

## Homily - 16<sup>th</sup> Sunday of the Year C

Our liturgical readings today help us to reflect on the “Spirituality of Giving”. What do we mean by spirituality? Applied to evangelization, Pope Paul VI, explains spirituality as “the interior attitudes which must animate those who work for evangelization” (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 74). What attitude or disposition, therefore, animates us in giving of our time, talent and treasure for the work of evangelization? Are we conscious that it is a spiritual action?

The Gospel’s account (Luke 10:38-42) on Martha and Mary’s encounter with Jesus shows two kinds of spirituality: Active and contemplative. Surely both are important and good. However, Jesus clarifies that contemplative spirituality is greater: “Mary has chosen the better part.” Thus, the emphasis Pope Paul VI places on “interior attitude” or “interior disposition.” Notice that both Martha and Mary were committed in their service; Martha prepared the meal, while Mary “sat beside the Lord at his feet listening to him speak.” Mary gave Jesus/God attention. Martha apparently thought she was doing more. But it was not the case.

Against this background, in giving, we must always make time for Jesus; he wants us to always be with him and listen to him. We do this especially through Weekend Masses, the monthly Holy Hour and Benediction; Visits to the Blessed Sacrament, Spiritual meditation on the mysteries of the Rosary; attending Bible Studies and Doctrinal Lessons, etc. These are principal priorities. Through them, like Mary, we choose the better part. Without this in place, the other areas of stewardship do not shine out properly. Pope John Paul II underlined this truth, saying, “The missionary must be a “contemplative in action” .... Unless the missionary is a contemplative he cannot proclaim Christ in a credible way” (*Redemptoris Missio*, 91). A deep spirituality is important to foster outstanding stewardship; else one will feel burdened and complain as Martha did.

Our First Reading (Gn 18:1-10a) shows how Abraham’s spirituality proved effective. Rather than complain, he displayed reverence and humility. He even had to beg for the honor, privilege and favor to provide for God’s messengers, “Sir, if I may ask you this favor, please do not go on past your servant. Let some water be brought, that you may bathe your feet, and then rest yourselves under the tree... let me bring you a little food, that you may refresh yourselves....” Can you believe that? That is why at Mass, we beg God to accept us: “Pray brethren that my sacrifice and yours may be acceptable to God the Father, almighty.” This is important because, that a gift is offered to God/Church is no guarantee that God

accepted it. God accepted the sacrifice of Abel and rejected Cain’s. So, the Church prays ceaselessly, “Look with favor on these offerings and accept them as once you accepted the gifts of your servant Abel, the sacrifice of Abraham...and your priest Melchizedek.” Sarah also cooperated with Abraham in working for God. What a model for all couples! God’s projects should never be a cause of conflicts. What more! Abraham did not just give them food; he “waited on them under the tree while they ate”. Yes, giving is not just about donations; it is also about self offering. God wants us to be always present to Him as He is to us.

One more point is that when we give, we are guaranteed a reward. Hence, God’s messengers asked Abraham, “Where is your wife Sarah?” He replied, ‘There in the tent.’ One of them said, ‘I will surely return to you about this time next year, and Sarah will then have a son.’” When we do something for God and his church; God takes care of the things we cannot do for ourselves. He grants us inestimable favors; above all, eternal rewards. “No one can outdo God in generosity!”

On the whole, first, giving is an act of dying to the self; dying to selfishness. It helps us respond to Christ’s invitation to offer ourselves to God with all our hearts, soul, mind and resources. Second, it is a privilege that Christ invites us to give to his Church and to the poor and the needy. Our sacred contribution is not something ordinary; it is a supernatural commitment. Note that God cannot be hindered. He will certainly get all his purposes fulfilled with or without us. Let us then appreciate the privilege he gives us to become “partners in progress” with Him. Third, to use the popular prayer to St. Francis of Assisi, “It is in giving that we receive.” We are better off through giving for God’s causes.

Finally, Jesus says, “For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also” (Matt 6:21). So, “Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven” (Luke 6:20). People have pet projects depending on their interests. People donate heavily, without any compulsion and sometimes unsolicited, for secular purposes – science, medical research, political and humanitarian purposes, and for wildlife conservation. Does this not call for concern when some Christians complain when giving for spiritual and divine causes? Beloved, let us declare like St. Paul in our Second Reading (Col 1:24-28), “Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake ... in accordance with God’s stewardship given to me....” May God grant us this grace of the right spiritual disposition for authentic stewardship, through Christ our Lord. Amen.