THE PASTOR SPEAKS...

(Thirty Third Sunday in Ordinary Time 2026)

A few months before I celebrated my 68th birthday, I asked myself a simple but important question: Now that I am turning 68, what resolution should I make for myself? And I came up with this answer: I want to ask the Lord to make me a kinder, gentler, and more compassionate person.

I sincerely wanted this. But I soon discovered that asking God for these virtues also meant allowing Him to put them to the test.

For example, my mother is turning 96 this December. I have noticed significant changes in her, and I sometimes wonder whether she is beginning to experience dementia. Every time I see her, I am reminded of all the years she devoted to caring for us, her children. Now that she is growing older and becoming more vulnerable, I feel that the Lord is giving me an opportunity to return that love through greater patience, kindness, and compassion.

Then, during my recent travels in Madrid, Spain, I was having a meal at a restaurant when I noticed someone begging on the street. I asked myself: How can I comfortably enjoy my food when someone nearby has nothing to eat? So I went out and gave that person something. A few days later, in Fatima, Portugal, something similar happened. An elderly couple entered a restaurant, apparently begging for food. Nobody wanted to serve them. When I asked the waiter to give them something to eat and told him I would pay, he warned me that they were beggars and even called them bandits. But I told him, "No, they are also children of God."

At that moment, I could not help seeing the suffering face of Jesus in those people. These experiences bring me to today's Gospel, the parable of the talents. The master entrusted different amounts of talents to three servants. The first two invested what they received and multiplied them. But the third servant buried his talent because he was afraid. We often understand these talents as the gifts, abilities, and opportunities God has entrusted to us. But I believe they also include the material resources we possess, our time, our blessings, and even the capacity to love and care for others.

God does not give us these resources merely for our own enjoyment. He gives them to us so that we can make them fruitful for the good of others.

I am particularly reminded of the teaching of Pope Leo XIII in his encyclical Rerum Novarum, which speaks about our responsibility toward those in need. The principle is that helping the poor is not simply an act of charity; it is also a matter of justice. What we possess in abundance should not make us indifferent to those who lack even the basic necessities of life.

Perhaps the question we should ask ourselves today is not simply, "What talents has God given me?" but rather, "What am I doing with the talents and blessings God has entrusted to me?" Perhaps we do not need to perform extraordinary things. Sometimes, multiplying our talents begins with being more patient with an aging parent, more generous toward someone who is hungry, more compassionate toward someone who is suffering, and more attentive to those whom society has forgotten.

As I celebrate another year of life, I continue to ask the Lord to make me kinder, gentler, and more compassionate. And perhaps that is one way of making the talents God has given me fruitful.

For in the end, the greatest talent we can multiply is the love we share with others.

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