



# Bringing Home the Word

Thirty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time | November 19, 2017

## Be Alert and Awake

By Mary Katharine Deeley

**“Stay awake.”** My siblings and I used to huddle in our rooms on Christmas night, determined to stay up for Christmas dawn. We’d inevitably fall asleep, awakening around dawn to find the presents already around the tree and Jesus in the manger.

“Stay awake,” we would say again on New Year’s Eve. This got a little easier as we got older and beat on pots and pans to celebrate the New Year.

Special occasions call for special wakefulness. We anticipate, we watch, we try to glimpse the first signs of the

holiday, birthday, or first day of vacation. These are important to us, and we don’t want to miss them.

Saint Paul tells us to stay alert and prepare for the return of the Master, for “the day of the Lord will come like a thief at night.” At the end of the Church year, everything is about watchfulness. We reflect on the end times, when Christ will return in glory to judge the living and the dead and draw all creation to himself.

What happens in the end? We show God what we’ve done with his many gifts. We behave as children of light and refuse to fall asleep (a metaphor for turning away from God) so we’ll be found waiting when Christ comes again. We keep the faith, knowing our hope is in the Lord.

When we were children, the temptation to fall asleep was great; we didn’t always make it to the first minutes of celebration. As adults in faith, the stakes are much higher. If we fall asleep here, we may miss the party altogether.

Let’s encourage one another while we still have time.†

***“The day of the Lord will come like a thief at night.”***

## A Word From Pope Francis

I prefer a Church which is bruised, hurting and dirty because it has been out on the streets, rather than a Church which is unhealthy from being confined and from clinging to its own security....

More than by fear of going astray, my hope is that we will be moved by the fear of remaining shut up within structures which give us a false sense of security, within rules which make us harsh judges...while at our door people are starving and Jesus does not tire of saying to us: “Give them something to eat”

(Mark 6:37).

—The Joy of the Gospel  
(*Evangeliium Gaudium*),  
November 24, 2013



## Sunday Readings

**Proverbs 31:10–13, 19–20, 30–31**

When one finds a worthy wife, her value is far beyond pearls.

**1 Thessalonians 5:1–6**

Therefore, let us not sleep as the rest do, but let us stay alert and sober.

**Matthew 25: 14–30 or 14–15, 19–21**

[Jesus said,] “Since you were faithful in small matters, I will give you great responsibilities.”

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- What are the most important talents I have? Think of virtues, abilities, qualities, time.
- Which talent should I invest in more so I can enjoy the return God wants?



# Doubling Our Love *By Joyce Rupp*

**T**he parable of the talents is a call to look at what we have—or have not done—with God’s gifts. Today “talent” refers to a natural ability or gift. The word has its roots in the Greek *talanton*, meaning a weighted amount of money of significant worth. A talent in Jesus’ time was a valuable coin. Invested wisely, its worth could greatly increase.

I can imagine Jesus looking at the people he taught and noticing the differences in age, physical features, and social conditions. He knew that beneath these externals there was a treasure of love in each. He longed for them to recognize and share their goodness. Then he thought of the talent, the precious coin, as a way to teach them.

In this parable three servants are each given talents “according to his ability.” They are expected to use them so the value will be multiplied. Two of the three do so and are praised for being “faithful servants.” Not so the fearful servant who did nothing with what he was given. He feared displeasing the master, getting hurt by doing the wrong thing, and doubted he could meet the challenge. In doing so his gift lay unused, so he was reprimanded severely.

## Guaranteed to Grow

The greatest talent we all have is our capacity to give and receive love. This gift in all of us, like the parable’s coin, has immense value. Love has the potential of growing in worth when invested in others. It has the ability of increasing in strength, depth, and quality.

Like the fearful servant, we can let this treasure of love lay idle. When we are in situations that challenge us to invest our love, we can hold back. Who wants to forgive someone who has done harm, do a kind deed if there will be no gratitude, or visit a lonely person when the day’s schedule is already full? At these times we would rather hoard our love, keeping it to ourselves.

One good deed can generate many more if we are willing to share our love. Kyle Sawyer, a ten-year-old boy, decided to raise money for a spinal disease affecting his sister. Kyle’s dedication and enthusiasm led him to find others who would help him make 2,000 paper cranes as a fund-raiser. They were sold as decorations for a hospital lobby, and after much hard work fueled by love, his efforts brought in \$12,000. Amazing what a young boy can do with one talent!

Many times we invest our love by extending simple, genuine kindnesses to others. A local pastor asked parishioners to describe loving deeds others had done for them that had made a difference. The responses he received were not about grandiose gestures. They were about

simple, loving actions like visiting a grieving widow, helping a senior citizen buy groceries, offering child care when a single parent was seeking work, listening to a confused teenager, and hugging someone who was crying.

## Learning From Loss

Often the wounded share the fullest amount of love. Parents whose young children have died reach out to others with similar loss. Recovering alcoholics spend long hours supporting others struggling with sobriety. Disabled persons volunteer as receptionists for charitable organizations. We are never too old or young, too wounded or busy to significantly share ourselves with others.

Large or small, our deeds of love can make an immense difference. We might ask ourselves: How can I loosen my tight grip on the precious coin of my love? What keeps me from sharing this valuable God-given talent? How can my love grow and multiply? †



Lord, I am grateful for all your blessings. Help me to use your gifts of love and compassion to rebuild people’s lives.

*From Grateful Meditations for Every Day in Ordinary Time, Rev. Warren J. Savage and Mary Ann McSweeney*

## WEEKDAY READINGS

November 20–25

Mon. Weekday: 1 Mc 1:10–15, 41–43, 54–57, 62–63 / Lk 18:35–43

Tue. Presentation of the Blessed Virgin: 2 Mc 6:18–31 / Lk 19:1–10

Wed. St. Cecilia: 2 Mc 7:1, 20–31 / Lk 19:11–28

Thu. Weekday: 1 Mc 2:15–29 / Lk 19:41–44

Fri. St. Andrew Dũng-Lạc and Companions: 1 Mc 4:36–37, 52–59 / Lk 19:45–48

Sat. Weekday: 1 Mc 6:1–13 / Lk 20:27–40