

29<sup>th</sup> Wednesday II

**EPHESIANS 3:2-12**

*Brothers and sisters:*

*You have heard of the stewardship of God's grace that was given to me for your benefit, namely, that the mystery was made known to me by revelation, as I have written briefly earlier.*

*When you read this you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to human beings in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy Apostles and prophets by the Spirit, that the Gentiles are coheirs, members of the same Body, and copartners in the promise in Christ Jesus through the Gospel.*

*Of this I became a minister by the gift of God's grace that was granted me in accord with the exercise of his power.*

*To me, the very least of all the holy ones, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the inscrutable riches of Christ, and to bring to light for all what is the plan of the mystery hidden from ages past in God who created all things, so that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the Church to the principalities and authorities in the heavens.*

*This was according to the eternal purpose that he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have boldness of speech and confidence of access through faith in him.*

**LUKE 12:39-48**

*Jesus said to his disciples:*

*"Be sure of this: if the master of the house*

*had known the hour when the thief was coming, he would not have let his house be broken into.*

*You also must be prepared, for at an hour you do not expect, the Son of Man will come."*

*Then Peter said, "Lord, is this parable meant for us or for everyone?"*

*And the Lord replied, "Who, then, is the faithful and prudent steward whom the master will put in charge of his servants to distribute the food allowance at the proper time? Blessed is that servant whom his master on arrival finds doing so.*

*Truly, I say to you, he will put him in charge of all his property. But if that servant says to himself, 'My master is delayed in coming,' and begins to beat the menservants and the maidservants, to eat and drink and get drunk, then that servant's master will come on an day and at an unknown hour and will punish the servant severely and assign him a place with the unfaithful.*

*That servant who knew his master's will but did not make preparations nor act in accord with his will shall be beaten severely; and the servant who was ignorant of his master's will but acted in a way deserving of a severe beating shall be beaten only lightly.*

*Much will be required of the person entrusted with much, and still more will be demanded of the person entrusted with more."*



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What did the master require of his steward but that he care for the other servants; that he feeds them? And that the steward is faithful in his duties whether he's being watched or not. His service to his master is by being of service to his servants.

Now, I had worked in a bureaucracy before. I worked for the City of Kalamazoo for 26 years as a public safety officer. I know all about bosses, mid-management and the workers in the fields (or the streets, that is). For the past 20 years, I've been employed in the Catholic Church, an institution known, in part, for its bureaucracy.

Many of you have worked for some and supervised others. You've seen that sometimes decisions are made on the basis of what would be of benefit to the supervisor as opposed to how well the decision aids the mission.

Decisions sometimes are made on what benefits one's own promotion.

In the Department, promotion brought higher rank, more supervisory authority and more pay.

In the Church, promotion can bring higher position, more breadth of authority and often not more pay.

But whatever organization we are talking about, too many of us have been subjected to the self-serving middle manager. We have seen those who are "solicitous up" and "abusive down", except that these terms were usually expressed more crudely (and yet more accurately).

As a sergeant, I was vulnerable to being an imprudent steward. I delivered orders received from above to those whom I supervised. I was responsible for forwarding upward the information I was given by my supervisees so that my superiors could make informed decisions.

I was vulnerable if I looked "up" too much. The more I focused on the needs of those whom I supervised, that better the mission was served.

I was fortunate that I had fairly enlightened chiefs at the City. They sent supervisors to management schools and conferences for increased professionalism. One suggestion I heard in class caught my imagination: the Reverse Performance Review. Most of us are familiar with those annual reviews we get from our bosses. In a Reverse Appraisal, the boss is evaluated by the employee.

How strange. How novel. How strange. But think about it. Especially for those “solicitous up & abusive down” folks. His boss may think the manager is all smiles and pleasant. The manager’s employees, however, know him as a son-of-a-gun. Who is in the best position to give an accurate appraisal?

Or better yet, what about the manager who isn’t sweet-talking the boss or blowing her own horn, who just concentrates about giving the support her employees need. Who is in the best position to give an accurate appraisal?

For the record, I came back from that school with just that very recommendation for our performance reviews. How strange. How strange. How strange.

However, our responsibilities exceed that which we have in our workplace. We are part of a family, a Church, a neighborhood and community. We are responsible to steward many, to care for them and to provide for them. Do I include my spouse in our decision-making? Do I listen to my children? Do I contribute time to my parish? Do I pitch in and help my neighbor? Do I engage in the public forum?

If all of those folks were given a Reversal Performance Evaluation form, how would I be appraised?

My confession is that our Father has abundantly blessed me—I’ve been entrusted with so much. Much is required of me. And yet, it need not be burdensome when we submit our lives to our Father. Jesus shares our yoke. With the Father’s delight and being shoulder to shoulder with our Savior, “*much required*” can be joy.

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