

## DISCOVER YOUR TALENTS & SET THE WORLD ON FIRE

One of the famous statements of St Catherine of Siena is: “Be who God meant you to be and you will set the world on fire.” Many of the famous people we know today, either came from obscurity or became celebrated people after being rejected several times. **Two women stand out for me here and they are: J. K. Rowling and Oprah Winfrey.** In the early 1990s, J.K. Rowling saw herself as a failure. She was jobless, divorced single mother on benefit, struggling with depression, and with a very dependent child. In 1995, she approached several major publishing companies with her Harry Potter script and was rejected by 12 of them. However, a small publishing house – Bloomsbury, accepted her script and gave her a cheque for £1,500 just to try her out. J.K Rowling not only surprised her publisher, but she also shattered all misconceptions around her. Her books went on to scoop several awards, she has sold more than 450 million copies of her book worldwide and is considered one of the most successful women authors around the world with a net worth of \$1 Billion. Although Oprah Winfrey is a household name today, she never had it easy as she was born into poverty. While a young girl, Oprah was sexually abused and molested by her cousin, an uncle, and a family friend. Later, at the age of 14, she became pregnant and gave birth to a child who died two weeks later. At the age of 22, she was deemed “unfit for TV” and fired from her job as a television reporter on Baltimore’s TV because the show received low ratings; however, Oprah did not give up. 7 years later, Oprah moved to Chicago and became the host of a self-titled talk show that went on to dominate daytime TV for 25 years. She now heads her own TV channel with a net worth of \$2.8 Billion. It is this doggedness in discovering and utilising our God given gifts and talents that we encounter in today’s Sunday readings.

In this Sunday’s Gospel pericope from Matthew Chapter 25, Christ continues His exposition of the kingdom of God and He compares it to the many talents we have been given by God. The Greek word used there for talent is *Talanta* which is a weight usually of gold or silver. In monetary denomination, it is worth roughly 20 years of wages. In effect, *Talanta* refer to a weight of unattainable amount. These talents from God were given to each of us according to our ability/strength/power as stated in the Greek word used there which is *Dunamis*. There are two options open to us: Either to use those talents as two of the servants did and became fruitful or to bury them as the third servant chose to do and became sterile. Whichever option we choose, has a day of reckoning attached to it and none of us can escape it. The perfect wife in today’s First Reading from the Book of Proverb discovered her talents and applied them appropriately by taking care of her home as well as helping the poor and the needy around her.

My friends, the most important job God has given us on earth is to discover our talents and put them to good use. It is important to note that **NOBODY IS TALENTLESS**. God has given each of us talents according to our abilities and those talents varies from person to person. While some people are talented intellectually, others are talented practically. While some people are blessed with managerial skills, others are blessed with imaginative skills. While others are great listeners, some others are great doers.

While some people are blessed with financial wealth, others are blessed with the wealth of Wisdom, Empathy, Fame, and other unquantifiable wealth. All we need to do is to find our place in society, carve out a niche for ourselves and flourish. Problem arises when we begin to compete, compare and/or even want to be like the other person by leaving our God-given talents to imitate the other person who has been blessed with financial wealth. As we all know, imitation is limitation. St Peter summarised the above in 1Peter 4:10-11 thus: “Just as each one of you has received a special gift [a spiritual talent, an ability graciously given by God], employ it in serving one another as [is appropriate for] good stewards of God’s multi-faceted grace [faithfully using the diverse, varied gifts and abilities granted to Christians by God’s unmerited favour]. Whoever speaks [to the congregation], is to do so as one who speaks the oracles (utterances, the very words) of God. Whoever serves [the congregation] is to do so as one who serves by the strength which God [abundantly] supplies, so that in all things God may be glorified [honoured and magnified] through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.”

As sons and daughters of the light as St Paul calls us in today’s Second Reading, once we discover our talents and polish them, we will set the world on fire with them like J.K. Rowling and Oprah Winfrey did. Let us remember **we are the only true copies of ourselves in the world; there are no photocopies of us elsewhere**. Hence, let us go out there, discover our gifts and use them to glorify God as well as edify those around us. We are all unique, fabulous, and awesome people. We should never allow anyone or anything to tell us otherwise. Furthermore, if anyone has ever told any of us that we are useless, worthless, meaningless, and will never succeed in life, I want to assure us that we are worth more than all the riches in this world put together. Yes, if we were the only ones left in the world, God will still come down and save us because we are created in His image and likeness.

One thing is sure, the world and the Church needs you and I before they could become what and who they are meant to be. We are not the side dishes but the main courses. Rise up and let us be on our way to self-actualisation by discovering our talents and using them well. As St Catherine of Siena reminds us: **“Be who God meant you to be and you will set the world on fire.”**

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Homily for the 33<sup>rd</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time Year A (19/11/2023)