

September 4, 2016 Homily

Today we begin Stewardship month at St. Mark's. We need to understand that Stewardship is a Catholic Christian way of life based on the spiritual principles of the Old Testament and the teachings of Jesus in the Gospels. When lovingly embraced, Christian stewardship produces a spirituality that refreshes our lives with the Holy Spirit, deepens our relationship with Jesus Christ, and glorifies God the Father.

Simply stated, stewardship is an expression of gratitude to God. It reminds us that we are the administrators, not the owners, of our assets. It fills a need deep within each of us to worship God and to thank Him for the abundant blessings He has showered upon us.

Stewardship is expressing our gratitude to God through the intentional, planned, and proportionate contribution of ***time, talent, and treasure*** to the Church and to charity.

I realize that some people in our parish will try to equate the idea of stewardship with fund raising. But Stewardship's true purpose is to promote the spirituality of "seeking first the kingdom of God." The effort's first concern is not money; (*we'll address that next week*), but to speak to the heart of the individual about seeking always the will of the Father in our day-to-day living. Stewardship includes careful money administration, but stewardship is not about "fund raising."

The principles of Stewardship leap out at us from the very pages of Scripture. Starting with the story of a creation lovingly entrusted to Adam and Eve, and fulfilled in the life and mission of Christ, who desired that his mission be consummated in the ultimate act of self-giving, we too are called to be loving, giving Christians. Sacred Scripture teaches that it is only in such sacrificial loving that we find out what it means to be fully human.

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; returning to him a portion of the time, talent, and treasure he has given us:

➤ **Time:** Each week, we choose what will be done with the 168 hours God gives us each week. Good stewardship of time means we will share some of that time with God in prayer, praise and thanksgiving, and some time caring for the needs of others. It is not limited to just one hour here on Sunday.

➤ **Talent:** Every person has a flair for something... vocations and avocations. Good stewardship of talent means we identify our talents and use them to glorify God and to help others.

➤ **Treasure:** Although the amounts vary significantly, we all bring some kind of revenue into our households. Good stewardship of treasure means we intentionally plan to donate a set percentage of our income to the church and to charity. 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.

The stewardship vision is an expression of basic discipleship. If the vision is understood as a scheme for simply meeting financial needs, it loses its essence and its power and it is no longer stewardship.

Stewardship is not simply making donations or taking care of the building and grounds. It is a spirituality— a way of life—made of four parts:

- ✓ Receiving the gifts of God with gratitude
- ✓ Cultivating them responsibly
- ✓ Sharing them lovingly in justice with others
- ✓ Standing before the Lord in a spirit of accountability

It is up to you to determine how you will live out a stewardship way of life. You will not be alone, however. Thousands of fellow Catholics are traveling together with you.

Creator Spirit, come and bless with heavenly grace
the people of St. Mark the Evangelist.
You are called Paraclete, Gift of God Most High,
Spring of Life, Fire, Love and the Soul's Anointing.
You are the finger of the God's right hand.
You are the clear promise of the Father.
Give our human tongues the grace of inspired speech.
Kindle Your Light in our minds, pour Your Love into our hearts
and mercifully uphold with Your Unfailing Strength
the frailty of our human nature.
Drive our enemy far from us and give us your gift of peace.
Ever guiding us, may we be always the stewards of Your Love.
Grant that through You, Most Holy Spirit, we may know the Father and the
Son,
and our faith professing, God, three in One.
Holy Spirit of Love, teach us that stewardship is the disciple's response.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Amen