

**This semester I am teaching a course on Catholic Thought and Culture Tuesday nights at Rockhurst University. On the first night this week I asked the students why each one was taking this course. The reason I am teaching it is because the regular teacher is on sabbatical this semester, and I am doing this as a favor for him. The students gave me a variety of reasons why they signed up. On one extreme, a student said she was thinking about getting a minor in Catholic studies. On the other extreme, another student said he is taking the course because it was available on Tuesdays, and it let him have no classes on Mondays, Fridays, Saturdays or Sundays.**

**Our motives for learning are often at extremes. There are some things we aren't particularly interested in, but we have to learn them because they are part of the job, part of the required courses, or you get married to someone who has an interest you previously knew nothing about – like football or moisturizers. Sometimes we learn things we never really wanted to learn.**

**Other times we work very hard to learn because the subject interests us. If you want to play better basketball, you learn how to run a play with your team. If you see a magician do a trick, you might say, "Show me how you did that." If you like something you eat at someone else's home, you say, "I'd like to have that recipe." There are things in life we want to learn.**

**Today's responsorial psalm is a prayer from someone who wants to learn the ways of God. Our sung response today is, "Teach me your ways, O Lord." We sing that because God's ways are mysterious, and they do not always go the way we think they should. Life can be frustrating. We think we are doing the right thing, but it doesn't always bring the right results. Or we say the wrong thing and only later figure out what we should have said. So we ask God to teach us, so that God's ways will become our ways.**

**This psalm is a little afraid that God won't answer this prayer. A good teacher wants students to learn, but not every magician will tell you how to do the trick, and not every chef will share the secret ingredients of a recipe. So the psalm is a little fearful that God will not reveal his ways. It does what we do when we want a favor from other people: we tell them how wonderful they are. "God, you are compassionate, loving, kind, good and upright, and you've been that way from of old." It's like a child who tells parents how wise and loving they are before asking them to buy a new flat screen TV for the bedroom.**

**The psalm also admits how humble we must be when we pray. It concludes with the line, "God teaches the humble his way."**

**So if we want to learn something from God, we can take a tip from Psalm 25. Tell God how wonderful he has been from the beginning of time, and ask the request in humility. After all, the point of this prayer is not to teach God the path we have in mind, but to learn the path God has in mind.**