

Homily for Stewardship Month-Week 2 (9/11/16)

Last week as a part of start of Stewardship Month at St. Mark the Evangelist, I talked about the over-all meaning of Stewardship as an expression of our gratitude to God through the intentional, planned, and proportionate contribution of **time, talent, and treasure** to the Church and to charity. Stewardship is based on the fact that all that we have and all that we are comes a pure gift from God. We commit ourselves to stewardship as a way of thanking God for all his blessings and returning to him a portion of what he has given us. I said that the most valuable thing you could give the parish is your time and talent. But as a fact of living in this world we cannot survive without treasure. Scripture, both Old and New Testament call for giving 10% of one's net income to support the Church and its works. Just like you, the Church must pay for utilities, insurance and taxes, care and maintenance of our facilities and employment costs for clergy and lay workers.

My plan since coming here 11 years ago was to be fiscally sound and transparent in our management of your contributions to the parish. Every year since I came here we have hired an outside, independent accounting firm to audit our financial practices, and last year a complete audit of both parish and school. *(To be honest I was hoping the auditors would find a few hundred thousand dollars that had been misplaced ... no luck there, but)* the audit proved we were properly handling and managing your money.

*When you look at the budget numbers in today's bulletin you will note that we ended the fiscal year in the black, but you will also note that the amount we were over budget was the result of the Our Faith/Our Future capital campaign and some rather generous donations to eliminate our debt. We are debt free! ... and I want us to stay that way!

Earlier this year, during Holy Week, we suffered the rage of Mother Nature in a hail storm that ruined or compromised almost every roof on every building on our campus, along with damaging many air conditioning units. Although I have always hated the amount of money we pay annually for property insurance, I was forced to admit that it was all worth it, as the damage came near to \$750,000. As a result we have new roofs on most of our buildings and new air conditioning units for many buildings. Some good came out of the bad!

Over the past four years we have thanked you for your financial support to St. Mark the Evangelist, and suggested increasing it. Statistically nationwide Catholic support for parishes has been slightly under 1% of net income. That has not changed in ten years and our own collections during Mass have stayed virtually the same over the past three years. Today I am bluntly asking you to increase your giving.

Good stewardship of treasure means we intentionally plan to donate a set percentage of our income to the church and to charity. I am asking you in the coming week to take the time to look at what you put in the Sunday collection and what that represents as a percentage of your net income. If you wish a simpler way, just increase what you currently give: if you give \$5 make it \$6, if you give \$10 make it \$12-15, if its \$20, can you make it \$25. Although our faith tradition calls us to give back 10% of our income I would be overwhelmingly grateful if you could raise your giving to 5%! As a final act of

stewardship, we should prayerfully consider leaving a portion of our assets to the Church in our wills, a legacy that lives on after we go home to God.

Let me make three more suggestions with respect to giving: first, are you teaching your children about giving? second, have you considered giving on-line ... its very simple to go to our parish webpage to make your giving electronic; and third, in considering your increased giving consider what one item using your disposable income you could do without in order to give more: one cup of coffee from Starbucks, one fast-food meal, one movie a month ... a pastor in the southern sector of our diocese suggested giving up one six-pack of beer. Please take my request to heart and help St. Mark the Evangelist in its 51st year to continue to grow in faith and outreach.