

PRAY Faithful God,
you bless us with the capacity
to feel and befriend, to love and
laugh, to think and understand.
We pray that none of us leave
unused our gifts for building a
community of love in our world.
Amen.

33rd Sunday in Ordinary Time

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SPiRIT

by Christopher J. Tures

The Leg” is what my teammates call me. I’ve played soccer for 10 years until this year. During that time, I developed a reputation for having a strong kick that served me well as a defensive player. Unlike music, soccer never came easy for me. I am not a natural athlete. From the beginning, I pushed myself in hopes of becoming an outstanding player.

When I was 12, I joined a summer traveling soccer league. My coach pulled me aside and told me that I was going to be the starting sweeper for the season, the most important position in the defensive line. He told me that I had leadership and excellent defense skills and that sweeper was where I belonged.

I worked hard at every practice and game to maintain my new position. To my surprise, the team selected me to be their captain. I remained captain and sweeper that season and the following two. I was never a star, but my reputation as a defender intimidated my offensive opponents. I loved the game. I went to practice early and came home late,



istock: Jim Kolianzko

and my teammates and I got along as great friends.

When I was about to start eighth grade, a new coach replaced our old one on our summer traveling team. He changed everything. In the first game, he started me at midfield, a position I hadn’t played since fourth grade. The coach pulled me out of the game shortly after.

My position as captain was also short-lived. The coach removed me without an explanation. I felt as if I were under surveillance and constantly feared being cut from the team. I realized the coach was

uncomfortable with the influence I had on the team. He placed another player in the sweeper position as a sort of closure to the way things used to be.

I decided I had to switch to a different summer team. I joined the archrival team, who accepted me almost immediately. I was tentative on this team because the guys had played together since they were six. I quietly accepted a place as starting left defender. We had a great season, only losing to my old team once during the season, then

There's Always
NEXT YEAR

SUNDAY GOSPEL

33rd Sunday in Ordinary Time

What does God ask?

JESUS: A man going on a journey summoned his servants and entrusted his property to them, according to the abilities of each. To one, he gave five talents; to a second, he gave two talents; to a third, one talent. Immediately the servant who received the five talents invested it and made another five. In the same way, the servant who received two talents doubled the figure. The servant who received one talent went off, dug a hole in the ground, and buried the master's money. After a long absence, the master came home and settled accounts.

SERVANT 1: Master, you gave me five talents. See, I have made five more.

MASTER: Well done! You are an industrious and reliable servant. Because you have been so dependable in this matter, I will put you in charge of larger affairs. Come, share my joy!

SERVANT 2: Master, you entrusted me with two talents, and I have made two more.

MASTER: You, too, are a good and trustworthy servant. Because you have been so trustworthy in this matter, I will put you in charge of larger affairs. Come, share my joy!

SERVANT 3: Master, I knew you were a harsh man. You reap where you do not sow and gather where you did not scatter, so I was afraid. I went and hid

your talent in the ground. Here, I am returning what is yours.

MASTER: You worthless, lazy lout! You knew, did you, that I reap where I did not sow and gather where I did not scatter? All the more reason to deposit my money with the bankers, so that on my return I could get it back with interest. Take the talent from him and give it to the servant with ten. To those who have, more will be given, and they will have an abundance; but from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away. Throw this worthless servant into the darkness outside, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Matthew 25.14-30

destroying them at the state summer-league championships.

In the fall, I played soccer for the freshman team at my high-school. Once again, my team elected me as captain. Sophomore year I decided to try out for the varsity team at school. I made the first cut, then the second, and finally came the last day of tryouts: final cuts. I finished in the top three for the mile run, sprinted faster than almost everyone else, and was still a great defender. The only thing that worried me was my lack of dribbling skills. Even as an effective defender, I never really dribbled the ball—a skill that the offensive positions require.

The coach posted the names of those who were cut. There were three names on the list. Mine was the third. My heart shattered. The noise blocked the sound of the coaches telling us that we were good players and that they just had to cut some people.

Needless to say, the spark within me flickered and waned as I showed up to practice with the junior varsity. I did not want to be there. It was not where I belonged. The JV coach came down extra hard on me. Apparently he was under the impression that I came with a superiority complex. True, I was low about being on JV, but I kept telling myself, “There’s always next year.”

A week later, the head varsity coach attended one of our practices. This struck me as odd. He had his team. Was he here to pat us on the back, reminding us to be proud to be part of the school soccer program? He pulled me aside afterwards and asked me to play up to the varsity team. A starting defender had broken his leg and they needed a replacement. I acted as if it was no big deal, but I was having a dance party in the back of my mind. Woo!

I started and played every conference game. This was a big deal for me: being the only starting sophomore. I did well, despite my constant fear that any mistakes would make the coach question if I really belonged on the varsity team.

Conference finals rolled around. My name wasn’t on the starting lineup. I thought there was a mistake, but there wasn’t. The coach benched me for the duration of the season.

As disappointed as I was, I could rationalize why the coach made his decision. These were the upper-classmen’s games. I was still a



QUESTIONS 1 What skill or talent have you worked hard at developing? What have you sacrificed? How have you benefited? 2 Why does Chris quit soccer? What would you do? 3 What does Chris learn from quitting soccer? 4 What does Jesus' parable ask us to do with our talents? 5 Why does the third servant bury his talent? 6 What is an example in your life of burying a talent? Why did you do it?

sophomore and "There's always next year."

