



MIDAS TOUCH



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VOLUME 1



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**This book was written to inspire lives of faith
especially for those young people living in
modern, urban, and multi-cultural environments**

Dedicated to Cesandro Guzman-Heliz
and all the other young people who
do not get as much media attention,
yet still fall victim to gang violence
in our lower income areas of NYC.

INTRO

The King Midas, which is probably known most from Greek mythology who in his greed for wealth wished for and received the ability to make everything he touch turn into Gold. This has been referred to over the years as the "Golden Touch" or the "Midas Touch" and has been used by many to brag about their own talents or abilities.

I remember hearing this story many times as a kid and it is one that has stuck with me throughout life. However, this is not the Midas I speak of in this series of books. I use Midas merely as a point of reference to connect with people as I hope to inspire into a deeper reality.

As a Christian I recognize one King of Kings, and one Lord of Lords who is ruler of the universe. He is the Trinitarian God who very much inspires everything in my life. For me he is the only true "Midas". So as the Midas Touch used in reference is something many have used in order to brag about their skills and abilities, I am only using here as testimony of the skills and abilities of the one whom I serve and how they work in me.

Now when it comes to gold, it has been throughout history an item of material wealth, and as I have used it in the past, (as well as in this series) I am using it as a metaphor to represent the things of the highest and truest values/ideals, with human life placed above all in God's eyes.

All of this in mind, this series is a collection of everyday stories from my personal life and how they have been moments of inspiration in which I have been "touched" by my Heavenly Father through the Holy Spirit and brought ever so closer to the vision he has for me in my life. Each story is a "Golden Nugget" which Christ himself works with me to refine until my life becomes a beautiful monument which shines light or gold for all to see and enjoy.

As a Idente Missionary, I have come to know, experience, and communicate these moments expressed as "Charismatic Touches" where the Holy Spirit is the one truly "touching" me deeply and revealing from within the lessons God has for me at any given moment. By listening to his voice we are able to look beyond the physical realities and see into the deeper and higher spiritual reality.

I have chosen to share only "Midas Touches" that at

the time they occurred seemed very unpleasant to deal with, painful, or in some ways seemingly scandalous. By highlighting these stories I wish to unite with Christ not only my own pains and daily crosses, but all who read this book may be inspired by the Holy Spirit to unite those moments to Christ for our own holiness, the holiness of the church, and the holiness of the world. Like Gold which is dug from the ground and sorted through, and refined, I believe it is in the moments that seem most "dirty" that the greatest treasures are ready to be revealed.

I end this introduction with words from the New Testament found in 1 Peter 1:3-9 which states:

"Do not return evil for evil, or insult for insult; but, on the contrary, a blessing, because to this you were called, that you might inherit a blessing"

Heavenly Father,

I pray that whoever reads these stories of how you are working in my life through the most difficult of moments may receive the inspiration of the Holy Spirit with hope that you are truly always here with us and have a plan for our lives. Christ may each of the pains and trials that we endure through each and every day be united to your passion for our friends and family, and may we enjoy with them and the college of Saints the resurrection. May we receive the understanding in how to apply these lessons which you are giving us in what may seem as the most insignificant of moments. May Mother Mary, St. Joseph, and our guardian angels walk with us and protect us from any harm which may separate us from you.

I pray this all in the name of you Lord Jesus Christ, by the power of your freely offered body and blood in which you redeemed us all to bring us to true freedom in you. Amen.

WASTE LAND

(a poem)

Black stain dots scattered
across this endless path
of solid rock.

Memories of walks
taken by those before me.
Used chewing gum scattered
across this pavement.

Why is it that we are only taught to use & dispose
making a mess for future generations?

Clean this land.
Tend to these people.

Metro card at hand.
I travel with you.
Through these streets
Until New Jerusalem
Is our reality

Stay Woke

Anyone who has listened to my music would know that me and my biological birth father have been through a lot. His character is one that very intense, and though at times we have bumped heads, disagreed, and have had fall outs, I love him very much and have learned a lot from him.

As a child my father was very animate about me being aware of my surroundings. Most parents will teach their kids to look both ways before crossing the street, whereas my father would go the "extra mile" in telling me to look left, right, forward, up, down and behind me. This was not only while crossing the street but at all moments, whenever outside walking on the sidewalk, on the train, and in school.

My father having many tragic experiences in his youth, and very much needing to have "street smarts" walked about with this sense that he needed to ensure safety for himself always. This is something he worked to hand on to me... Another way of saying this is "he was always on the defense." This is probably why when I played basketball and baseball as a kid he always trained me harder defensively. *Just saying,*

if you see me on the court be ready to have a hard time scoring. Even though I'm small, I've always played with big players. If I need to foul you to stop you then I will.... Halfway joking, it has nothing to do with the story, just needed to let you know that I ball.

