

*A Breath of Life from the Wilderness - 101 - 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time B*

**Disciples and Stewards – Week 3 – Recap & Stewardship of Treasure**

*Good morning sisters and brothers. Here we are on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of our 4-week series of reflections on Jesus' call that we be his disciples and good stewards of the many good things entrusted to us by God our Father. We Christians are called by Jesus to be his disciples and to be good stewards of God's many blessings to humanity. How is your reflection coming along? We proposed that we all enter into this 4-week reflection as a kind of spiritual retreat.*

*Two weeks ago Deacon François treated us with a marvellous homily on Time. I hope he may post it on our Parish website if he still has his text; so that we might ponder it again. At the time I remember thinking and saying to him it was the best reflection on time that I've ever heard, and there would be great profit for us in returning to his homily; so that his words might help us ponder God's great gift of time to us his children and to all of humanity.*

*Last week Father Murray did what he does so well. He brought us back to the basics of our Christian faith. He remembered how we just finished celebrating during the Christmas Season the great gift from God to us when his Son became one of us, Emmanuel. Jesus was a true prophet bringing God's truth to the Earth. Many received his good news gladly, but the demons resisted him, as did those people who were very much invested in the goods and the pleasures of this life. Saint Paul warns us that it is difficult to dedicate ourselves to the Lord when we are concerned with pleasing others or the worries of this life. Soon we will once again enter into a Season of Lent to prepare us to experience Holy Week; when Jesus shows us how God bestows eternal life on those who do not allow the troubles of life to stop or distract them from showing mercy to others or from sharing with those in need.*

*We could say that our Creator puts at our disposal three categories of riches: time, talent, and treasure. Time: we don't know how long our life will be, but God entrusts it all to us along with all the time there is in each day. Talent: we all have skills and abilities – some we know we have but others may still be hidden or undiscovered – and we are free to decide how to use them. Treasure: whether we are rich or poor or in between, whatever we have or don't have is an opportunity for us to participate in the great adventure of human life and family.*

*How do I experience the passage of time? Do I feel like a slave without hope, like Job? Or am I an enthusiastic servant of the Lord like Saint Paul? God gives us time as a gift, but if we try to keep it jealously to ourselves or if we are obsessed about not having enough of it; Jesus one day said we will not be able to avoid losing everything. However, if we trust in God to give us the time we need; then we can experience the joy and freedom of the children of God. The key is the 3<sup>rd</sup> commandment: "You must keep holy the Lord's Day." God is sad to see us working to death and doesn't want that for us. Our Father wants us to rest one day a week, preferably on Sunday, the Lord's Day, and spend the day with family and friends: no work, no worry all day.*

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*How do I feel about my talents, abilities, skills, and experience? Am I tired of being called on to help and rescue others? Or am I glad to be of service and have the satisfaction of making the lives of others a little easier? It probably happens to everyone at some point to feel like we have been giving too much of our time and energy. When that happens; our body and heart may be warning us that we are neglecting to take proper care of our life: enough sleep, proper nutrition, exercise, resting in the Lord through prayer, enjoying family and friends, and so on....*

*Young parents know all about being deprived of sleep, but they understand that their baby is not intentionally making life difficult for them, and out of love they accept to endure the time it takes for their baby to find a proper rhythm of sleep, and then they catch up on their rest. We can all go through periods when we spend ourselves for others, and when we choose to do it out of love, we are deeply enriched and we become better people, we become saints.*

*Sometimes, the only way to discover our ability to say yes to others and bless them with our talents and abilities, time and effort, is to exercise our freedom to say “No.” when that is the wise thing to do. When we know from experience that we are quite capable of saying no at the proper time, then our willingness to say “Yes” takes on a much greater value. Jesus one day taught us to say no when we mean no and to say yes when we mean yes.*

*We can experience time as a blessing or as a curse, and our talents can bring us great joy or they can weigh on us as a great burden at times, but what may cause us greater suffering is our relationship with the material goods of this Earth: food, clothing, shelter, cars, books, collectible items, household appliances, electronic equipment and gadgets, and, let’s not forget, money – income and investments.*

*Some very rich people have become saints, but so have many poor people. We probably all know both rich and poor people who are miserable. We are all familiar with the saying: “money won’t make you happy, but it sure helps.” We sometimes hear people misquote the word of the Lord from 1 Timothy 6:10 when it comes out as: “Money is the root of all evil.” In fact, what the Lord actually says through Timothy is: “The love of money is the root of all evil.”*

*How then are we to avoid the misery that both rich and poor people fall into because of an unhealthy desire for riches? God’s remedy for our problems with time is for us to give one day a week back to God by going to church to worship Him, listen to his Word, be nourished by Jesus’ Body and Blood, and spending the whole day resting, not worrying or working, enjoying our family and friends. God’s remedy for feeling that our talents, abilities, and experience are a burden is to help us find the freedom and generosity of the children of God. The Holy Spirit is ever ready to fill us with the love of God. Once we know how much we are loved by God, then we can share the enthusiasm for the good news that inspired Saint Paul and all the saints.*

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God also has a remedy for the infectious disease of an unhealthy love for or desire for riches. God's solution is that we give some of it back to Him for his work and some of it to share with those whose needs are greater than our own as a work of mercy. Our charitable offerings support the Lord's Church and come to the aid of those in need.

**Time:** to have the interior freedom to really enjoy living our life in each moment of time given to us, we need to learn to find rest in God, beginning by observing the Lord's Day rest.

**Talent:** God has designed us to participate in his ongoing work of creation in the ordinary opportunities that life presents to us. The joy comes when we find a way to make use of our talents and abilities with freedom and generosity. **Treasure:** We enter into this world naked and we leave this world the same way. When we do leave this world, what will be our legacy? The more we invest during our lifetime in the lives of others and participate in the good works Jesus began; the greater will be our joy both in this life and in the next.

Last week there was a handout in the bulletin entitled: "Taking an Inventory of My Discipleship." If you didn't get it, you will find it on my website – [fathergilles.net](http://fathergilles.net) – on the homilies page. If you don't have a computer, please call the Parish Office and our wonderful Parish Secretary Donna will do her best to get you a copy of it. You fill it in and it gives you a sense of how you are doing as a disciple of Jesus. The Holy Spirit will help you see what you need to see and you decide what you want to decide. This week there are three handouts on two sheets: "First Fruits of our Income" – "Sacrificial Giving... Taking a Step" – and "Taking an Inventory of My Stewardship" Please approach these with a child like trust in God, that He wants to bless you, and make use of them as a spiritual exercise in a prayerful attitude.

When Jesus walked this Earth, much of what He taught was very provocative, because He taught with authority, and He taught only the truth. People found his words challenging because of the original sin. Because of the human condition, we have lost our natural trust in God. We are suspicious of God, and at times we may even be afraid that God wants to take things from us. When someone dies, some will say "God took him or her away from me" and even Jesus said that the Son of Man would come like a thief in the night. But by those words Jesus was only trying to warn us that life is short, because He really loves us, and that we need to listen well to the Holy Spirit now, while there is still time in each of our lives.

The Holy Spirit wants to teach us to truly trust in the Father's love while we are on Earth; so we won't be embarrassed when we come before God face to face only to realize how wrong we were about the Holy Trinity. The Holy Spirit wants to free us from unhealthy attachments to the things of this world; so we can truly enjoy all good things with a free and generous heart.