



HOMILY by Father Robbie Low

33rd Sunday in Ordinary Time – Year A

Use it or lose it

Readings: Proverbs 31: 10-13, 19-20, 30-31, Ps 127, 1 Thessalonians 5: 1-6, Matthew 25: 14-30

There have been many unhelpful changes made to the Laws of Rugby Union since my schooldays. The ball is regularly put into the scrum crooked without penalty. Games can have the last few minutes consumed by the winning side repeatedly crashing a few inches forward and then refusing to move the ball out of the resultant heap for as long as possible. Then there is the 'maul'. (Ladies I should explain this is like the opening moment of the parish fair when a knot of dealers claim to have seen the same bargain first). Referees are given the opportunity, especially at a maul that has ground to a halt to shout the warning to the side in possession, 'USE IT OR LOSE IT.'

This is pretty much the gist of this morning's parable from Jesus.

The parable of the Talents is sometimes seen as a thoroughgoing endorsement of venture capitalism. Indeed even the Master's advice to the unproductive servant – to put his money with the bankers - has a very modern edge (having just received a notice from my own bank that the

savings rate has gone down from 0.1 per cent to 0.01 per cent against an inflation rate of 3% this is still only a slower way of losing capital).

In reality Jesus is commending the very simple business of using what God has given us. To some people God has given an enormous range of talents. To most of us a couple and to some just the one. The fact is that the spiritual as well as the economic lesson is that we employ our capital it will grow. If we do nothing with it, it will atrophy and vanish. There is a line in Psalm 50 where the psalmist pleads with God not to take the Holy Spirit from him. That line is incorporated into the responses of the old Anglican daily office. Both are a constant reminder that we are bearers of God's gifts, stewards of His mysteries, and that if we neglect our commission we may find those gifts taken away. It is entirely possible to let the fire of love for God go out on the altar of our hearts. Use it or lose it.

The sad thing about the man with one talent is that he is unaware of another deep spiritual truth. Sometimes people with five talents get so confused with the range of possibilities that they never get started on any of them. The man with one talent doesn't have that debate. He has the one option and if he goes for it full on he is just as likely to achieve great things for God. Most of the great saints have been in that category.

The other thing to remember is that what we have been given to invest in this life is not really like cash or stocks and shares. As the small print will tell you, 'the value of these investments may go up or down'.

The value of what God gives us, fully employed in His service, will only increase. It's a surefire long term investment. You can check this out for

yourself in the simplest way. Take any opportunity to talk about the Faith and share it with others – your own faith will be stronger and more vibrant. Take any opportunity to perform a spiritual or corporal work of mercy and you will experience the mercy and the rekindling of the flame on the altar of your heart. The more full-on you are, the greater the reward, the more God will entrust to you as a faithful steward. Use those gifts in love and you will have more besides. Bury those gifts in fear and you will lose them. It is a no-brainer.

Every single child of God here has been given gifts. They are gifts of love. The saints are those who have truly 'gone for it', taken God at His Word and employed everything He has entrusted to them. They are our guides in this great matter of salvation.

A few years ago I witnessed an interview with Britain's greatest living sporting ikon, Sir Ian Botham. How, the interviewer asked Ian, had he lived his life with such passion and commitment in everything he did. Botham seemed genuinely puzzled that anyone would consider doing it any other way. 'Because', the great man replied, 'Life is not a rehearsal. You get one shot at it. Get on with it and give it all you have got.'

That's pretty much the message of Jesus in today's Gospel.

Let's use what God has given us. Use it or lose it.

There are souls to save – not least our own.