Unfortunately, I took this teaching for granted as a child about being aware. It actually wasn't until one afternoon coming out of school walking on Fordham plaza in the Bronx that I really would learn the importance of this lesson....

In my senior year of high school I would need to take two New York City MTA buses to go to work at the Afterschool program I worked in named "Achieve". I would walk a few blocks from my school to get on the Bx9 bus; ride it to Fordham road and I would then transfer to the Bx22 bus and take it to Castle Hill avenue. From these hour long bus rides I have a million stories of things I saw daily and conversations I eavesdropped on that after a while I thought to be normal... Welcome to the Bronx; Fast movement, loud noises, and international food smells mixed with garbage and funk all day long. It's a place where all you need is an unlimited metrocard to survive and anything else is a surplus. Get a 50 cent

icee from the "Coco, cherry, mango" man's cart, and a dollar slice and you feel like a king.... Just helping you with the setting.

This one particular Spring afternoon was a day with pretty decent weather and up until that point I didn't have any issues in school or any real challenges of the day, so I was "chilling". With my headphones on, I walked listening back to some new tracks me and my friends were going to release on a Mixtape soon to be sold out of home room and my locker. I seemed to walk without any care in the world!

It had been about 2 weeks since I had gotten a brand new Sidekick LX. I seemed to have super bad luck with them every time I got a new one, with it either getting broken or lost, etc. My last Sidekick was snatched out of my hand and smashed by my girlfriend when we had a dispute (*Again... welcome to the Bronx*) So, I was still excited about being "connected with the world" once again through this device. I was a 17 year old Latino raised on Hip Hop, and still far from being a fully practicing Catholic.

In those years before text messaging got really popular with emojis and things; or before there was

any Facebook messenger or snapchat, most of us would tell friends to "*hit us up on AIM*". Aim(Aol Instant Messenger) was the way many of us would pass time and find out information about friends, our neighborhood, or what was happening in the world through extended conversations between class and other activities. As I study the social sciences and do more and more work in Youth Ministry I am shown consistently of how my life depicts one of your average "Millennial"... I grew up where diversity was normal, and technology was still in the process of becoming daily life... In fact this whole thing was first written out on the notes of my iPhone (*but that is besides the point*).

This day, as I was about to transfer to the Bx22 bus my phone went off as someone had "hit me up on AIM"(sent me a message). Just a few steps from getting on to the bus, I reached into my pocket and slid up the screen of my sidekick to reveal what message I had been sent so that I could respond. Not being aware of my surroundings and not looking around I hadn't noticed the other teens plotting for a "come up" (robbing someone's phone). Without a moment's, I notice one guy bumped into me and as I looked up another one smacked the phone out of my hand. When it hit the floor a third picked it up quickly

and began to try and run away to past my left into the crowd on Fordham plaza. (Yeah... my luck with Sidekicks).

As I started to realize what was happening I reached for the one who took the phone and as I grabbed him another young man punched me in the right side of my face. Off balance I attempted to go after the one with phone again when I encountered another blow from my left side. Before I could react to any of it I received three other punches before they all took off.

When they were about a block away, an onlooker to the situation offered to me to call the police. Because it was Fordham plaza(the Times Square of the hood) and as busy as it was at that time of the day the cops arrived soon after. They took a report of what happened but informed me that these sorts of things happen every day in that area so it was unlikely that they would be able to recover my phone. (Who was I kidding... I knew the game, most of my friends robbed phones and resold them. Even I honestly owned a few of those re-sold phones at times because let's face it there is no other way to afford one at retail price.... moving forward.)

I left to work and got there about an hour late

explaining what happened. Lucky for me I had escaped without an injury - not even a bruise or a scratch. I contemplated this as I was given time by my supervisor to sit and recover to get my mind together after this experience which left me quite shook up. Then the words of my father in his very reprimanding voice crept into my head...

"You see? You see? I told you you need to pay attention. When you're not aware of your surroundings at all times that's what happens! That's what you get Brandon!" I washed my face in the sink feeling ashamed and critical of myself.

Fast forward...

Years later as I came to my faith and met the Identite Missionaries I would continuously be told about "attentiveness" as we spoke about the point of "recollection" which is the continuous prayer of the mind. In the charism of Father Founder Fernando Rielo it's not so much as entering into moments of prayer at certain times of our lives but as living in a state of prayer always. This doesn't mean repeating the words of the "Our Father" or other prayers over and over(although at some specific times in our day we should put aside time to say these prayers) but instead always asking yourself, "what is my Heavenly

Father asking me of this moment?" How am I being attentive to him and the needs of my brothers and sisters around me? Or am I listening to my own inclinations or what I am being told by the world? The big question of recollection was really my awareness; was I being conscious of my thoughts and decisions or just going through the motions of life? Did I see all of my time, talents, and treasures as things for the glory of God? Simply put, it is living out the words of Christ given to his apostles during his agony in the garden as he said "*Watch and pray always, that you may not undergo the test.*"
- *Matthew 26:41.*

Ironically this is as they were falling asleep...
Heh - Stay Woke

I would also be told of the story of the great king of Israel King David and his sin with Bathsheba. It goes something like this...

