

Cardinal John O'Connor was the Archbishop of New York in the 1980's and 90's. He was once at a fundraising dinner. At the end of the meal, the Master of Ceremonies had a long list of people he wanted to thank but because he had a poor memory, he wrote some names down on note cards in case he forgot and put them in his pocket. When he forgot a name he would say, "I want to thank the communication director, um, (he would pull out a note card from his pocket and say Mr. Jones.) He did that a number of time and eventually people began to laugh each time he forgot a name and pull out one of his note cards.

Finally, he said, "And now Cardinal O'Connor will come forward for the benediction. The Cardinal began the prayer: Almighty God, we thank you for all your wonderful blessings this evening. And we do this in the name of your Son, um (and he pulled out his own little note card and said) Jesus Christ.

Jesus told his disciples this parable: "A man going on a journey called in his servants and entrusted his possessions to them. To one he gave five talents; to another, two; to a third, one, each according to his ability. Then he went away. "After a long time, the master of those servants came back and settled accounts with them. The one who had received five talents came forward bringing the additional five. He said, 'Master, you gave me five talents. See, I have made five more.' His master said to him, 'Well done, my good and faithful servant. Since you were faithful in small matters, I will give you great responsibilities. Come, share your master's joy."

In the parable Jesus reminds us that each of us have been given different talents. Sometimes I hear people say, "I really don't have any talents which will make a difference." I believe when ordinary people, use ordinary gifts with love and respect, it changes the world around us.

In the middle ages there was this architect who was curious about the attitude of his laborers. He sent a representative to the construction site to interview some of the workers.

The representative asked the first worker, "What are you doing?" The worker snapped back. "What are you blind? I'm cutting these impossible boulders with primitive tools and putting them together the way the boss tells me. I'm sweating under this blazing sun. It's back breaking work, and it's boring me to death."

The representative quickly retreated to a second worker who was doing the same task as the first worker and asked the same question, "What are you doing?"

The worker replied, "I'm shaping these boulders into usable forms, which are then assembled according to the architect's plans. It's hard work and sometimes it gets boring, but it's a job, I earn enough to support my wife and children. Things could be worse."

Finally, the representative went to a third laborer who was doing the same work as the first two and asked, "What are you doing?"

The third worker lifted his arms to the heavens and replied, "Can't you see? I'm shaping these boulders and I'm building a Cathedral; I'm creating something beautiful for God.!"

Three workers doing the same thing, one saw it as a burden, one saw it as a way of feeding his family and third worker saw it as an opportunity to do special and important for God.

Most of us will never build a Cathedral but we can create something beautiful for God by the things we do and the words we say? It has been said that our lives are a gift from God and what we do with our lives is our gift to God.

On Tuesday, I celebrated a funeral Mass for a friend of mine, Joan Haviland; who was a part of our staff at Corpus Christi where I was a Pastor.

Joan and her husband John were huge Yankee fans and their favorite player was Derek Jeter. John once said to me, "Jeter's greatness could not be realized by looking at his baseball numbers as a hitter or fielder; his importance could only really be seen by watching him play every day; it was then that you witnessed his loyalty, dedication, determination, hard work, hustle, his willingness to sacrifice. John concluded, "Jeter was a hall of famer not so much because of his talent but because of how he used ordinary, everyday, intangible things, that made him special."

When I reflect on John's words about Derek Jeter, I think about my friend, Joan Haviland. Joan's real specialness could only truly be seen when you watched her work every day. I was blessed to have seen her every day ministering to the Lord, doing ordinary things with great love and determination. Joan Haviland was like the third worker because she understood that she was creating something beautiful for God by the things she did and the words she said.

Like Joan, we are all children of God, which makes each of us important, in turn makes what we do important. It has been said, "too often we underestimate the power of a touch, a smile, a kind word, a listening ear, an honest compliment, or the smallest act of caring, all of which have a potential to turn a life around because everything we do and say is important."

This week, take some time to reflect on how you can better use the things that God has given you. Is the Lord inviting you to send a thank you note to a love one or text a word of encouragement to a friend, or call someone in need? Remember, ordinary people doing ordinary things can make and ordinary difference.

Let us pray: please pray after me: Lord Jesus, help me to understand that the talents that you have given can make a difference and that when I use those talents, I'm creating something special for you. Amen and Amen.