS UPDATE: Please remember that we are
moving to relocate our Sunday 10.30am Mass and will occur on the First Sunday
of Advent this year – 3rd December 2023 to Forest Hill.

ST SUNDAY MORNING MASS UPDATE: Please remember that Sunday
morning Mass will begin at 10.30am as of 3rd December 2023.

ST CHRISTMAS CARDS & 2024 COLUMBAN CALENDARS are now on
sale from the Piety Stall. St. Vincent de Paul Society cards are \$3.00 for a pack
of 5, Magellan Cards are \$7.00 for a pack of 10 and the 2024 Columban
calendars are \$ 9.00 each.

CARITAS AUSTRALIA'S GAZA CRISIS APPEAL An estimated 1 million
people have been displaced in Gaza with immediate food, shelter, health,
and psychosocial needs. You can donate online www.caritas.org.au/gaza or
phone 1800 024 413

ADVENT WORKSHOP WITH FR ELIO CAPRA Do you struggle to read
scripture? Using art, Fr Elio will lead us to discover a fresh perspective on the
familiar Advent and Nativity Gospel stories. Monday November 20th, 7pm
Coghlan Centre St John the Evangelist Parish 494 Whitehorse Rd, Mitcham.
Bookings click [here](#) to book online or contact Parish office: 9401 6366 or
mitcham@cam.org.au You are invited!

A SANCTUARY REMEMBRANCE BOOK is now available for any Parishioner
to record a loved one's name, family member, Parishioner or someone you
would like included in this month's Masses for the Faithful Departed.

**SL RECENT EXTENSIVE EXTERNAL MAINTENANCE & PAINTING OF
THE PARISH HALL** is now complete and compliments our Parish Church too.
Total cost this time = \$29,300 net. Thanks for your ongoing financial support that
enables tasks like this one doable in the current financial environment.

A VOCATION VIEW: Don't just bury your talents. Dream your best dream
about your life and then live it to the full. God calls you to live in happiness.

STEWARDSHIP CORNER: "Well done, my good and faithful servant. Since
you have been faithful in small matters, I will give you great responsibilities."
Matthew 25:21 God calls us to nurture and develop the gifts He has given us
and then generously return a portion with increase. He doesn't want us to waste
or hoard the gifts He has given us. He expects us to grow our gifts, to use them
wisely, and to be generous with them. Unfortunately, many of us are not
generous in proportion to all that God has given us. God asks us to be generous
with all our gifts, especially the one that means the most to you. (ST: Weekly First
Collection Presbytery Envelopes: \$132; Thanksgiving Stewardship Envelopes this
week: \$180; Vietnamese Donation: \$263; SL: Last week's Church Stewardship
Envelopes: \$354; Last week's Presbytery Stewardship Envelopes: \$425).

WE ACKNOWLEDGE THE TRADITIONAL CUSTODIANS who have walked
upon and cared for this land for thousands of years. We acknowledge the continued
deep spiritual attachment and relationship of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
peoples to this country and commit ourselves to the ongoing journey of Reconciliation.