One day as David was walking around his big castle which was higher up in the city than everything else, he happened to walk over to the window and noticed a woman taking a bath and was attracted to her so he continued to look. He called over someone working in his Palace and asked who that woman was and

what was her name. He then instructed that they should get in contact with her and ask her to come over to the palace.

When she arrived, King David asked her to sleep with him even though he knew it was wrong outside of marriage and to make it worse she herself was married to another man. The man happened to be in King David's army fighting for him and was away in war. So, in order to cover up his sin when the woman became pregnant, David had the man brought back from battle playing a "front" and acting like he wanted to honor him. Really he called him back so that when the wife came out pregnant they could just play it off like it was not David's child but her husband's.

The man then does the unexpected and makes a public statement saying that in his fidelity to Israel he would not sleep with his wife until Israel had won the war. Since this messed up David's plan completely he then sent the husband back to war and had it ordered to put him in the front line so that he would surely be killed. When this happened, he put on a big show saying that he would take in the man's wife to honor him by taking care of her (*again just a cover up.*)

The details of this story are much more but I think we can agree that David had some pretty awful and foul actions from adultery to murder and so on. (*If you want the full story, read... 2 Samuel 11*) What was pointed out to me was that the problem did not come when he had the husband killed, or when he slept with Bathsheba but instead the lack of holiness came from a lack of recollection. When he was in the castle and saw Bathsheba from the window he was not in a state of prayer or attentive to his thoughts. If you read even more carefully, the reason he is even in the Castle is because he was being lazy as he was supposed to be at war with his people, and yet he decided to “lay back” and let them do the work. He could have definitely ran into this incident of seeing her shower and rejected temptation by not contemplating any further for the sake of holiness. He instead however chose to dwell in the thoughts and to consent to the evils as he plotted them in his mind. He may not have been able to avoid seeing her that day, but the question came in his consent. In a recollected state of prayer he could have seen and simply turned to the Heavenly Father saying *"She is attractive Lord but I offer her to you. Thank you."*

The purpose of attentiveness and recollection is not just stop from falling into sin but also to be ready to

receive the graces God is giving as he gives them. You see the Holy Spirit placed before me opportunities to consent to the grace of awareness. In the instance of my father's teaching and getting robbed for my phone on Fordham road I would have learned attentiveness but only out of fear and shame. Instead however God later used this experience to show me the importance of awareness in the spiritual life, as it has been stated elsewhere by many other sources

*“Watch your thoughts, they become words;
watch your words, they become actions;
watch your actions, they become habits;
watch your habits, they become character;
watch your character, for it becomes your destiny.”*

Simply put... **Stay woke.** Staying in a state of recollected prayer is an essential key to holiness as it not only stops you from sins of “commission” but also in sins of “omission” - helping you overcome not only mortal sins, but also venial sins(CCC 1846-1876) ... Ultimately helping you to take initiative and be diligent in your walk with Christ.

In conclusion...

"King Midas" our Lord, touched my heart and unveiled a timeless treasure; one that would be a gift for me and for others. One that would keep me safe, and one that would assist in my mission of charity. May we live recollected lives in continuous prayer that lead us to becoming the exact vision that the father has for us. Whether you live in a major city like me, or in any community our Lord is present, although many times we have been sold an idea that he is restricted to only one place or another. I have learned to pay attention and be vigilant seeking God and bringing him to others always.

Scripture to read and reflect: Matthew 25: 1-13

**Holy spirit take control of my life
so that I see all of my time, all of my talents,
and all of my treasures for the glory of God.**

May I waste none of it.

**Allow me to see all things through the eyes of faith
so that I may always walk with Christ
carrying my daily crosses
and enduring until the end.**

Amen.

PILGRIMAGE

(16 Bars)

I'm walking a pilgrimage through NYC
Letting the spirit guide me
Should I go through the back roads or the side streets
Up down left or right whoever I see
Place before the lamb into the hands of the almighty
Putting that work in - no twerk Cyrus Miley
In the hands of mercy & grace through faith I see
Through him I'm twin, no Minnesota/ Siamese
If you can't see it then you clearly need some Visine
Danger - disaster - it's Hurricane Irene
Toxic gas released after eating refried beans
Poor of spirit hooked up to I.V.'s
Tryna multiply the Pisces
Grind wheat - bake it so their lives feast
Each and every night they fight and cry "Why me?"
Make a dollar - don't walk by - pick up the penny
Some dudes throw the deuces or say "one out"
I reply three
True communal peace in love please abide in

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