

# HOMILY ~ 33rd SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME NOVEMBER 18/19, 2023

*There was a man,  
a lonely man.  
Who lost his love  
through his indifference.  
A heart that cared,  
that went unshared,  
until it died within his silence.  
And solitaires' the only game in town,  
and every road that takes him takes him down.  
While life goes all around him everywhere,  
he's playing solitaire.*

Why was this man alone? I think he was paralyzed by fear, fear of getting rejected, fear of commitment, fear of being hurt, fear of being vulnerable. Loving involves some risk. Living involves some risk; otherwise, life goes on all around us, and we are alone.

In the parable in the Gospel Reading today, a master entrusted his possessions to his servants. He expected them to do something with the sums of money that he left in their care. The servant who received one talent (a unit of money) buried the money because he was afraid of his master. Now there was no indication that there was any reason for the man to fear the master. He was a very generous man. One talent was a great deal of money. He was freely entrusting it to his servants. The master knew there was a possibility that they would lose the money. This was the risk he was willing to take. The master would have been happy if he at least put it in the bank to get interest. But he did nothing with it because he was paralyzed by fear.

The talents in the parable (a unit of money) represents our talents, gifts or as I call them charisms. God gave us these charisms, and he wants us to do something with them to serve other people. First of all, we need to recognize our charisms. We tend to undervalue our charisms. When I point out charisms to people they frequently say, *"That is just something I was always able to do, it is no big deal."* It may be no big deal to you because you could always do it, but it is to others who do not have that charism. You may also have charisms that you have never discovered because you have never tried to use them. If you feel drawn to something, try it. Do not be afraid. You may discover a new charism.

To use our charisms we need to be in relation with others. We are relational by our very nature. We have an epidemic of loneliness in our culture today, particularly since COVID. We have less community since COVID. We learned to fear each other during COVID because we could give each other a fatal disease. Some of us went into a pod of people that we thought were safe, and we have not ventured far from that since. Are you still afraid of others? Have you become comfortable isolating? This is not healthy. Push yourself to get out with others. Do not isolate out of fear. We have allowed social media to take the place of in-person community. So many people are working from home and no longer have a work community. We all need a group of people where we belong. We still have community at St. Edith.

Sometimes we fear using our charisms. There is some risk involved when you put yourself out there. We need people to step up and get involved in Art and Environment. If you have some organizational skills and an artistic eye, you can do it. Cindy Coleman and Jane DeRoo have done such a great job it may seem a little intimidating to take over for them, but you know what? I had to give them a little push when they started 11 years ago. *"We have never done this before, and we do not know all of the Church rules."* I know the Church rules. I can help you with that. They had to feel the fear and do it anyway, and they used their charisms. We need some new ushers, particularly at the 11:00 AM Mass. You may be afraid to volunteer. You may be afraid that you will not like it. You may be afraid of making a commitment. Feel the fear and do it anyway. You may discover a new charism. An example of fear from my own life, I do not like to be the center of attention. I dropped a class as an undergraduate because I had to give a speech. When I was forced to give presentations at my first professional job, they told me that I was good at it so I continued to do it. I felt the fear and did it anyway. I found a new charism.

We all have charisms that God gave us to use to help others. Everyone can use them at St. Edith if they choose to do so, but there are many other places you can use your charisms. If you have been procrastinating about getting involved, are you putting it off because of fear? What are you afraid of? Do not become paralyzed by fear. While life goes on around you, are you going to be playing solitaire?

Love and Peace,

Fr. Jim