

Stewardship Homily: September 18

We continue our Stewardship month here at St. Marks, and this weekend celebrates Catechetical Weekend throughout the Church, a time to renew our discipleship in Christ Jesus in the Faith Formation of our children, young and older, and adults.

Remember that Stewardship is a complete way of life, a life of accountability and responsibility, acknowledging God as Creator and Owner of all. Stewardship is responsible management of our God-given resources, not just of treasure, but equally of our time and talent. It is a recognition that all that we have and are comes as free gift from God. In gratitude we offer our gifts back to God. This enriches our relationship with God and one another. Stewardship is living out our commitment to be Christ-centered rather than self-centered and involves a conversion of the heart. Stewardship is a lifelong journey with each person at a different place on the path. Once one chooses to become a disciple of Jesus Christ, Stewardship is not an option.

Through the Sacraments, especially Baptism and Confirmation, we are also called to be stewards of God's gifts. If we are to truly live our faith then we must also live our stewardship. Faith is much more than prayer. It is also action. By living as good stewards we not only listen to God's words, but we also join in His work. Ultimately, the words of Our Lord in sacred scripture and the teaching of the Catholic Church are the guiding force behind all the work of discipleship and stewardship.

St. Mark's size is a blessing and a curse. Everything we do is on a larger scale than what I call 'normal' sized parishes. I had a program run last week to determine how many catechetical age children and youth were listed in our data base of registered parishioners. I almost cried: 8,888! As Faith Formation classes begin this week we show less than 2,500 individuals, which includes St. Mark School, Parish Faith Formation from pre-school through high school, home schooled and adults in RCIA and Adult Faith Programs. That's less than one-third.

In Marriage: "Are you prepared to accept children lovingly from God and bring them up according to the law of Christ and his Church?"

In Baptism: "Parents, you have asked to have your child/children baptized. In doing so you are accepting the responsibility of training him/her/them in the practice of the faith.

It will be your duty to bring them up to keep God's commandments as Christ taught us, by loving God and neighbor. Do you clearly understand what you are undertaking?"

An affirmative response to these questions is required for either sacrament to proceed. It affirms the Church's consistent call that parents are to be the first and best teachers in the ways of faith. Now here is why I'm putting this in the context of Stewardship: we can make room for many more children in our Faith Formation classes, we will reopen registration next week, but we are desperately in need of additional catechists, facilitators, classroom aids, group discussion leaders and hall monitors, and especially Sponsors and Companions for those adults and families seeking entry into the Catholic Church. You don't have to be a theologian. You will receive the training necessary ... and on the personal side of the equation you will grow in the understanding and practice of your faith in the process. Say YES to the call of Christ!

In the Bethany Narthex this weekend we are offering information and signing up new people in Faith Formation from children up through Adults. I emphasis adults because we are not finished when we leave the Sacrament of Confirmation, although for the majority of Catholics that sacrament marks the end of formal learning about their Faith.

As I have said the past two weeks: don't stop at sharing your treasure, give of your time and talent, for as Jesus says in Matthew's Gospel "*where your treasure is, there also will be your heart.*" Be part of the living treasure of St. Mark the Evangelist, volunteer to either help in the Faith Formation of our children and young adults or take one of the opportunities to grow in your faith by signing up for one of the Adult classes.

RITE OF BLESSING OF CATECHISTS, PARENTS, CHILDREN FOLLOWING THE HOMILY

IT INCLUDES BAPTISMAL CREED

PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL FOLLOW