The season ended. That summer, I played on my traveling team, all the time noticing that my peers improved with each week. I may have slacked during my summer soccer simply because I worked two jobs and practiced with my band in the morning. My skills froze in time because I held onto my defender mentality. I rationalized, "What kind of a defender needs offensive skills?"

School came around and so did tryouts. I made the team without question. I was the starting defensive wing once again. I accepted the rookies, and I drove them to games. That created a nice positive vibe in the team.

We won every one of our conference games. Most of them, courtesy of the defense, were shut outs (which were accredited to our goalie.) I was on a total adrenaline high at the first conference game finals until coach called the starting lineup, once again leaving out my name. I was shocked. All I could do was sit on the bench and stare. Not again! Reality sank in. I was done for the season, but I tentatively thought, "There's always next year."

When we won the section final game, all the guys reached up to touch the trophy held by our captain. All the guys, except me. That wasn't my trophy in any way. I didn't help us acquire

it. I just sat on the bench hoping someone would break a leg again so I could play.

The team made it to state, and I pasted on a happy face to keep team morale as high as possible. We lost in the state quarter-finals.

I set my heart on becoming a recognized leader on the team. I started thinking about being captain the next school year. I felt as if I were a shoo-in. I was always a positive force on the team. I worked hard on concentration drills but could also crack a joke when it was time to be funny. Furthermore, I figured I had all the rookies' votes since I was the only one who cared about them.

The awards ceremony finally came. This was it. I was going to become captain. It was what I waited for: appreciation for all the heart I had poured into the team as well as the sport. The coach went through the standards: "We had a great year . . . each member provided . . . the MVP for this year is . . . thank you for a great season . . ." I grew more and more nervous with every cliché until, "The captains for next year are..."

The identities of the captains are not important, only bear in mind that I was not one of them. I had enough. There would be no "next year."



Goodbye to 'The Leg' meant hello to 'The Voice.'

My BAND Lucid Groove has been around for about six years. Performing is the thing I love the most. Without soccer, I have time to play and practice. We're trying to break into the club scene and have more chances to play.

FALL PLAY I took a drama class by accident my sophomore year. After I made people cry, the teacher asked, "Are you in drama?" "No, I'm playing soccer," I said. Now, I'm going to try out for the next play.

RELATIONSHIPS This winter, since I wasn't playing soccer, my girlfriend and I learned to swing dance together. It's nice to feel like I have time for my friends. I don't have to leave to go practice.

What are talents for?

“If you’ve got it, flaunt it.” That seems to be the message of this Sunday’s gospel reading. If you bury your talents, a harsh judgment is going to fall on you. Let your light shine. Show your stuff. Make your mark. Is this what Jesus is saying?

Let’s look closer. High-school and college-age people struggle with figuring out what their talents are, how they can put them to use, establish a career, hold onto a good job, lead a successful life. Most of us resolve this struggle by trying to figure out what we are good at.

Some of us are artistic. Some of us have fine verbal skills. Others have mathematical ability. Some of us are good at making or fixing things. A number of us do well in music, athletics, or science. These talents are individual. Some of them run in families.

Basically, each of us has to find out what our own unique talents are and make the best possible use of them. For our purposes, we’ll call these “second-level talents.”

There is another set of talents, common to all of us, which we’ll call “first-level talents.” These talents have to do with the way we are with each other. They have to do with caring for our neighbors, reconciling differences, showing mercy, being creative about problems that arise among and between people.

As we grow in relationship with other persons and with the world

around us, these first-level talents emerge. Usually, we discover them in ourselves through other people in our lives who show us, in one way or another, that we are worthwhile human beings.

These first-level talents can be cultivated. Our Catholic religion teaches us that we have the potential for being good, loving people and contributors to our society. The coming of Jesus into the world tells us that God can be found in the world. If God was in Jesus, then God can be in us.

Jesus’ coming suggests that we have within us a divine spark, a light that shouldn’t be hidden under a bushel basket. That divine spark can make us more fully human, more fully alive, more committed to serving people in need. It can help us recognize and appreciate the good in others.

Second-level talents can only develop fully if our first-level talents are also emerging. We develop our first-level talents when we invest by listening to others as they try to think ideas and plans out, by creating fun for our friends, by making a place for kids others tend to leave out, by joining in group activities, by playing and praying together.

We all have the divine spark. God is here, among us and within us. We’ve got it; how can we choose to flaunt it? We can each choose to use our talents and make a difference.



Our Deepest Fear

by Marianne Williamson

Our DEEPEST FEAR is not that we are INADEQUATE.

Our deepest fear is that we are POWERFUL beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness that most FRIGHTENS us.

We ask ourselves who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, fabulous? Actually, who are you not to be? You are a child of God.

Your playing small does not serve the world. There’s nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won’t feel insecure around you.

We are all meant to shine, as children do. We were born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us.

It’s not just in some of us; it’s in everyone.

And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we’re liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others.

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FAITH in ACTION

- 1 List 5 good things about yourself in your journal.
- 2 Listen to five people in the next day without interrupting or turning the conversation to yourself. You can affirm the other person’s ideas or experiences. You can ask them questions to enhance their descriptions or make ideas clearer.
- 3 Write on a slip of paper an unused second-level talent you have. Put your slip in a container with those of other group members. Form groups of four. Have each member draw a slip from the container. Imagine and invent what might result from investing these four talents in making a difference in your school, parish, or neighborhood.