

**The Inclusive Community Celebrates Marriage and the 50th
Anniversary of Betsy and Joe Guarducci
Thirty-Third Sunday in Ordinary Time
Theme: Accountability
Sunday, November 16, 2008
Matthew 25: 14-30
Homily of Anthony Padovano**

No one is supposed to have a safe life.

This is the message of today's parable.

**The talent each is given in one's own lifetime – no one else's - just ours.
What did we do with it?**

**The investment metaphor here is fitting.
Life is an investment
What did we invest in?**

The rate of interest does not seem to matter. Even the possibility of losing it all does not seem to trouble the master accountant. The fact that we played it safe and gave back exactly what we were given infuriates the master,

We were given life and we have no right to play it safe.

Life, like the talents in the parable, was not given so that we could bury the treasure for safety or take our lives only on gentle seas and into protected harbors.

A talent is worth about \$1000. To have 5 of these is a fortune. Even today \$5000 is not nothing. Then, it was about what you might earn in a lifetime.

The anxiety one might feel about losing it would be great. The master will come back. If I give him nothing because I did not invest he might kill me or send me and my family into the wilderness or put me in prison. No one of us faces those risks with our investments. It took unbelievable courage to do what the investors did.

Jesus knows something about wages, banking, interest, investment, accounts.

So what is Jesus telling us: 4 points:

- **without risk, you gain nothing - all you have is what you were given – it is not your life until you risk it – until then it is someone else's life that you were given**

- **safety is unproductive. Jesus does not like people who play it safe. Because when you play it safe, you never get more than yourself.**
- **it does not matter how well you do with the risk – what matters is that you took the risk.**
- **No one of us likes stories of people who played it safe – did nothing – thought only of themselves – and have nothing to show for having lived.**
- **People who play it safe have no joy – they have no hope, no humor – worse, they are boring people. Do we want to be around people who keep telling us of their successes and their safety nets? They let no one else in their lives, no creativity. There is a biblical irony in this: they lost their life by keeping it to themselves.**

So how do we apply this parable to our lives today? I would like to do so by considering it in two different contexts: religion and marriage.

Religion first, because religion is less interesting than marriage.

Jesus is saying to the religious leader of his day: what did you do with the religious heritage you received? Did you hand it down to the next generation undeveloped? Did you take no risks with it? Did you play it safe? Did you bury the treasure you received in the ground of your own insecurity and narrowness? Did you hand on a dead system, one you allowed to die by not exposing it to the light and air of life, by not allowing it to be lost? Did you make religion boring and did you punish everyone who tried to make it creative, and interesting and life giving? Did you favor the ones who buried religion in the ground so that you could give the Word of God back to God just as you got it, never having made it your own, never allowing others to share it, yes, and even to misuse it? Did you keep religion to yourselves, for yourselves? You received only the past of religion. You gave it no future. It died on your watch. You invested nothing. You never made religion a wedding feast. You made it a funeral. You did not make religion something that creates more wine at the feast or more bread on the table of life. You staged a burial. You offered religion only to those who were dead. Indeed you are like whitened sepulchers, filled with the bones of the dead, not with the heart and the blood of the living.

And all of this, I might add, applies to marriage. Marriage is the most important investment of your life. It is the one that will demand the most from you. It is not for those who play it safe but for those who risk everything.

Nothing can break your heart more – nothing – than a marriage that does not work – or a child who dies – or the loss of communication in a family. This kind of heartache is a heart attack. All other pain by comparison is inconvenience.

But nothing – nothing – can bring you the joy of a marriage that works. Nothing is better than love or the sight and the voice and the nearness of the one you love. Nothing compares with giving life to a child or watching a child live.

Divorce matters less than the fact you took the chance – you risked all you had. At least you did not bury your life and your talent.

And, so, when there is a wedding anniversary, we celebrate. With wine at the feast and loaves of bread multiplied for all who are there. We celebrate people, 5, 10, 25, 50, 75 years after the wedding for all they were then and for all they are now. We celebrate years and years of courage and risk and life and loss and joy and pain. We celebrate because such people give life to the world and hope to the future.

Marriage is the greatest risk and the best investment you can make. It has no guarantees. In a sense though, no marriage is a failure, even one that does not work out. I teach you about life and love in a new way. And it proves to the world that you are not living only for yourself. It makes you a better candidate for another marriage, more risk, more life.

A church that says you get only one chance at marriage is a frightened church that buries its people's talents.

Every couple who marries – every marriage that lasts – brings more life to the world than religion does. Or rather, it is marriage that makes religion work – not the other way around.

It is time to celebrate all those in this community who risked everything to be married. All those whose marriages lasted because they never stopped risking. All those who never married but gave all they had in friendship and community. All those who buried nothing but their fear. All those who were joyful and trembling when they made their vows – speak of courage! All those who spoke their vows because they refused to be silent or terrified or to find only safety in life. These are the truly talented people in life.

If you get a choice, would you rather go to a funeral or a wedding? Jesus said of religious leaders of his day – you prefer funerals don't you? As long as you're burying something, you feel good. It is not a threat anymore. You like burying prophets and risk takers.

You don't like weddings. Too much joy, too much chaos (notice how orderly funerals are), too much life, too much love, too much courage.

Dead religious leaders can't make religion from that.

Every marriage is an act of rebellion against death - an act of hope in the future. It gives love the best chance it gets to live in our world. It is the only investment that truly pays off; the only talent worth spending; the only story worth telling.