WEEKEND PARISH MINISTRY ROSTER

MINISTERS OF THE WORD

SATURDAY

6:00 PM SL

18 AND 19 NOVEMBER

Godfrey Thong

25 AND 26 NOVEMBER

Bernie Brennan

6:00 PM ST

Hubert Lobo

Rachel Greal

SUNDAY

8:30 AM SL

Ian Holmes

Melina Barcellona

9:00 AM ST

Stephen Fan & Mai Le

M. Harris & J. Roussety

10:30 AM SL

Margaret Gearon

Genevieve Hemsley

5.00PM ST

Youth Group

Thuan Tran & Tuyet Nguyen

EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS OF THE EUCHARIST

SATURDAY

6:00 PM SL

18 AND 19 NOVEMBER

Olive Hammill

25 AND 26 NOVEMBER

Godfrey Thong

6:00 PM ST

Owen Greal

Peter Naughtin

SUNDAY

8:30 AM SL

Sonya O'Farrell

Ian Holmes

9:00 AM ST

Pat Kawalevski

Laura Cigana

10:30 AM SL

Val Gardiner

Margaret Gearon

5.00PM ST

Youth Group

Hoang Nguyen

SLIDE OPERATORS

SATURDAY

6:00 PM SL

18 AND 19 NOVEMBER

Nikhita Paul

25 AND 26 NOVEMBER

Choir

6:00 PM ST

Michelle Chen

Michelle Chen

SUNDAY

8:30 AM SL

Anthony Fernandez

Megan McLean

9:00 AM ST

Lee Min Yee

Lee Min Yee

10:30 AM SL

Manny Gonzalez

Manny Gonzalez

5.00PM ST

Theresa Nguyen

Toan Tran

SL WELCOMERS 18/19 NOV

6:00 PM Edna Lee

SL CHURCH CLEANING

25th Nov. – Kellie's Team

SL CHURCH FLOWERS

18th Nov – Marie Parker

8:30 AM Marie Pekish

Kellie McCarthy, Toni Wynne,

25th Nov – Kate Skowronska

10:30 AM Volunteer

Emma Brodawka & Daniella

ST CHURCH FLOWERS

HOSPITALITY

Manolopoulos

Parishioners

THE BASIC LITURGICAL MINISTRY

SL WELCOMERS 25/26 NOV

6:00 PM Volunteer

ST CHURCH CLEANING

25th Nov. @ 10am

This week Team 5:

9:30 AM Janette Clark

Hoang Nguyen, Anico Yee,

Anico Yee & Pabs Gonzales

10:30 AM Volunteer

Dzung Vu & Trong Nguyen

Next week Team 6:

Peggy & Ngery D'Cruz

NOVEMBER OFFERING ENVELOPES are available on the table in the foyer/narthex to remember those who have gone before us this month of November.

ON THE JOURNEY THIS WEEK: Fr Mark De Battista says that this is a parable about the Lord trusting us with talents and skills and burying them simply doesn't cut it with the Lord. Mother Hilda has been reading the book of Ezekiel and its recurring line "and they will know that I am God." Fr Tony Percy wonders are we like the third servant, frozen into immobility by our prudent timidity, Mark Raue explains the Preferential Option for the Poor, and Pete Gilmore says life is like a circus big top with Jesus as the ringmaster. Plus, more great music!

MELBOURNE CATHOLICS: A Church that witnesses to Jesus

MAJELLAN FAMILY MEDIA: Children are precious ...

SL EMMAUS COLLEGE SCHOOL ADVISORY COUNCIL PARISH REP.

BERNARD O'MALLEY: The Parish acknowledges and genuinely **THANKS** him for his time, expertise and commitment to this Council on our behalf over a number of years. His has now completed his involvement on this Council and all his children are now finished their Secondary Education. A job certainly well done!

ST & SL PPC acknowledges and **THANKS** Toni Wynne for her time and talent as a member of it. Toni has recently decided to concentrate on her commitment to our local St V. de P. Conference.

SL & ST THANKYOU PARISHIONERS FOR ALL YOUR FEEDBACK on the proposed relocation of the 10.30am Sunday morning Mass from St Luke the Evangelist to St Timothy's that will occur on 3rd December 2023 – the First Sunday of Advent. The PPC met this past week and as there has been no better proposal suggested for our 'One Mission Two Parishes' with one appointed priest it was decided to forge ahead with the challenge at hand for all of us.

VCE STUDENTS have finished their 2023 examinations and, therefore, now is the time for us to reflect on their hard work, with the dedicated support of teachers throughout their primary and secondary education. Well done to all our Year 12 Parishioners reaching this milestone in their young lives.

