

Do Whatever He Tells You

I believe that I have shared with you that I served as principal of a school that went from Pre-K through 8th grade. When you have a variety of ages, in this case from 4-14, you encounter all sorts of interesting things. The school had a student population that went from 297-425 when I left them but not enough to support an Assistant Principal. That meant that I not only supervised staff, ordered supplies, did lunch duty and recess duty, and served as an emergency substitute teacher, but I was also the student affairs person who saw the kids who “misbehaved” in the classroom, cafeteria, or at recess.

There was an old pew, taken from somewhere, that was in the hallway outside of my office. Any student who had been sent from the classroom. One day I looked out and saw a kindergarten student sitting next to an 8th grader. You’ve known me now for three years and I think you know that I don’t mask expressions very well. Of course, I snickered (so that I wouldn’t laugh right out loud) and said to both of them, “You have no idea what this looks like.”

Now, to avoid situations like this, I had come up with some mantras that the children could repeat. I taught them a call and response such as, “The snow—*stays on the ground.*” I even taught one to the teachers as we changed the schedule, “I am patient and flexible; I am doing the best that I can.” My all-time favorite was “Do as you are told—*the first time.*” I have a very sneaky suspicion that I borrowed that one from my parents. “If you had done what I told you the first time we wouldn’t be having this conversation now, would we?”

Some things never change, do they? In today’s Gospel lesson from John, we find Jesus and his mother in a bit of a conundrum where Mary tells him about the situation and, in return, gets what we think could be a reply that would make any parent say, “Oh really...” Can you imagine the look she may flashed, not only at Jesus, but at the servants? “Do whatever He tells you.” Something tells me that they may have been too afraid not to! But where does that leave us?

“Do whatever he tells you.” It is not often that we will concentrate on that one phrase. Often times it is about the first miracle, being old water and turned into new wine, etc. But all of our reading today gives

us ways that we can respond to the command, “Do whatever he tells you.” In his letter to the Church in Corinth Paul tells us how to respond to that command and that there are many gifts but one Spirit and that the gifts should be used to answer it. Now, I borrowed these and have re-written some.

WISDOM. Aristotle described this word as striving after the ends by using the best methods. The ultimate goal of wisdom is striving to know God intimately. We can use the gift of wisdom in our quest to “know” God.

KNOWLEDGE. This gift is the "nuts and bolts" of wisdom. It is the method for using the wisdom for God's glory.

FAITH. This gift moves beyond the saving faith to the realm of "moving mountain" faith. "It is faith which turns the vision into deed." In the past few days, I have relied on faith to help grieving folks.

HEALING. This gift is the ability to treat people in a holistic fashion. God has endowed some to speak the word of faith for the physical healing of others. But be careful: This gift can be misinterpreted easily if eyes are taken away from Jesus.

MIRACULOUS POWER. We never know what can happen if we use our gifts correctly. There are many people in our church who can tell a story or two about how miracles have happened. On the other hand, there are “miracles” that we may have been involved with that we never knew about. This can happen through our interactions with others. However, I don’t discount that true miracles can happen.

PROPHECY. This gift can be translated as preaching. It is not necessarily the ability of foretelling, but "forthtelling." The preacher who lives close enough to interpret the heartbeat of God has this gift. It is to be used by the person who rebukes, warns, guides, and advises believers.

DISCERNMENT. The ability to distinguish real from false characterizes this gift. The church needs people who can distinguish between what God wants and what society deploys as real. This gift steers the church away from overindulgence, hysteria, and fanaticism.

I think the bottom line is this, given gifts from God, by the Holy Spirit, allow us to answer, much like the servants, who heard “Do

whatever he tells you” as our response to spreading the Gospel message of Jesus Christ, crucified and risen from the dead.

Have you noticed, though, that we are not always people who like to be told what to do, let alone, “Do as you are told the first time?” We are blessed by God because we are unconditionally loved by God, who knows our stubborn hearts and loves us in spite of those.

Let us take some time in the next week to listen so that, we, too may use our own gifts, whatever they may be, to “Do whatever He tells us.” Amen.