

Reading the Manual – Homily from 25<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time 9-22-13

I recently bought a brand new Toyota Prius car that came with not one but two manuals!! In all my years of owning cars, I can proudly say that I have never read the manual that came with the car. But I am forced to at least look through various sections of the manual since the car operates in ways unlike any car I have ever owned. I am slowly learning how much this car is capable of doing and the less I read the manual, the less my car will do. For example, I am finally learning that the car has the ability to give me directions to anywhere I wish to drive...something called a "GPS" system.

As human beings, we are no different than my Prius...there are unexplored areas of our lives: gifts, talents, desires and aspirations that we are unaware of because we have not "read the manual" of the Gospel, Church teachings, or the lives of the saints. These form a manual of living life that surface untapped geographies of the human heart. The car is designed to take us to places, involving not only our jobs but trips of adventure to unfamiliar places and cities.

Reading the manual of the Gospel and Church uncovers new territories within our hearts that compel us to want to build the kingdom of Jesus in ways that are creative and challenging. The unjust steward in the parable is not praised for his dishonesty but his ingenuity...his creative response to a difficult situation. Once he loses his job he ingratiates himself into the lives of the debtors so they will "welcome me into their homes." And he proceeds to reduce what each debtor owes the owner of the land, who then commends this dishonest servant for "acting prudently." Only in this parable of Jesus do we have a totally dishonest and cheating person being held up in approval.

Jesus is looking at us right now and seeing all the untapped potential here...right here...in you and me. In failing to "read the manual" of our faith so that the words sink in and saturate our very hearts, we are not living up to the potential given to us by God. Jesus is saying to us that if we put as much energy into building up this parish community as we do into investing our money in stock dividends and portfolios, supporting the beloved Bears, surfing the net, engaging in the latest technology...what a fantastic and vibrant community this could better become.

We have to make friends of the "children of this world" whose creativity in building up the world can be imitated. We can invest our very lives and the passion that comes with our talents into reaching out and building the world of the Kingdom...a way of life rooted in the Eucharist and prayer, as well as, the words of the Gospel. The investment of our money can help people who are poor or struggling economically; our technology of Facebook and Twitter and other forms of electronic media can be used to connect us with each other and spread the gospel.

Reading the manual of gospel and church and holy lives will take us on the greatest adventure possible: giving birth to God's Presence...the Kingdom...through our very gifts and passions. This adventure will engage us into the lives of countless numbers of people who wear the "face of God." Yes, we must become engaged in life by giving our own lives away. But we have to read the manual.