

Stewardship

"...*Your Father knows what you need before you ask him,*" are Christ's own words, as written in the gospel of St. Matthew (6:8).

I'm here to tell you how this scripture personally influenced the lives of my husband and me. How, through the actions of the Holy Spirit, God sent people into our lives to support us through a difficult time...all of which eventually led me to a Stewardship role at St. Joseph's.

My journey toward Stewardship began one year after my husband, Don was diagnosed with Lewy Body Dementia, an illness with Parkinson symptoms and progressive memory loss. On one of his better days he says to me, "I want to go to confession." My husband was never comfortable with confession, but as his wife I knew he felt a spiritual stirring within him. He had this need to see Father and I had to listen. So, I called Father Terry, explained the situation, and we set a date and time for me to bring Don to church.

Father has a "Shut-In" list, and unknown to us, we're now on his list. I learned of this one morning when Patty J. phoned, and asked, "Would you like to see Father on Friday?" Our answer: "Yes."

Don and I were not his typical homebound parishioners. I still could bring my husband to mass with me. However, since "*your Father knows what you need before you ask him,*" our wise pastor understood that with my husband's diagnosis, we would need God's prayers and graces to carry us through whatever lay ahead.

Besides saying a Mass every Thursday morning at Regency nursing home, we learned Father spends some of his Fridays, driving around town, caring for the souls of his people. He visits the sick, the homebound of his parish—those unable to attend mass...praying with them, blessing them, filling their souls with spiritual courage to deal with their various needs, just as he did with us.

When the time came, Father suggested the Homebound Eucharistic Ministry to us. Every Sunday, during the last six months of my husband's life, dedicated parishioners brought Holy Communion to us. It's hard to express in words, what an invaluable source of healing comfort they were to us, especially to me as his caregiver. Now when I pray, "*Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, only say the word and my soul shall be healed,*" I clearly understand its true meaning.

For myself, I'd never felt closer to God than in the almost-two years of Fathers' spiritual visits to our home, and during the time the Eucharistic Ministers carried the Body of Christ to us. For my husband Don, after Fathers' visits and after receiving Sunday Communion in our home, though he could not always say it in words, I noted a peaceful presence about him...it was as if he was willing to accept what God had given him.

After my husband's death the evenings and nights were hard; I was confused trying to figure out this new life I was living.

But as I had learned, God always knows what you need, for on one of these sad evenings, help arrives, unexpectedly, in the form of a phone call from Father Terry, politely asking me to serve on the Pastoral Council. I'm aware that requests for members have been in the Church Bulletin for several weeks without success. And when I remember the

Eucharistic Ministers, Father's kind and caring support to us during Don's illness, I accept his offer and feel very privileged to serve my church in whatever way I can.

For me it's a way of thanking God for the abundant blessings he has given me. For five great children and their families and their loving support during their father's illness; for my pastor and my church who stood who by us during the most difficult time of my life. For this, I will be eternally grateful.

Now through Stewardship, I can give back to God what he gave us when we needed him.

So now, my question to you is: What can you give back to God for what he gave you when you needed him?

Lillian Smith

Good morning. My name is Steve Kline. And may I start with a line you likely hear every week – welcome to St Joseph's Church.

Our family became parishioners here at St Joe's in August of 2000. At the time, we had moved to a new state, 1000 miles from our previous home, with 4 kids, a bi-racial family, with kids in middle school and just entering kindergarten. Our daughters were nearing confirmation.

My wife and I looked at other churches in the area and settled on St Joe's because it felt the most comfortable.

Twelve years later, we have another child, our daughters have earned Bachelor's degrees and two of our sons are preparing to graduate high school next year. We've all come a long way. I feel like I have grown personally and spiritually as my family grew up around me. And Stewardship is a part of that growth.

I am pursuing the journey of Stewardship because it is the next building block in my personal faith journey.

I believe I have a vocation to be a Steward of Christ because of the **Foundation built by my parents** and their parents before them. I was raised in the Protestant, United Church of Christ faith. My mom and dad were both active Stewards in our church growing up and served in various ways over the years. My mother taught Sunday School to the young and helped in the nursery during church from time to time. My father ushered and built furniture for some of the Sunday School rooms. He also served time on the Church Council. And together, they led Adult Sunday Morning Classes while my brother and sister and I were in Sunday School. They showed us the way to be part of a Church or Parish community. And now it's my turn to take the baton and serve my parish and set the example for my family in the same fashion my parents did for me.

