

Monsignor Dennis Sheehan
Homily Given on January 24, 2010
3rd Sunday in Ordinary Time – Liturgical Year C

The art of successful business management is a hot topic these days. The other day, I came across a title of a management book that struck me. “Discover Your Strengths”, it was called. The author (I only read the summary) has a fascinating theory. Business, he claims, wastes tons of time and money trying to get people to do things they are not really talented for. I remember a bank that wanted all its staff to be salespeople. So they started a program to train everyone in sales. The program produced a lot of hostility, a sense of frustration, and the loss of some good people. Everyone is not good at sales.

Good businesses, good churches, good organizations lead people to discover and use their strengths. I thought of all this as I read our second reading today. Paul writes to the church at Corinth. The Christian community there had apparently gotten into a divisive fight about which spiritual gifts were most important!

Paul sets this Corinth community straight. First, he tells them, all our strengths – even the ones you don’t have - come from God. God has wisely and generously given the church a whole range of different gifts. So, says Paul, successful churches help each person discover what his or her gift or gifts might be.

I think of a man I knew years ago. He had the personality of a pit bull. He was brusque and tough. I winced when I heard he had volunteered for the food pantry. But I was surprised when he turned out to be an advocate for people down and out. He lambasted the local electric company when they casually turned off power because a family was behind in payments. He became a best friend to more than one poor soul needing a voice.

My strengths are mine. But in the church, Paul insists, we’re all called to find and promote gifts that are different, people who are different.

Not everyone can sing in the choir. Maybe they’ll try religious education. If that doesn’t fly, there’s always Christian service. A real church, says Paul, will find and use gifts from just about everyone.

Let’s call this “Discover Your Gifts” Sunday. God never ceases to gift us, each and every one. We need everyone so that together we can be fully the church Jesus wants us to be.