瀬田の丘

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Today's Word
The Thirty-third Sunday, Year A (15 November)

Parish Priest: Father Hiroshi Konishi

First Reading: Proverbs 31:10－13, 19－20, 30－31
Second Reading: 1 Thessalonians 5:1－6
Gospel Reading: Matthew 25:14－30

Reflections on the Three Readings

In the First Reading, the "capable wife" represents the Wisdom of God. Just as a capable wife works and brings happiness, so too does the Wisdom of God work and bring happiness. To praise the capable wife is, in effect, to praise the Wisdom of God. According to the Second Reading, the "Day of the Lord" will certainly come. For those living in darkness, that day will arrive suddenly; however, because we are "children of the light," it will not come upon us by surprise.

Regarding the "talents" mentioned in verse 15 of the Gospel reading: one talent is equivalent to 6,000 drachmae. Since one drachma is equal to one denarius (a Roman silver coin)—representing a single day's wage—a talent amounts to 16 years' worth of wages, a truly vast sum. Note that the master simply "entrusted" these funds to the servants; he gave no specific instructions on how they were to be used. This speaks to the great degree of trust the master placed in his servants.

Then, in verse 18, we read that one servant "hid" his talent. While the other two servants responded to their master's trust by putting the large sums to work, this servant chose to bury the master's property to ensure it would not be lost. It is said that, at the time, if one buried an entrusted item and it was subsequently stolen, there was no legal obligation to provide compensation. This servant seems to have forgotten the very fact that his master had entrusted the wealth to him; he focused solely on preserving the property itself.

Take note of the terms "entrusted" and "gained" as they appear in verses 20－25. In the accounts of the servants who gained five talents and two talents, we see a pairing of the concepts "entrusted" and "gained." This pairing is absent, however, in the case of the third servant. The original Greek term for "gained" is

kerdainō, which means "to acquire" or "to profit." The third servant fails to grasp the true intent behind his master's decision to entrust him with a large sum—namely, the master's trust in him. Instead, he becomes "afraid," harboring fear and anxiety toward his master.

A Reflection

If one were to identify a central theme across today's three readings, it would be "a relationship of trust with God." The first reading speaks of a "capable wife," who serves as an allegory for Divine Wisdom. God places complete trust in this Wisdom—which originates from God—and Wisdom, in turn, seeks to respond to that trust. The phrase in verse 11, "Her husband trusts in her with all his heart," resonates deeply with me as a man.

In the second reading, I would like to highlight the passage in verse 5: "You are all children of the light." Through baptism, Christians have been made children of the light. Yet, children of the light do not shine by their own power; rather, they radiate the light of the Lord Christ—who is "Light from Light" (as stated in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed). God the Father, trusting that we would live as "children of the light," sent His Son, Jesus, into this world.

As previously noted, the Gospel reading presents a master who places his trust in his servants—some of whom respond to that trust, while one fails to do so. To live in obedience to God is, in essence, to live in accordance with the "trust" that God has placed in us.

How, then, can we discern that God places His trust in each one of us? Looking to the first reading, I believe that the "wisdom for life" we have received from God is, in itself, a testament to God's trust in humanity. It is not just "wisdom for life" that we receive; our faith, our abilities, our character—even our very lives—are gifts bestowed upon us by God. We live within a relationship defined by God's unilateral trust in humanity.

At times, this reality can weigh heavily upon us. Being trusted—with the understanding that each of us is irreplaceable—can indeed become a burden. I can certainly empathize with the servant who felt "afraid." Yet, it is a pity to "hide in the ground" the gifts that have been entrusted to us.

November is the month of the dead, a time associated with the "end times." At first glance, today's scripture reading might not seem to have any connection to the end times. However, to live the "here and now" within a relationship of trust with God—and to live as fully as possible, rather than "hiding" the wisdom and the life we have been given—is, in fact, what it means to live in the end times. The end times do not lie somewhere beyond this world; rather, they are something that unfolds "now," "right here."