SAFETY STATEMENT: We are committed to a safe and nurturing culture for all children and vulnerable persons in our Church. Saint Luke the Evangelist Parish Blackburn South holds the care, safety, wellbeing of children and vulnerable persons as central and fundamental responsibilities of the Church. This commitment is drawn from and inherent to the teaching and mission of Jesus Christ, with love, justice and the sanctity of each human person at the heart of the Gospel.

by Promoting God's Hospitality

Parish Groups & Contacts

Lectors, Registrars, Collectors,
Extraordinary Ministers of the Eucharist,
Slide Projector Operator & Rosters

ST: Corrie Quimbo 9412 8499

SL: Margaret Gearon 0409 807 135

Baptism Preparation

ST: Mary Italiano 9412 8499

Vietnamese Community

Hoang Nguyen 0422 400 116

Andy Tran 0422 382 109

Vietnamese Youth

John Dinh 0448 977 037

Parish Collection Preparers

ST: Barry Silvester &

Michael Kawalevski

Stewardship Counters

SL: Dale Dixon - 0433 885 087

Steve Kilroe-Smith - 0404 864 232

Parish Pastoral Council

As we are one Mission now, it has been suggested that we require only one Chair?

Parishes Safeguarding Committee

Theresa Nguyen, Mary Italiano,

Darren McLean - 0417 774 504

Janette Clark - 9877 2292

Fr Gerard - 9877 2292

Parish History

SL: Margaret Gearon - 0409 807 135

Whitehorse Deanery - Fr Gerard

Finance Committee

Bernard Negline

Parish Accountant

SL: Hall Hire

Sonya O'Farrell @ the

Parish Office - 9877 2292

Church Sacristan

ST: Margaret King & Hoang Nguyen

SL: Greg Grant - 0401 644 474

Church Housekeeping

ST: Margaret King 9412 8499

Church Cleaning & Flowers

SL: Megan McLean - 0419 347 693

Church Linen

SL: Beryl Kanagalinggam

Parish Garden Maintenance

ST: Des Connors, Leo Watson,

Anico Yee & Vietnamese Community

SL: Darren McLean - 0417 774 504

Holy Communion to the

housebound - Fr Gerard

Parish Choirs

ST: Mary Italiano & Theresa Nguyen

SL: Lina & Maria Mafi

0411 136 043

Parish & School Fete Committee

SL: Mrs. Clare Ryan - 9877 4023

School Advisory Council

ST: Ms. Anne Maree Jones 9878 4188

SL: Mrs. Clare Ryan - 9877 4023

School Parents' Association

ST: Ms. Anne Maree Jones 9878 4188

SL: Mrs. Clare Ryan - 9877 4023

St Vincent de Paul Conference

For Assistance: 1800 305 330

(Freecall: Monday to Friday 10am-3pm)

Parish Contacts:

ST: John McCoy

SL: Tony Lobo &

Steve Kilroe-Smith

Raise your voices ... Entrance Antiphon: The Lord said: I think thoughts of peace and not of affliction. You will call upon me, and I will answer you, and I will lead back your captives from every place.

Response to the Psalm: Happy are those who fear the Lord.

Gospel Acclamation: Alleluia, alleluia! Live in me and let me live in you, says the Lord; my branches bear much fruit. Alleluia!

Eucharistic Acclamation: When we eat this Bread and drink this Cup, we proclaim your Death, O Lord, until you come again.

Communion Antiphon: To be near God is my happiness, to place my hope in God the Lord.

ST & SL END OF YEAR BREAK-UP & THANKYOU to all Parishioners of both Parishes who provide a service/ministry in any way, in either or both parishes. It will be held at St Luke the Evangelist Parish Hall after the 6.00pm Saturday Vigil Mass on 2nd December 2023 from 7.00pm onwards, ALL PARISHIONERS ARE INVITED!

SL: 60TH ANNIVERSARY WINES FOR OUR PARISH: Please contact the Parish Office at your convenience. Bottle \$15, 2 Bottles \$25, 6 Bottles \$75, 12 Bottles \$140; (Will mix, red/white).

SL: MARGARET GEARON'S HISTORY OF THE PARISH & SCHOOL PART II is now available for @ \$15 each.

