

FAITH MATTERS

ISSUE 16

A PUBLICATION OF AVE MARIA MUTUAL FUNDS

GROWING PEOPLE AS WE SEEK PROFITS

BY MARCELLINO D'AMBROSIO





I've seen it time and time again. Someone opts for a better-paying job, pursues an investment strategy or launches a new business. Invariably some pious person objects that this is too worldly, it will be a distraction from Church and family, that one should be satisfied with what one has.

This mindset implies that faith equals passivity, that mildness is the greatest of Christian virtues. A number of scripture texts shatter this picture. One is the image of the ideal wife in

Proverbs 31. The Blessed Virgin Mary read this passage and, as the most perfect of Israelite wives, likely modeled herself after the woman portrayed here.

Does the woman in Proverbs sit around passively, pray a lot, and wear beige? No. The first few verses poetically tell how she is more valuable than pearls, a true prize. The rest of the passage tells us why she is such a catch — she knows how to roll up her sleeves and hustle. The passage tells of her side-business ventures that



increase the family's wealth, which she shares with the poor. Of course, if she hadn't worked so shrewdly and diligently, there would be nothing to share.

Another scripture that shatters the picture of passive Christianity is the famous parable of the talents (MATT 25:14-30). The master entrusts money to his servants — different amounts according to varying abilities. Two servants realize that the master wants a return on his capital, so they invest it and each double it. The master doesn't expect to get the same sum back from these two because they started with different amounts. But they both received the exact same praise because they both gave him 100% return.

The servant of least ability, on the other hand, buried the money for fear of losing it. Instead of praising him for being conservative, the master is outraged. If you entrusted your retirement nest egg to a stockbroker and years later it hadn't grown at all, would you be

happy? The master was angry because the servant had allowed fear to paralyze him. He was so afraid of losing money that he didn't even take the very modest risk of depositing the money in

the bank (THERE WAS NO FDIC INSURANCE IN THOSE DAYS).

**THE LORD HAS
ENTRUSTED MANY
THINGS TO US:
MONEY,
NATURAL TALENTS,
SPIRITUAL GIFTS...
HE EXPECTS US
NOT JUST TO
CONSERVE THESE
THINGS BUT TO
GROW THEM ALL.**

The Lord has entrusted many things to us: money, natural talents, spiritual gifts, the truth of the gospel. He expects us not just to conserve these things but to grow them all. In the Last Supper discourse, Jesus expresses the expectation that the disciples bear much fruit. In the Parable of the Sower and the Seed, He speaks of grain that bears 30-, 60- and 100-fold. Whatever labor we are involved in — business, family, apostolic — the goal should be to develop, increase and

grow what God has given us, for His honor and glory.

One thing to keep in mind, however, when it comes to development: Jesus says, "Seek first the kingdom of God, and all the rest will be given to you" (MATT 6:33). Paul

defines the Kingdom of God as righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit (ROM 14:17). These are numbered by Paul among the fruits of the Holy Spirit (GAL 5). The increase of these markers of holiness are the first thing we are to be concerned about — in our own life and the lives of those over whom we have influence.

Those of us who are business leaders have influence over many people, most particularly our employees. The jobs we help to create provide income for them, and of course this is important. But Pope Francis is eager to point out that God intends for their work to be an arena in which they grow in a myriad of ways — personally, professionally and even spiritually. As a result, we need to be equally eager to grow our people as we are to grow our profits.

One of the greatest Catholic thinkers of the 20th century was a Swiss priest named Hans Urs von Balthasar. He points out that one of the most frequently used words in Acts of the Apostles is the Greek word *parrhesia*, meaning cheerful boldness — even in the face of danger, difficulty and opposition. Without such boldness, Christianity would have stalled in Jerusalem. It never would have made it to Antioch, Greece and Rome.

Faithfulness to God means having the courage to take bold initiatives in business, to be creative, even entrepreneurial. This always involves taking risks. Let's express our gratitude to God for all the treasures He's given us — including our employees — by daring to make them grow.

REPRINTED WITH PERMISSION FROM LEGATUS.ORG
Originally published under the title "Growing Profits, Growing People"





MARCELLINO D'AMBROSIO

Marcellino D'Ambrosio earned his Ph.D. in theology from the Catholic University of America under the guidance of the renowned Jesuit theologian, Avery Cardinal Dulles. His series on the Early Church Fathers is broadcast weekly on the Eternal Word Television Network. His book, *The Guide to the Passion*, on Mel Gibson's film, hit #6 on the New York Times best-sellers list with over a million copies sold. Dr. D'Ambrosio is a world renowned commentator on Catholic issues appearing on Fox News "Geraldo Rivera At Large" and "The O'Reilly Factor" to discuss the legacy of John Paul II. After nine years at Loyola College and the University of Dallas, Dr. D'Ambrosio left academia to direct www.CrossroadsInitiative.com, one of the world's leading Catholic websites, and to oversee Wellness Business Ventures, a company promoting physical, mental, and financial freedom. He, his wife Susan, and their five children reside near Dallas, TX.



Schwartz Investment Counsel, Inc., a registered investment adviser established in 1980, serves as investment adviser for Ave Maria Mutual Funds and invests only in securities that meet the Funds' investment and religious requirements. The returns may be lower or higher than if decisions were based solely on investment considerations. The Funds' method of security selection may or may not be successful and the Funds may underperform or outperform the stock market as a whole. All mutual funds are subject to market risk, including possible loss of principal.

Request a prospectus, which includes investment objectives, risks, fees, expenses and other information that you should read and consider carefully before investing. The prospectus can be obtained by calling 1-866-283-6274 or it can be viewed at www.avemariafunds.com.