

## **Another Thought on Catholic Education**

When I was a student at the Covington Latin School, every year we had Days of Recollection. These all-school events were days on which we were presented with material that would help us to grow spiritually. At that time in near ancient history nearly all of the faculty members at the school were priests. Every year the headmaster ( a monsignor) would conduct one of these sessions by first reading from the 25<sup>th</sup> Chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel. It is the story of the landowner who left money behind in the hands of his servants. To one he left ten talents (a monetary unit of the day), to another he left five talents and to another he left one talent. The master had expected that each servant would work to increase the amount of money compared to what he had been given.

Upon the return of the master, the servant who had been given ten talents presented the master with ten additional talents. The one who had been given five talents had made five more. The master was pleased with both of these servants. The servant who had been given one talent did not invest it (he buried it) and he, seemingly with pride, presented the one talent back to the master. The master was not happy with him, because he had not used the talent to make more. The idea was for each servant to take the risk, have confidence in themselves and God and put the money to use to make more money.

As the headmaster went on, he would say, "Now some of you men (this was before coeducation came to the Latin School) will graduate and find yourselves 'pumping gas.'" By this he meant that some of us would not go to college and be stuck in some menial job like working at a service station putting gasoline into cars. This was before the days of the self-serve gas stations that are the norm today. "Pumping gas" was like the nowadays "flipping burgers." The headmaster would go on, "And one of your classmates will drive into your gas station in a big black Cadillac." This was a sign that one had "made it" in those days. "And you, pumping gas" will say, "Oh, he was lucky. He was lucky that he has done so well, and I am stuck in this job, because I am unlucky."

The headmaster would then explain that luck was not the difference. The successful person had applied himself, taken the risk of using the gifts God had given him and advanced himself beyond the level of a high school graduate, while the person in the menial job had not. His point was that, as students at the Latin School, we were recognized as having been gifted by God, and it was our responsibility to develop those gifts by studying and doing all of our school work to the best of our abilities. Because I heard this each year for four years, it stuck. I think that it stuck with most graduates of that school. I found that somehow my mother had heard the same lesson, for whenever my grades were not up to snuff, she would say to me, "God gave you a good mind. Use it!" When you hear the same message from two different sources, it really hits home.

The point is this: God has given each of us talents, maybe to some more gifts than to others. But whatever the gifts, it is our God-given responsibility to do our part to develop those gifts so that they may be used for the honor and glory of God and for our own salvation. This is what Catholic education is all about. Students should be taking pride in what they do, because the teachers, the staff, their parents and, yes, even GOD, expect them to do the best they can. They should get used to not saying "I can't." until they have brought all of the information and knowledge they can muster to bear on the problem. It is only in this way that they will be able to accomplish more than they expected and be able to stretch their gifts to beyond what they think God has given them.