

HOMILY 33RD SUNDAY Ordinary Time

November 15, 2020

I had my 10th year anniversary of being assigned to St. Edith last week. I was remembering getting the call from downtown. It went pretty much like this. As you know, the pastor at St. Edith died and we need someone to become pastor there. The parish needs a lot of healing and we think you are the priest to do that. I would like you to pray about it for a week and let me know what you decide. And by the way, there is no plan B, we have no one else in mind. My initial reaction was: “There is no way that I am going there. I am happy where I am at. I just got everything going exactly the way I want it, I have a great staff in place. I have another year in this assignment. I would like to just coast for a year. Why would I leave? And then I thought: “What if I cannot help them? What if the people do not accept me? What if I am not a good fit for St. Edith? What if I don’t like it there? I am not moving.” I had some fears. With daily prayer, by the end of the week I knew that I had finished what I was sent to do at St. Priscilla. I knew that God was calling me to go to St. Edith. I was at peace with that decision.

In the Gospel reading we hear a parable. The man who was going on a journey represents God. The talents that were given to the three servants were large sums of money in the parable but they represent the gifts and charisms that the Holy Spirit has given to each one of us. The three servants represent all of us. The first two servants took the initiative and were successful in doubling the money. The third servant did nothing with the money out of fear. Now was that fear reasonable? There is no indication from the parable that the master was a hard man. He entrusted the money freely to his servants. He was very generous with his

wealth. And when he returned home, he gave the first two servants more. The master seemed really disappointed in the third servant because he took no initiative to do anything. I think the master would have been more pleased if he at least made an attempt to use his talents and lost them than he was with him doing nothing. The third servant should have figured that out. He was giving the money to the servants for a reason. If he wanted it buried, he could have done that himself before he left. God wants us to use our gifts and charisms to serve others. We may not always be successful, and I think that is OK with God, if we at least try. The first two servants took risks but did it anyway. We cannot let fear stop us from doing what God is calling us to do.

No one likes to feel fear, right? It is not a pleasant experience. When we feel fear, our first reaction is to both ignore it and pretend that we are not feeling it, or to become totally immobilized by it. That is not a helpful reaction. This is what I think we need to do when we are afraid. First of all, we need to recognize the fear. Recognize that we are feeling afraid. Next, we have to allow ourselves to feel the fear and sit with it a little while. Next, we need to investigate the fear. What exactly are we afraid of? Name it. Then we have to see if the fear is reasonable. Next, we need to decide if we are going to allow the fear to prevent us from doing what we feel called to do or if we are going to feel the fear and do it anyway. And that involves prayer.

Sometimes we let fear stop us from doing what God is calling us to do. We tend to be afraid of the unknown. We tend to be afraid of getting out of our comfort zone. Sometimes we continue to do things that just do not work for us anymore because we are afraid to make a change. I could have stayed at St. Priscilla for another year and just coasted; however, I do not

think that God called me to the priesthood to coast. And I would have missed the positive experience I have had at St. Edith and I would have missed getting to know all of you. Through prayer I was able to discern that God was calling me to a new challenge and I needed to step up. And this form of prayer was discussing the issue with God and being quiet and listening to what God was communicating to me. Making a decision to switch assignments was a big decision, but I think fear sometimes stops us from doing smaller things. We are all situated differently. We all have different responsibilities. We all have different gifts and charisms. We are each called to be a blessing to other people in a unique way and if we do not do it, it will not get done. So, pray about it. Is fear preventing you from doing what God is calling you to do? Recognize the fear. Allow yourself to feel the fear. Then investigate it with God in prayer. Is it time to feel the fear and do it anyway?