

"Go-Getters for God"

Reflecting on this Sunday's Gospel about the use of the talents God has given us, Patricia Sanchez writes:

We all know them—the “go-getters” who take an idea and run with it through the ups and downs of life until they achieve success. Our shared human story is made so much more interesting by these people who have started small and finished big, all because they were bold enough to risk whatever was necessary to realize their goals. Some of these “go-getters,” such as David Thomas (Wendy's), David Edgerton and James McLamore (Burger King) and Ray Kroc (McDonald's) took a concept like “fast food” and made it what many find to be a “necessity” of life. Most of these entrepreneurs share similar stories. Like Glen Bell, Jr., the founder of Taco Bell, who grew up in poverty and rode the rails during the Great Depression, most have overcome considerable obstacles before finding themselves numbered among Fortune's 500. As Bell put it, “it is possible to have humble beginnings and, through hard work, to succeed beyond your wildest dreams.” But what is it that enabled these “giants” of industry to accomplish their purpose? How did they succeed where so many others have failed?

What, for example, made Abraham Lincoln continue to pursue a career in public service after two failures in business, eight defeats at various runs for public office, a nervous breakdown and the loss of a sweetheart to death? What would cause a person to continue to follow studies in science after being labeled a “misfit” by his teachers and “abnormal” by his parents because he had not learned to read by age 9? What would make him persevere after miserably failing his college entrance exams? Fortunately, these obstacles did not deter the man whom the world would later know and admire as Albert Einstein.

What, for that matter, would account for the disparity in the success rate of the servants featured in today's Gospel? Therein, the Matthean Jesus tells of three persons who were entrusted by their employer with a share of money—each, as we are told, “according to his ability.” While two invested and recouped the employer's money as well as a sizeable profit, the third took the route of the ostrich and buried the money, as well as any hope of a profit, in the ground. What made this third person fail where the others succeeded? Was it fear? Was it a lack of gumption? Was it laziness, as the employer's angry words appeared to suggest? Or was the servant simply unwilling to become as fully invested in his employer's business as his employer had intended?

This servant called “worthless” and the others who are called “industrious,” “reliable” and “dependable” provide the lesson today for Jesus' disciples. As sharers

in the “business” of Jesus, i.e., of preaching and teaching the good news of salvation by word and example, we are called to be risk-takers who choose to commit ourselves to the cause of truth and justice and peace. While it may be safer to bury or to hold tight the good news that has been invested in us, we are challenged to be daring in its promulgation. We are to take it with us to people and to places that may not afford us welcome. We are to dare to speak its message even where and when it shall be deemed unpopular, unwanted or passé.

[Used with permission, *The Word We Celebrate: Commentary on the Sunday Lectionary—Years A, B, C*, by Patricia Sanchez—Sheed & Ward Publisher, 9-1-89.]

Reflecting on today's Gospel, Fr. Flor McCarthy states:

Once a reunion took place of the past pupils of a famous school run by a religious order. An elderly priest, who came back for the reunion, found himself surrounded by a host of former pupils. It was obvious from the way they flocked to him that he enjoyed great respect among them.

He received them with graciousness. Then, without the slightest prompting from him, they began to pour out their stories. One was an architect who had designed a number of public buildings. Another was a university professor who had written several learned books. Another was the head of a business company that had branches in over a dozen countries. Another was a highly successful farmer. Another was a Monsignor in the Church. Another was the principal of a very prestigious school. And so it went on.

The old priest listened with pleasure to the impressive litany of successes and achievements. There didn't seem to be any failures or losers among them, or if there were, they hadn't shown up at the reunion.

As they told their stories, the priest nodded his head and smiled. When they had finished, he complimented them on their achievements. Then, looking at them with affection, he said, “And now, tell me what you have made of yourselves?”

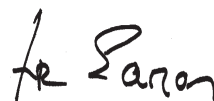
“What do you mean?” they asked, puzzled.

“You have told me how you did in your careers. Now tell me how you have done in your personal lives?”

A long silence followed.

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Have a blessed week,



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