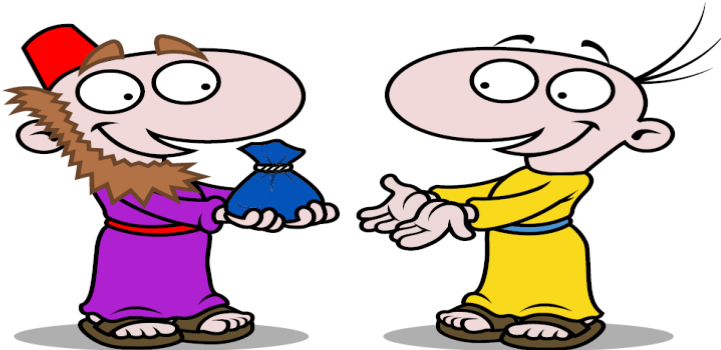
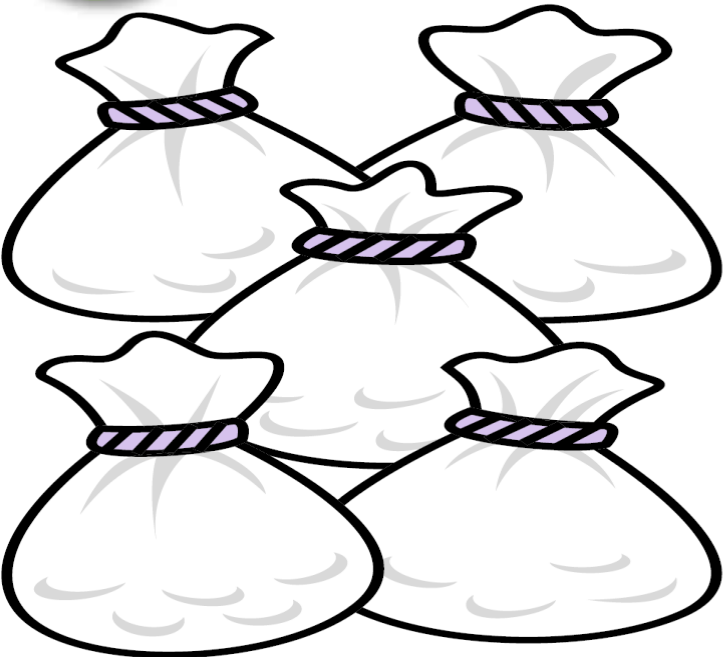


Come and share in my happiness

33rd Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A



Jesus tells us that God rewards those who use their gifts wisely. Inside each bag write down a gift God has given you.



In today's gospel, Jesus tells the story of a Master who gives each of his servants responsibility for a large amount of money. Draw a picture that shows you being responsible for an important job.



COMPLETE THE TEXT MAZE

"Come and share in my happiness!"

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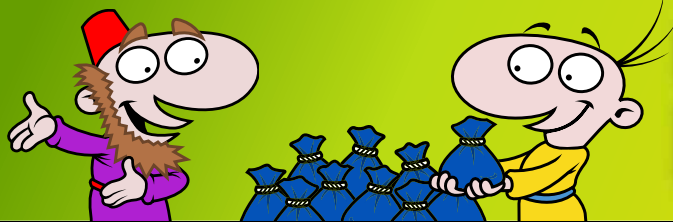
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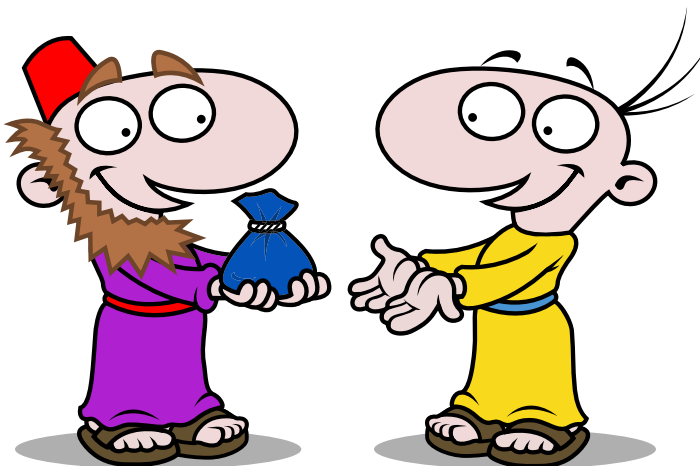