My parents laid a foundation for our family's faith to be built. It became incredibly important as we became teenagers and my mother battled illness. We saw how the values and belief in God provided strength and support through difficult times. We also saw how a community supports each other during the good times and in the difficult ones too.

I went to college in Pittsburgh, home to many Catholic Parishes – including St Justin's on the street I called home when I was 20. My best friends in college were also Catholic and the advisor for our Fraternity was a Catholic Priest. A Priest advising a Fraternity seemed odd to me, but also it also provided a refreshing look at the world through open discussions with Father Terry.

I met my wife, Judy, while at school. And, hard to believe it's been that long, about 29 years ago, Judy and I were married in the Catholic Church. It was then that I was formally introduced to Catholicism by my new wife and her family. In preparation for marriage, we attended pre-cana classes. **Walls were being built.**

Within 5 years, our family grew with two daughters. They were baptized Catholic and we attended mass with them as much as possible. Then, after moving to a new neighborhood and parish, I began attending early (6:30 am) mass after delivering newspapers. The Catholic beliefs

and cultures were still somewhat new to me, but I enjoyed the early mornings with Father Franz...

Over the next 15 years, we moved 3 more times and adopted 3 boys. Along the way we listened to and thankfully learned from Father Birch at LaSalle and Father Paul at St Jude's in Pennsylvania - forever valuable counselors. We landed in Indiana. All three boys were baptized in the Catholic Church – here at St Joe's. **The Foundation was now beginning to convert to "load bearing."**

And now I am pursuing the journey of Stewardship to take the next steps in understanding my faith, the Catholic religion and the scriptures. I think I have been prepared. It is now my turn to give back what I have learned and set an example for my family the way my parents did for me.

I believe I have a vocation as a Steward of Christ. I am more open to new ideas and learning, more so since turning 50. And I believe I have the ability to bring others along and help them express their thoughts and beliefs without risk or ridicule. I am inspired to help others without judging or looking back. When I was younger, I was often concerned about how others judged me... Those concerns have faded. This has become a new normal for me.

My family is hesitant about this Stewardship way of life because this is out of what we have known for the past.... I don't know years. Perhaps they are still not comfortable dropping their defenses and making a commitment to serve. My time has frequently been shared outside of my household. This is a new avenue. And one of my opportunities is to bring my wife and kids along. To have them serve beside me and express their views openly and talk about topics we have not spoken about previously.

It is a refreshing moment.. when you share from your heart. I think that is what Jesus taught and showed us during his time on earth and then after. It's a sacrifice, but it's a rewarding offering. My stewardship work has brought me a new perspective.... spending time helping and working with others and serving the parish and community around me.

I realize there is a cost involved in embracing the Stewardship way of life, primarily time. But the rewards are worthwhile.

So I serve St Joe's as a Steward... in several ministries. **St Joe's provides the new building blocks of my faith journey.** And none of them are painful or intrusive..

My first step was to ask the ushers one morning several years ago.. "Do you need a hand with the collection?" It was that simple. A simple sharing of time.

As time passed, my family and I began sharing more of our gifts. My wife accepted Father Terry's invitation to become an extraordinary minister. It was a great example for me. After I was confirmed into the church 3 years ago, I joined her and now we serve together. It's not a difficult task, but a task that shares the body and blood of our Lord, Jesus Christ.

My sons are now altar servers.

We also count the offering once every two months. It gives me a chance to catch up with Noel, my counting partner, and also allows my kids to see and understand the gift of Treasure for our church by helping.

Finally, two years ago, Father Terry asked me to participate in the Pastoral Council. It has been a pathway to explore my faith further, to meet other extraordinary people of this Parish like Lillian Smith, the Heffernan's – Tom and Gladys, and John Hearne. Our role is to support St Joe's in Parish decisions – where appropriate.

Today, I've shared my Stewardship. Now I invite you. Participate in the journey – your own Stewardship journey. Share your gifts. This Parish needs your gifts.

The St Joe's Parish is indeed a community. The first step is as simple as mine was... say hello and ask ... "Do you need a hand?" Don't we all appreciate a welcome greeting from the community around you? Then introduce yourself to the neighbors in the pew.

Come join the St Joe's Parish family. The rewards will be more than you can count.

