

Commentary on the Gospel for Mon, Sep 22nd 2014

Today's Gospel tells the familiar story of Jesus admonishing his listeners (that would include us) not to hide our "light" under a vessel, rather to place the light where it will allow others safe passage as they enter the room. This seems fairly obvious. So why does Jesus take time to mention it?

In chapter 19 of Luke, we find the Parable of the Pounds. You may recall that story also. Though this time, Luke spells out the teaching goal of the parable: "that the Kingdom of God would show itself then and now."

Both parables end with this somewhat somber warning: "To everyone who has, more will be given; from those who have not, even what they seem to have will be taken away." The steward who buried his allotment rather than investing it to gain interest for the landowner was sternly dealt with and once the light is gone, we are left with darkness.

Obviously, Jesus is using an analogy, not just discussing candlelights and pounds. Rather, these are gifts given to be used for building the Kingdom of God in the here and now whether they be talents, skills, family opportunities, excellent education, and so on.

When I first read these passages in preparation for writing these remarks, a certain memory of Fr. Pat Malone, SJ, popped into my mind. Fr. Pat was the beloved pastor of St. John Parish in Omaha who at 55 died what most felt was a most untimely death, according to our schedules.

The connection was not apparent at first, but then I recalled that on several occasions, I heard Fr. Pat pray for the gift of transparency, quite earnestly pray for it for himself. I was never quite sure why, and would think: What does he have to be transparent about?

If one cooperates with the grace of transparency, you ward off, it seems to me, the temptation to hide, to keep secrets, to dig caverns inside that eventually have to come to light, to be discovered in order to become a more whole person whose entire being gives glory to God. I think Pat's prayer was verbalizing a deep desire in him to recognize and expose immediately gifts from God, even those things that at first glance scarcely fit the category Gift as it turned out: terminal illness, constant pain, utter dependence on others; for Pat the primary Other was God.

In Pat's writings, which he continued to within days of his death, he shared with thousands the gift that he had yearned for: transparency-- capturing the depth of his experience and particularly his ability to welcome God into the heart of it all and demonstrate just what that truly entailed. Is this not a profound lesson to ponder for each of us?

Let us pray that we are blessed with the patience to listen, and respond in ways that would be pleasing to Jesus.