Come and share in my happiness

33rd Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A



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In today's gospel, Jesus tells the story of a Master who gives each of his servants responsibility for a large amount of money. Draw a picture that shows you being responsible for an important job.



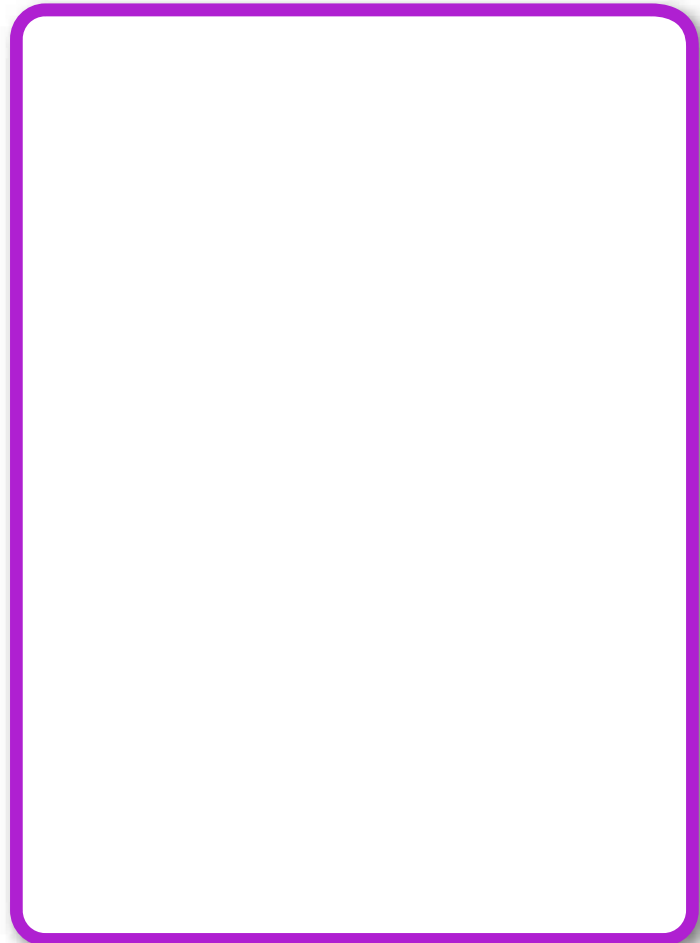
COMPLETE THE TEXT MAZE

"Come and share in my happiness!"

START

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FINISH



SUNDAY READINGS

READ AT HOME

33rd Sunday in Ordinary Time

Year A

19 November 2023



Collect

Grant us, we pray, O Lord our God,
the constant gladness of being devoted to you,
for it is full and lasting happiness
to serve with constancy
the author of all that is good.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.

Amen.

Readings and Commentaries

Woman, wife, mother, social campaigner for migrant women and families, devout Catholic – Caroline Chisholm was all these things and more. In Sydney's St Mary's Cathedral, on Easter Sunday in 1841, she dedicated herself to serve God and neighbour. Her self-offering cost her dearly as she later recalled:

"During the season of Lent of that year, I suffered much, but on the Easter Sunday, I was enabled, at the altar of our Lord, to make an offering of my talents to the God who gave them. I promised to know *neither country nor creed*, but to try and serve all *justly* and impartially. . . I felt my offering was accepted and that God's blessing was on my work; but it was his will to permit many serious difficulties to be thrown in my way, and to conduct me through a rugged path of deep humiliation" (Cited in Rodney Stinson. See, *Judge, Act: Caroline Chisholm's Lay Apostolate*, Sydney: Yorkcross, 2009, 27).

