Father O'Connor's Homily for 15 November 2026
33rd Sunday in Ordinary Time [A]

Proverbs 31: 10-13, 19-20, 30-31
1 Thessalonians 5: 1-6
Matthew 25: 14-30

This "Parable of the Talents" in today's Gospel had an immediate lesson for those who heard it for the first time. And it has a series of permanent lessons for us who hear it today.

But before we look at it, we must understand what kind of a "talent" this parable is talking about.

It did not mean an ability as in "time, **talent** and treasure."

It was not a coin.

It was a weight. One talent weighed 75 pounds, and its value depended on whether it was composed of gold or silver or copper. But no matter which metal it was made of, there was still 75 pounds of it per talent, and even one talent amounted to a great deal of monetary worth.

For the first hearers of this parable, the attention was riveted on the useless third servant. He stood for the Scribes and the Pharisees and their attitude toward the Law of God. The useless servant buried his single talent in the ground so that he might hand it back to his master exactly as it was.

In other words, the whole aim of the Scribes and the Pharisees was to keep the Law, as they understood it, intact. They sought "to build a fence around the Law," and preserve their own version of it. And about this, they were "unanimous," as Mrs. Slocombe might say.

Jesus tells us that there can be no religion without adventure. God wants access into our lives. But the minds of the Scribes and the Pharisees were closed to God. They kept God's Law buried in the ground. They would not allow God into their lives, to change them for the better. "We have always done it this way," was their theme.

But there is much more to this parable than this. What does it teach us?

1. It teaches us that God gives us differing gifts. One person received five talents, another two and another one. It is not the number of talents that matters to God, but how we use what has been given to us.

God never demands of us what we do not have. But God does demand that we use-to-the-full what we have been blessed with. We are not equal in our gifts. But we can be equal in our effort.

2. It teaches us **t**hat the reward for work well-done is our being given still more work to do. The two servants who had done well with the talents they had received were given even greater tasks and responsibilities in the work of their master.

3. It teaches us that the one who is punished is the person who will not try. The man with the one talent did not lose his talent. He simply did nothing with it. The condemnation for that man is that having one talent, he did not even bother to deposit it in the bank to gain interest, but he buried it in the ground instead.

4. At the end, the master gives the one talent to the person who already has ten. This "Parable of the Talents" teaches us that, to the person who has, still more will be given to them. And the one who has less will lose even the little they have.

If we have a gift for doing something, the more we practice, the more we will improve. And the harder we work, the bigger the task we will be able to handle. This is true of playing golf or playing the piano; of singing songs or baking pastry; of calculating figures or writing sermons.

It is the lesson of life that the only way to keep a gift is to fully use it in the service of God and in the service of our neighbors.

And now a question. Which character in this parable sounds most like you? The first five-talent servant, the second two-talent servant, or the third one-talent servant?

The third with the one talent is downright lazy. He does not even bother to put his master's money in a local bank where it at least would have earned some interest. So I delete him from my choices.

My hero in the story is the second servant, the two-talent fellow. I am projecting that he is like many of us here for Mass today. We don't reject Our Lord like the third servant did. Nor are we the "celebrity Christians," the "living saints," who seem to have an abundance of gifts, both natural and supernatural. You and I probably **s**ee ourselves as being "rather ordinary."

The second servant, the two-talent fellow, is not jealous of the first servant, the five-talent guy. He doesn't complain that he only received two talents to work with from his master. He just gets to work with what he has and does what he can.

And in the end, he receives the same reward as the first servant: they both receive their master's joy.

The two-talent servant has a message for all of us: to focus on the duties of our own state in life. To focus on doing the small things in our ordinary lives with great love and great faithfulness.

If we do, we can look forward to sharing our Master's joy alongside five-talent servants like Saint John Paul II, and Saint Mother Teresa of Calcutta, and a host of others.

And rest assured. We two-talent servants are called to the great company of God's saints too!