

33rd Sunday (A)

- In today's Gospel we are introduced to a man who entrusts his property to his servants while he is abroad.
- He is an enterprising employer, who hopes that his own flair & daring in business matters will be reflected in his servants' attitude to this new challenge.
- He doesn't instruct them what to do with the talents; he trusts them - to use their own initiative & imagination in this economic venture.
- As in all stories & jokes with three characters, our attention is focused on number three: the third servant is portrayed as the one who refuses to involve himself in the spirit of the enterprise.
- He believes that the safest way to handle his talent is to bury it & return it intact to his master.
- Jesus is seen to be making a point against the scribes & the Pharisees.
- Their chief aim was to keep the Law which they had been given exactly as it was — not to change it, not to develop it, not to alter it in any way.
- In their own phrase their mission was "to build a fence around the Law."
- It's as if they wanted to put the Law into a state of perpetual coma or paralysis — that way they would avoid the risk of its walking the streets, where it would have to change & grow according to the conditions it met.
- Like the man with the one talent, the Pharisees are seen to have an investment in keeping things exactly as they were, & it is for that stale attitude that Jesus condemns them.
- In this parable Jesus tells us that there can be no religion without risk, no religion without adventure, no religion without enterprise.
- Willingness to dare; to change in response to the needs of our times; to understand & promote the Word of God in new contexts; to read the signs of the times & how the Spirit calls us to be Church in a world of change - these are essentials of our faith.
- The parable speaks to us about God & his kingdom – of intimate relationship with God & one another – a way of being in which God's standards are valued & lived out.
- We've lived too long like the Pharisees whereby as Church we have held on relentlessly to Tradition in a way that we've 'boxed' it in so that it says nothing of value to much of our society as is evidenced by our society's refusal to listen to us any more. But the reckoning is here; the master of the property has returned & we are to give an account of how we've done business with the gift we've been given.
- This time of Pandemic & coincidentally, the current Plenary Council in Australia, can be the beginning of a time to reimagine Church – who we are to be in the world & what we are to do to be faithful to our mission of promoting God's kingdom – a prophetic moment that will demand of all the Church – change.

- And that's what is asked of us at this time – all of us – to embrace change & not to be looking back to what we think were the good old days.
- The conclusion of the same-sex marriage plebiscite is a challenge to us to accept that society has demanded that we value & honour people who want to establish same-sex unions officially, & at the same time to live out & promote well our understanding of sacramental marriage between a woman & a man.
- The assisted-dying debate concluded with legislation permitting it in various circumstances - The challenge for us as Church is to do everything we can to promote the development of palliative care of the dying & living out a clear & transparent belief in the dignity & value of life as gift as well as an awe in the mystery of dying.
- The church can be considered in more recent times as the lazy steward who's buried the treasure, not believing in its adaptability to all times & societies, in large part because we have not listened to what people around us are saying by their pain & yearnings.
- The Plenary Council of the entire Church in Australia that is now to conclude towards the end of 2021 can discuss & legislate on a wide variety of issues including matters of faith, morals & discipline & also consider the critical issues of our time, & determine how we can respond to them consistent with the Gospel values.
- This can be for us an opportunity to reimagine ourselves as Church & discern how we do business with the talents we've been given to develop.
- I'd like to read something that speaks to me, as I'm sure it does to all who have remained faithful to the Church written by Carlo Carretto, a great Catholic social activist & contemplative who struggled with his love/hate relationship with his church & he expressed it in these words:
- *How much I must criticize you, my church, & yet how much I love you!
You have made me suffer more than anyone & yet I owe more to you than to anyone. I should like to see you destroyed & yet I need your presence.
You have given me much scandal & yet you alone have made me understand holiness.
Never in this world have I seen anything more compromised, more false, & yet I have never touched anything more pure, more generous or more beautiful.
Countless times I have felt like slamming the door of my soul in your face & yet, every night, I have prayed that I might die in your sure arms!
No, I cannot be free of you, for I am one with you, even if not completely you.
Then to where would I go? To build another church?
But I could not build one without the same defects, for they are my defects.
And again, if I were to build another church, it would be my church, not Christ's church. No, I am old enough to know better!*