It may have been a way of the cross for her, but her never-say-die determination and enterprise brought untold blessings to the migrant women and families she served.

A reading from the book of Proverbs

31:10–13, 19–20, 30–31

A perfect wife – who can find her?
She is far beyond the price of pearls.
Her husband's heart has confidence in her,
from her he will derive no little profit.
Advantage and not hurt she brings him
all the days of her life.
She is always busy with wool and with flax,
she does her work with eager hands.
She sets her hands to the distaff,
her fingers grasp the spindle.
She holds out her hand to the poor,
she opens her arms to the needy.
Charm is deceitful, and beauty empty;
the woman who is wise is the one to praise.
Give her a share in what her hands have worked for,
and let her works tell her praises at the city gates.

First Reading

The final chapter of the book of Proverbs is an alphabetical psalm in praise of the “perfect wife”. Two things are useful to bear in mind with regard to this idealised portrait of the married woman. The first is that it may have been added to the work to serve as a counter-balance to the negative portrayal of women in its early chapters. The second is that in spite of the constraints of ancient patriarchal societies this woman has an appreciable degree of agency.

That said, there is no doubt that her qualities are assessed in terms of their value to her husband: “from her he will derive no little profit . . . Advantage and not hurt she brings him”. She is praised for her weaving skills and for her generosity to the poor, but the lectionary text omits reference to her enterprise in buying land and planting a vineyard, and in trading her wares with merchants. What we hear puts the emphasis on her domestic role and the honour she brings her husband, neither of which will appeal to a contemporary congregation that takes marriage equality and women's careers for granted.

The choice of the reading will only become clear when the gospel parable of the talents is read. In anticipation of that story, the ideal wife is presented as a model of initiative. She's industrious and puts her gifts to good use. Some readers may have to overcome their reluctance to subscribe to this idealisation if they are to proclaim the text well. Each of the two-line units should be respected in the delivery.

Responsorial Psalm

Ps 127:1–5

R. Happy are those who fear the Lord.
O blessed are those who fear the Lord
and walk in his ways!
By the labour of your hands you shall eat.
You will be happy and prosper. **R.**
Your wife like a fruitful vine
in the heart of your house;
your children like shoots of the olive,
around your table. **R.**
Indeed thus shall be blessed
the man who fears the Lord.
May the Lord bless you from Zion
in a happy Jerusalem
all the days of your life. **R.**

Responsorial Psalm

While the first reading remained within the matrix of patriarchal life, it did pay homage to the gifts and virtues of the “perfect wife”. The responsorial psalm switches the focus back to the male head of the household. The response seems inclusive – “Happy are those who fear the Lord” – but the first verse quickly homes in on the working man whose labour will provide food and prosperity for the home.

A man like this who respects the Lord and lives accordingly will be blessed with a fertile wife and an abundance of children. Furthermore, the happiness of families like this will overflow into the community and create “a happy Jerusalem”. The key to all this blessedness is the faithful following of the way of the Lord.

Apart from the short final verse, the whole of Psalm 127/128 is used for the responsorial psalm. In all likelihood, the assembly will hear and understand the response as inclusive of all believers, but the verses do stand in tension with this. Readers should respect the poetry of the short lines and also take care with the final five-line stanza.

A reading from the first letter of St Paul to the Thessalonians **5:1–6**

You will not be expecting us to write anything to you, brothers, about ‘times and seasons,’ since you know very well that the Day of the Lord is going to come like a thief in the night. It is when people are saying, ‘How quiet and peaceful it is,’ that the worst suddenly happens, as suddenly as labour pains come on a pregnant woman; and there will be no way for anybody to evade it.

But it is not as if you live in the dark, my brothers, for that Day to overtake you like a thief. No, you are all sons of light and sons of the day: we do not belong to the night or to darkness, so we should not go on sleeping, as everyone else does, but stay wide awake and sober.

