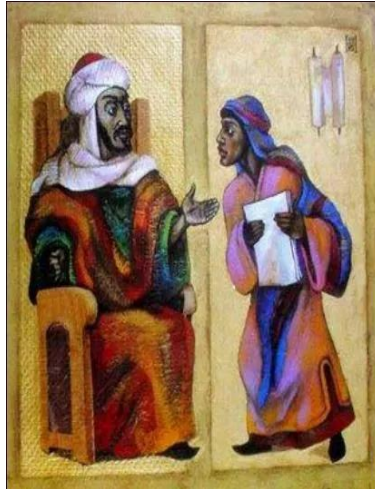


Homily – September 21st, 2025 – 25th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Once again, we hear a parable from the lips of Jesus, and we leave scratching our heads. That's what's supposed to happen with parables. Parables are meant to be



The Parable of the Dishonest Steward (Luke 16:1-13)

puzzled in our minds until they change our minds. Spiritual conversion—which we all need until we draw our dying breath—comes from the Greek word “metanoia” meaning “to change one’s mind.” Easier said than done. Maybe that’s

why the most common addiction, worldwide, is our addiction to our own thoughts. We falsely think that if everyone just thought the way we do, the Church and the world would suddenly turn into perfect bliss! This is very convenient to the ego but doesn’t make us very good listeners nor does it help us grow spiritually. We are meant to puzzle the parables in the hope of changing our minds into the mind of Christ.

In the gospel parable, we have a manager entrusted with managing a rich man’s wealth. The rich man has a product to sell, and people seem to be buying it; that’s why he’s rich. The manager’s job is to make sure the money keeps flowing. He’s supposed to sell the rich man’s goods around the area for a nominal fee. However, in time, this nominal mark-up turns into a significant mark-up or interest payment on top of the master’s costs. This leaves the manager probably making as much or more than the master and leaves the consumers feeling gouged. Because the

people buying the product feel ripped off, they buy less and less of the product and the master's profits start shrinking. The rich man, being concerned that his bottom line is hurting, suspects that the manager is being greedy and so calls him in and threatens to fire him.

So, the manager begins to panic at the prospect of losing his job, of having to live on the streets, and of not being welcomed into peoples' homes. What will this stressed-out guy do? He considers three options to avoid becoming destitute.

The first strategy is one we've all tried at one time or another—blame someone else for our misfortune. He says, ***“What will I do, now that my master is taking the position away from me?”*** Notice how he has shifted the blame to the master. The master is not taking your job away from you; you blew it because of your greed, you dummy! By taking such a high commission on the master's goods, he tarnished the master's reputation and made it appear that the master was greedy by charging so much for his product. Most of the cost of the product was, in fact, going into the manager's pocket as commission. We have people at the highest levels of politics and within the Church who are like this—they have never grown up. They've never taken responsibility for their own incompetence and sin but continually shift the blame onto someone else. Someone else is always the problem. Someone else is always to blame. That's the difference between a child and an adult; adulthood comes with taking responsibility, something we don't expect out of young children but hope they will eventually grow into.

The manager doesn't think this will work, so he quickly devises a second strategy. Instead of blaming someone else, he's going to play the victim. He plays the "poor me" card. ***"I am not strong enough to dig, and I am ashamed to beg."*** Well if you're that useless, do as I did, become a priest in the Archdiocese of Moncton! What a useless tool this guy presents himself as. He wants people to feel sorry for him and rescue him from his poor decisions. This strategy, he knows, will not work either.

Then he comes to his senses. He has, what you might say, a conversion, a metanoia, a change of mind. With this conversion comes his last strategy. The third strategy goes something like this: he is going to forgive others their debts (or at least reduce them), in the name of his master, in the hopes that he will have his debt forgiven as well. And, guess what? It works! He finds people who are in debt to his master. The first person is someone who owes the master 100 jugs of oil. The manager tells this person to give the master 50 instead. The next person is someone indebted to the master—he owes the master—100 containers of wheat. The manager tells the person, ***"Take your bill and make it eighty."***

What's going on here? The master is getting paid, the customer is no longer getting gouged, and the manager is no longer taking his ridiculously high commission. The manager, in fact, is not taking any commission at all.

This is a risk on the part of the greedy manager. He hopes, but is not guaranteed, to extend mercy to others so that should he be on the streets without a job, maybe one of these people, that he showed mercy to, will welcome him into their

home. Why is it a risk? Because in the world of showing mercy, in the world of giving another person a break, there is no guarantee *you* will be given mercy or given a break. This is the gamble this newly converted manager is willing to take. This is why he is praised in the end.

I say it's a risk and, on one level, the physical level, it is. What I forgot to tell you, earlier on, is that these parables don't work on the physical level but on the spiritual level. On the spiritual level, there is no risk. In the world of spirit--and mercy belongs to the world of spirit-- you only have what you give away. So, in risking to give mercy away to those who were in debt, the manager hoped to be carried into deeper and deeper levels of mercy for himself. That's exactly what happened. Instead of being criticized for his greed, he's praised for his shrewdness. He has figured out, what children of the light—church people—for the most part haven't understood. He has figured out the dynamics of the spiritual life. That is, when you give from the place of spirit, things do not divide and become less; things multiply and become more.

What was the first thing out of Jesus' mouth when he began his public ministry? ***"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy."*** Voilà, it's right there coming from the mouth of Jesus. Now, you might say that the manager showed mercy only because he ran out of options (blaming and looking for pity) and so had no choice; he was only trying to save his own skin. True enough. But he did show mercy, and for that he is praised by Jesus.

In the very moment you give mercy away, even to someone you deem doesn't deserve it, you shall receive mercy. In other words, any time in your life that you extended mercy to someone else, you did not feel cheapened, did you? No. You felt enriched. The moment you gave your love away, even to someone you were sure wouldn't love you in return, you didn't feel lessened but, again, enriched. It happens instantly. There's no delay. It's not like God has a book that He opens at the end of time and says, "On March 8th, 1977, Susie showed a little mercy, give her a little mercy now! I think she's done her purgatory and finally got a passing grade." It doesn't work like that, thank goodness.

In the very act of forgiving, we are forgiven. In the very act of giving away fish and loaves, Jesus was overwhelmed with the fish and loaves that kept replenishing themselves in his basket. It happens instantaneously, like today, like now. In the very moment of conversion, after spending his entire life stealing, Jesus says to the "good" thief, "**Today, you will be with me in paradise.**" Not tomorrow, not next week, not after you've paid your debt to society but TODAY! Likewise, when Zacchaeus, the tax collector, decided to change his ways and re-pay the people he had ripped off, Jesus' response was the same, "Today, salvation has come to this house." If it's "today" for them, it's also "today" for us.

~Fr. Phil