

Ordinary Time 33A 2014

When I was a youngster, there was a popular television program called *The Millionaire*. The premise of the show was simple but interesting. Every week an unknown benefactor would give someone a million dollars, tax free, to see what this new millionaire would do. As you can guess, for some this unexpected gift resulted in a better life. But for most, it led to sorrow and disappointment.

Although I didn't realize it at the time, that program is similar to the parable we just heard, and I wouldn't be surprised if it was based on Jesus' parable. But whereas the television program focused on a particular individual, Jesus' parable applies to all of us. The master in the parable represents Jesus, the servants of the parable represent his disciples, and the talents represent the gracious gift of the gospel Jesus has given to his disciples.

The first two servants are industrious. After receiving the generous gift that the master has given them, they increase it a hundred percent. But the third servant is filled with anxiety. Fearful that he may lose what his master has entrusted to him, he hides this gift of millions of dollars in the ground so that when the master returns he will have what belongs to him.

The master, however, is not pleased. He did not entrust his servants with such riches for safe keeping. He wants his servants to be enterprising and industrious. He wants them to increase what they have received.

This parable is meant for each one of us. Christ has entrusted us with the treasure of the gospel: the good news of the kingdom of God, the hope of resurrection life, the gracious gift of God's love and grace. The gift has not been given to us for safe keeping. We have been given the gift so that we can increase it by giving it away. Yes, we have been given the gift so that we can increase it by giving it away.

You see, every time we share the gospel with others, we increase the gospel by giving it away. Every time we proclaim the gospel in word and deed, we increase the gospel by giving it away. This is why Pope Francis has challenged us to be part of a new evangelization by sharing our faith with others. This is why each one of us needs to reach out to others and show them by word and example what Pope Francis calls "the joy of the gospel."

The greatest obstacle to the gospel is not persecution; it is fear: fear that we will fail, fear that we will be rejected. Fear is the great obstacle to the gospel because it does not believe and trust in the power of God to do all things. Faith overcomes fear. And for those who believe there is nothing to fear because Christ has won the victory. There is nothing to fear because God's Word will be victorious. Do not fear. Do not be afraid. Boldly share what your faith with others. For it is only when we give away our faith that it comes back to us a hundred fold.