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew **25:14–30**

Jesus spoke this parable to his disciples: ‘The kingdom of heaven is like a man on his way abroad who summoned his servants and entrusted his property to them. To one he gave five talents, to another two, to a third one; each in proportion to his ability. Then he set out. [The man who had received the five talents promptly went and traded with them and made five more. The man who had received two made two more in the same way. But the man who had received one went off and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master’s money.] Now a long time after, the master of those servants came back and went through his accounts with them. The man who had received the five talents came forward bringing five more. “Sir”, he said “you entrusted me with five talents; here are five more that I have made.” His master said to him, “Well done, good and faithful servant; you have shown you can be faithful in small things, I will trust you with greater; come and join in your master’s happiness.” [Next the man with the two talents came forward. “Sir,” he said “you entrusted me with two talents; here are two more that I have made.” His master said to him, “Well done, good and faithful servant; you have shown you can be faithful in small things, I will trust you with greater; come and join in your master’s happiness.” Last came forward the man who had the one talent. “Sir,” said he “I had heard you were a hard man, reaping where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered; so I was afraid, and I went off and hid your talent in the ground. Here it is; it was yours, you have it back.” But his master answered him, “You wicked and lazy servant! So you knew that I reap where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered? Well then, you should have deposited my money with the bankers, and on my return I would have recovered my capital with interest. So now, take the talent from him and give it to the man who has the five talents. For to everyone who has will be given more, and he will have more than enough; but from the man who has not, even what he has will be taken away. As for this good-for-nothing servant, throw him out into the dark, where there will be weeping and grinding of teeth.””]

[Short Form: omit text in brackets.]

Second Reading

It seems that some of the Thessalonians had grown complacent, believing that “the Day of the Lord” had already come in the death and resurrection of Jesus. As a result, they considered themselves no longer subject to judgement. Paul is at pains to disillusion them.

While at no time speculating as to when this Day would arrive, he warns them it will take them by surprise if they aren’t ready for it. They run the risk of being caught napping. Paul uses two contrasting images to make his point – the householder taken unawares by a night-time thief and the expectant mother whose pregnancy suddenly erupts in birth. One has unhappy consequences, the other joyful.

Paul implies that the Thessalonians are letting themselves be mesmerised by the Roman propaganda phrase “peace and security”. Without spelling out how, Paul clearly implies that the Day of the Lord will call them to account. They must stay wide awake, remain sober and live as children of the light – advice that may bring last Sunday’s parable of the ten wedding attendants to mind.

This final reading from 1 Thessalonians has an ominous tone which readers should not play down, but it also has an encouraging reminder that believers are children of light and of the day. The NRSV renders the text in inclusive language.

Gospel

This second-last parable in Matthew’s gospel maintains Jesus’ focus on the final judgement. The story of the wealthy traveller who entrusts three slaves with large but varying sums of money is long and repetitious. The lectionary allows an abbreviated version to be read, but this completely deprives the parable of its purpose. It aims to deliver a stern warning. Jesus’ followers have been blessed with the gift of the kingdom. Accepting this gift brings with it the obligation to live the reign of God adventurously and advocate for it enthusiastically.

The parable as we have it has been heavily allegorised. It testifies to Jesus’ willingness to use the “ways of the world” as a vehicle for his teaching. He dares to associate God’s expectations of believers with the master’s economic ruthlessness. He’s unafraid to run the risk of reinforcing an image of God as harsh and punitive. This presents homilists with a challenge but no sound reason for choosing to proclaim the truncated version. Preachers can make the point that Jesus is telling this story when he is on the brink of wagering his whole life and mission. Fear of failure does not deter him. Nor should it paralyse his followers from testifying to the good news.

Concluding Blessing

May the peace of God,
which surpasses all understanding,
keep our hearts and minds
in the knowledge and love of God,
and of his Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

Amen.

And may the blessing of almighty God,
the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
come down on us and remain with us for ever.

Amen.

(Adapted from the Solemn Blessing for Ordinary Time II, Roman Missal p 715)





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