

# What we become is our gift to God

By Father Albert Shamon  
Courier columnist

Sunday's Readings: (R3) Matthew 25:14-30; (R1) Proverbs 31:10-13, 19-10, 30-31; (R2) 1 Thessalonians 5:1-6.

The theme of Sunday's readings is talents.

The Gospel parable tells us that God gives everybody talents. We are a richly endowed people — "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, ..." Everybody has talents.

However, God does not give everyone the same talents. No two fingerprints are alike. No two people are alike. Personality means individuality. Everyone has different talents.

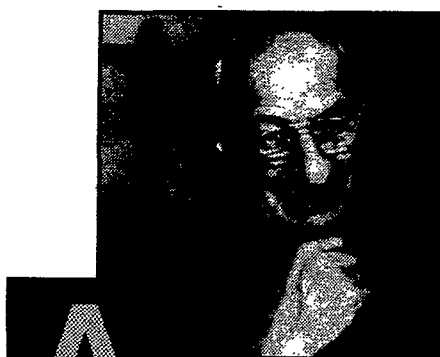
Moreover, God expects everyone to use his or her talents even though some may seemingly have less than someone else. The orchestra's conductor expects every musician to play, no matter what instrument he plays. Each player is important and necessary for the symphony.

Finally, if we do not use our talents, we lose them.

In using our talents we must follow the three *don'ts*.

First, don't look at others. Don't be making comparisons. So often we do nothing because we say, "If only I had his/her talents ..."

Edward Sill wrote a poem called



## A WORD FOR SUNDAY

"Opportunity."

This I beheld, or dreamed it in a dream; —

There spread a cloud of dust along a plain;

And underneath the cloud, or in it, raged

A furious battle, and men yelled and swords

Shocked upon swords and shields. A prince's banner

Wavered, then staggered backward, hemmed by foes.

A craven hung along the battle's edge,

And thought, "Had I a sword of keener steel —

That blue blade that the king's son bears, but this

Blunt thing!" he snapt and flung it from his hand,

And lowering crept away and left the field.

Then came the king's son, wounded, sore bestead,

And weaponless, and saw the broken sword,

Hilt-buried in the dry and trodden sand,

And ran and snatched it, and with battle-shout

Lifted afresh he hewed his enemy down,

And saved a great cause that heroic day.

The poem's lesson is that opportunity lies not so much in what we have, as in what we do with what we have. It is not the role God gives us to play in life that counts, but how well we play the role that He has given us to play.

Secondly, don't be afraid of failure.

Nothing succeeded like failure for Thomas Edison because every failure taught him something he did not know before. Often he would test and test until his assistants were ready to drop from sheer exhaustion. He failed more than 5,000 times before discov-

ering the electric light bulb.

He spent five nights and days in his laboratory — without food or sleep — before discovering the phonograph. He used to say that people called him the "Wizard of Menlo Park." But he would say, "Genius is one percent inspiration and 99 percent perspiration."

Lincoln lost a number of elections, but finally won the presidency of the United States. He never gave up.

The man in the Gospel buried his talent, because he was afraid of failure.

Better to try and fail than to fail to try.

Thirdly, don't be negative. Don't be concerned about not being bad; be concerned about being good. The wife in the first reading is praised because she used her talents fully.

Be the best in whatever you do.

Plan for more than you can do — then do it.

Bite off more than you can chew — then chew it.

Hitch your wagon to a star.

Keep your seat and there you are!

What we are is God's gift to us. What we become is our gift to God.

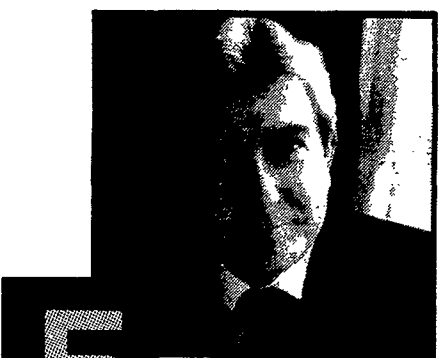
We may not have others' talents. We may make mistakes. We may fail. But these God will forgive. Only one thing he will not forgive — our burying our talents, our not trying.

# Integration of work, personal life is essential

By Gregory F. Augustine Pierce  
Syndicated columnist

Then the Pharisees went off and plotted how they might entrap him in speech. They sent their disciples to him, with the Herodians, saying, "Teacher, we know that you are a truthful man and that you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. And you are not concerned with anyone's opinion, for you do not regard a person's status. Tell us, then, what is your opinion: Which is more important — work, personal or family life?"

Knowing their malice, Jesus said, "Why are you testing me, you hypocrites? Show me one of your workers." They pointed to a man who worked for one of them. He said to them, "Does this man not need to work to support himself and his dependents, to exercise his God-given abilities, to help make the world a better place? And does this man not need to be by himself, to relax, to pursue his hobbies and interests, to develop physically, intellectually and spiritual-



## F AITH AND WORK

ly? And does this man not need to be with his friends and family, to love and enjoy them, to help build and maintain their home, to participate in their joys and their sorrows? Do not make people choose between their jobs, themselves or their families. Rather help them integrate all three so

they might be whole, even as your heavenly Father is whole."

When they heard this they were amazed, and leaving him they went away. (See Matthew 22:15-22)

Much has been written lately — some of it by me — about the spiritual task of balancing work, personal and family life. Recently, however, Ron Nahser, a business friend of mine, pointed out that the word "balancing" is the wrong one to use.

Nahser is convinced that this issue is not one of merely achieving "balance" or "balancing" the demands of work, personal time, and family life. The image of a person's life being divided into several compartments or spheres or boxes that need to be juggled or balanced or equalized or chosen between is both inaccurate and misleading, he insists.

"We can expect neither ourselves nor our employees to arrive at the point of peace and happiness that Jesus promised by merely taking a few hours from box A and switching them over to box C," he said. "Therein lies a task that is ultimately fruitless and

frustrating."

The word that Nahser proposes we use is "integration." By "integration" he means seeing all elements of our lives as important, meaningful, interdependent — and holy. To him, good businesses and professional firms are enterprises that provide employment opportunities allowing individuals to experience rewarding work while making a decent living for themselves and their dependents.

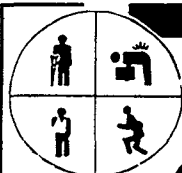
Good business practices must include providing an environment that allows employees to integrate their work, personal, and family needs and goals. Managers need to understand and promote this integration both on the part of the employer and the employee.

As Jesus might have said if he had been asked, the task of integrating work, personal and family life is essential to the spiritual quality of both the workplace and the individual employee.

And it is part of the job of the manager to facilitate and encourage that integration.

### Kid's Chronical Answer Key

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|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Psalms             | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Numbers     |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Exodus  | <input type="checkbox"/> Job                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Isaiah             | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Deuteronomy |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Joel               | <input type="checkbox"/> Joshua                 |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Genesis | <input type="checkbox"/> Daniel                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ezekeiel           | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Leviticus   |



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