

COLUMNISTS

Use or lose God-given talents

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

Once there was a wealthy landowner who was about to go away on a long trip. Since he was going away for a long time, he decided to put his loyal staff in charge of everything he owned. He entrusted five talents to one servant, two to another, and one to another — unbelievable sums of money at that time. A talent represented the earning of 20 or more years.

After the master left, the first and second servants doubled their master's money. The third dug a hole in the ground and buried his talent. When the master returned unexpectedly, he called his three servants to give an account of how each had used the talents entrusted to him.

For us, talents are our God-given abilities. The parable tells us four things.

First, God has given everybody talents. We are richly-endowed people. Everybody has talents.

Second, God doesn't give everyone the same talents. Everybody is different. No two fingerprints are alike. No two people are alike. We all have different talents.

Third, God expects us to use our talents even though they are different. The conductor of an orchestra expects everyone to play well no matter what instrument he plays. Each is important and necessary for the symphony.

Finally, if we don't use our talents, we



a word
for
sunday

BY FATHER ALBERT SHAMON

lose them!

To use our talents, we must follow the three "don'ts."

First, don't look at others. Comparisons are odious. So often we do nothing because we say, "If I only had his/her talents..."

Remember Edward R. Sill's poem that some of us learned in the eighth grade. It was titled "Opportunity."

In the poem the craven hangs at the battle's edge and does not recognize Opportunity. "If" is the big word to him — "if" he only had sword of keener steel, what might he not do! Instead of doing his best with the little he had, he broke his sword, flung it aside and crept away. The courageous king's son, though wounded and weaponless, seized the broken sword, poor though it was, and turned defeat into victory. So our opportunity lies not so much in what we have, as what we do with what we have.

"Hell begins," Giano-Carlo Menotti has said, "on the day when God grants us a clear vision of all that we might have achieved, of all the gifts which we have wasted, of all that we might have done which we did not do ... For me, the conception of hell lies in two words: 'too late.'"

Second, don't be afraid of failure. Of Thomas Edison it was said, "To him nothing succeeded like failure, because every failure taught him something he didn't know before."

Edison would test and test until his assistants were ready to drop from sheer exhaustion. He failed more than 5,000 times before discovering how to make an electric light bulb. He spent five days and nights in his laboratory before discovering the phonograph. He used to say that people called him "The Wizard of Menlo Park," but "Genius," he said, "is 1 percent inspiration and 99 percent perspiration."

Lincoln lost many elections before he was elected president of the United States. His losses did not drive him out of politics.

The man in the Gospel lost his talent, because he was afraid of failure!

Better to try and fail than to fail to try!

Finally, don't just be concerned about being bad, about avoiding evil — that's negative. Rather, be concerned about being good! The woman in the first reading is praised, not because she was a wife, but because she was a wife who used all her wifely talents fully.

The rule is simple: 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 you are is God's gift to you; what you become is your gift to God.

Father Shamon is the administrator of St. Isaac Jogues Chapel, Fleming.

Daily Readings

Monday, November 18

Revelation 1:1-4, 2:1-5;
Luke 18:35-43

Tuesday, November 19

Revelation 3:1-6, 14-22;
Luke 19:1-10

Wednesday, November 20

Revelation 4:1-11; Luke 19:11-28

Thursday, November 21

Revelation 5:1-10; Luke 19:41-44

Friday, November 22

Revelation 10:8-11;
Luke 19:45-48

Saturday, November 23

Revelation 11:4-12;
Luke 20:27-40

Soccer ball campaign condemns child labor

"Marketplace" is the wrong image for our global economy.

When we think of markets, we envision local farmers, fresh produce and low prices on a sunny autumn Saturday.

Global production, however, is neither bucolic nor benign. Often, transnational corporations act like sharks — but the simile insults sharks who are only acting in accord with their nature. Sharks don't know any better. People do.

The behavior of the giant corporations, some bigger than most nations, is on my mind. Recently, some economists and corporate moguls have been trying to make the case for child labor. Following all the disclosures of child labor in the garment, carpet and sporting goods industries, along came the contention that undeveloped national economies need child labor to get a leg up. It's the old "ends justify the means" argument; child labor will build the economic wealth, and the children when they are grown will share in that wealth.

I don't think so. Child labor is one more way to transfer what few resources the poor have into the pockets of the already rich. With little food or exercise, the children's bodies and brains atrophy. They die young and impoverished, while the profits their soccer balls and



ordinary
time

BY MARY ANN MCGIVERN, SL

tennis shoes yield go directly into the coffers of company headquarters in wealthy nations. We have plundered the natural resources of the Third World. Now we are plundering their youth.

The past decade has seen an 83 percent increase in the number of children and youth playing soccer in the United States. Les Blumenthal of the Tacoma, Wash., *News Tribune* reported in the July 7, 1996, edition that in the Sialkot region of Eastern Pakistan children as young as 6 years old are hand-stitching soccer balls that were used in the Olympics, in the World Cup and by millions of American youngsters. More than 20 percent of the work force producing soccer balls in the Sialkot region is under the age of 14.

Some of these child workers sit on

the stoops of their one-room homes stitching the hard leather. Others work in small village workshops that have been likened to sweatshops. Middlemen provide them with kits containing all the parts of the ball. The children can finish roughly one ball a day.

Their pay: 60 cents a ball. Meanwhile, the balls can retail in the U.S. for up to \$45 apiece.

The *Foul Ball* Campaign has brought together religious, labor, consumer and child advocacy groups to pressure the Federation of International Associations of Football (FIFA) to withhold its seal of approval for balls made with child labor. All soccer balls now used in FIFA-sanctioned U.S. play must meet FIFA standards, which are now only for size, weight and durability.

Reebok and Nike have agreed to open stitching factories in Pakistan, designed to ensure production will be done on-site and not out-sourced to villages where children under the legal working age of 15 could be used. But they are not among the five largest U.S. soccer ball importers. It is easier for them to make labor concessions for sports equipment than for running shoes.

The *Foul Ball* soccer campaign is focused, simple and the right thing to do.

If your child plays soccer, ask your coach where the balls come from. Ask your sporting goods shop. Ask your soccer association. Are the brand name manufacturer and the local retailer willing to certify that children were not used in their production?

Start a *Foul Ball* Campaign in the Rochester area. The campaign is a project of the International Labor Rights Fund, 110 Maryland Ave., N.E. 74, Washington, D.C. 10002; e-mail, laborrights@igc.apc.org.

The image of the global marketplace captures the best elements of the capitalist system. It doesn't raise pictures of 10-year-olds in sweatshops, earning less than a dollar a day. Most people don't connect international economics with the purchase of soccer balls at the local discount store. But while we encourage our children's athletic achievements by buying expensive equipment, we may be condemning other children to painful drudgery.

We all want a global economy that is just. One step toward economic justice would be to refuse to buy products made by children's hands.

Sister McGivern is executive director of the St. Louis Economic Conversion Project based in St. Louis, Mo.

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