

Let me tell you a few stories about people who felt spiritually inadequate.

One of my co-workers ~~took responsibility for a~~ ^{had} teacher training session. She's quite capable at teaching her material, but she was nervous about ~~preparing~~ the prayer service. She had a creative idea in mind, and she decided to try it out first on our staff. It was a complicated prayer, and at the end we were to sing a song and use gestures, but she didn't have the bugs worked out, and it was more humorous than it was prayerful. She said to the group, "I'm sorry, I know I have many gifts, but leading prayer is not one of them."

Another story. When I was a child, attending Catholic school, I went through first communion preparation in my class, as was the custom. But the year after I finished, it was my younger brother's turn for first communion preparation and the school announced to the parents that it was changing the way it prepared children for Eucharist. Now the school wanted parents to take a more active role. Many parents were upset. They sent their children to Catholic schools so they could learn religion at school. Many parents felt they didn't have the skills for preparing their children for communion.

One more story. Last year the Vatican released a document explaining its position on some recent developments in reproductive technology; that is, whether certain methods of producing children are morally acceptable, like test-tube babies or the use of a surrogate mother. The local new media in Kansas City were looking for priests to interview about the new document. And they had a hard time finding some. Most of us, myself included, felt inadequate to deal with the issues on the air on such short notice.

These are examples of people who felt spiritually inadequate. And maybe you have your own stories. Times you felt called on to make a decision that was larger than life: Shall I have surgery? Which college is best? Shall I move my parents to a nursing home? Should I change careers? Sometimes we just feel inadequate to decide. Like the characters in today's parable, some people have five thousand talents, some two, some one. Some days even the most gifted among us feel like we only have one, and we long for ten.

But, according to the parable, if you have one talent, you don't need ten, you probably just need one more. That's enough to please the master. We might feel more inadequate than we need to. Sure, it'd be nice to feel more competent when we face spiritual decisions, but small strides are more important than great achievements.

This week we conclude our first season of Renew in the parish. Many have been able to share their spiritual journey with other members of the parish. Renew is helping us focus on a basic challenge in the Christian life, to take our few talents and to make a few talents more. If you're still feeling inadequate, take consolation in small strides. They are enough to please the master.