John Hearne
Extraordinary Ministry Reflection

Good day:

I appreciate the opportunity Fr. Terry has given me to speak with all of you today. My name is John Hearne and I have been a parishioner here at St. Joseph for 15 years. My wife Janet and I, along with our three children are members of this faith community. I have served on the parish pastoral council, been an Extraordinary Minister, and my wife Janet has volunteered with the food pantry. In addition, our daughter Jessica has served as an Altar Server for last several years.

With that said, I have an important question for all of you to consider. What do we all have in common right now, at this moment, in this church? Think about it. Some might answer praying, others might respond we are sitting....think about it, what do we all have in common right now? Do you want to know? You might not be ready for the answer. What we all have in common right now is our breathing. And with each breath we are one step closer to death. We will never get those breaths back. They are precious. Each and every one of them. Just like you and me. Now, I'm not trying to be the bearer of bad news...on the contrary, I'm here because I've come to a better appreciation of this precious gift which has come from God and have actively chosen to live every breath I take to its fullest.

You may be familiar with my face and those simple yet powerful words I say to you, "The Body of Christ," or "The Blood of Christ." Our encounter up here might be brief, but it is one of the most important moments in our life. In the gospel of John right before Jesus died for us, he gives a pep talk to the disciples. He tells them, "You did not choose me, no I chose you; and I commissioned you to go out and bear fruit, fruit that will last." (John 15:16) In other words, Jesus was reminding the disciples and now us that each breath we have is an opportunity to bring about his word, his life, and his love. I was chosen by God. You were chosen by God. One important choice I made was to become an Extraordinary Minister several years ago. It has given me the opportunity to more fully participate in our prayer and worship together. Looking you in the eye and offering Holy Communion - gives me the chance to use my breaths for God's purpose.

Ponder on what Jesus was telling the disciples before he died and rose for us; He wanted us to be His stewards- His runners. We have been given gifts- yes, YOU and I- all of us have them---- to use for His purpose. The vocation to stewardship looks different for each of us- but it all comes from the same place. When you dip your fingers into the holy water font and sign yourself, that moment is a reminder and symbol of the vocation each of us has been given in baptism. Most of us were baptized as infants- we probably can't recall the actual moment- but now is our chance to live it- witness to Christ- and use every breath we are given for his benefit. If not you, who? If not now, when? If not here, where? Christ has given us life...our breaths give us the choice to be His runners on a daily basis.

Coming here every Sunday to pray with my wife and 3 children is an opportunity to share with God and all of you our common breath....our baptism. It is a choice. God chose us because He loves us. Love is not so much about feelings- rather, it is a choice. We choose so many things everyday- what to wear, what to eat, which way to drive, what our work will be, what sports we

will play, etc. What about choosing to love every breath? Choose to live your baptism. Don't let it just be a past event--- it is happening right now in you just as you right now breathe without even realizing it. Don't waste a breath. There is something here at St. Joseph for you. As Fr. Terry has reminded us - this is not his parish- rather it is OUR parish. Make this your true home. From becoming an Extraordinary Minister or lector or altar server or usher or greeter, etc... But today I speak on behalf of the Extraordinary Ministers. My wife and kids will tell you I am certainly not perfect- although I'd like to think I am- and I know I'm not worthy on my own to distribute Jesus' flesh and life to you....yet even despite our sinfulness, God calls us to be part of His team, to participate...remember when the Sox won the World Series in 2005? Even if you're not a Sox fan, one still has to admit how they truly played as a team- every player knew their role- their strength and weakness...each one was needed to complete the mission. Even more so with our parish community. Every one of us is needed to complete our mission.

How do you glorify the Lord? It starts here. This place is the source of our faith – the celebration of the Eucharist. When we gather here, what we simply are doing is “giving thanks.” How do you thank God for your life, for your blessings, for your talents, and yes even for those crosses in your life? Give thanks means giving back. I'm not talking about money here, something much more profound – our time and mission. St. Joseph gives you the opportunity to live your baptism in the here and now...to make each and every breath count. This is our faith-our call...and something I'd like to think I live and instill in my family...focus on what you can become instead of what you've been. Don't worry about your past breaths. Focus on the now! My prayer and hope for each of us is that we will use those God-given breaths for His purpose. Consider my words. Pray about it. Choose. Remember, God chose US here and now to breath for Him. Value every breath given...and when you do, it will make all the difference in the world. And that's exactly our baptismal call from Christ...As He breathed on the disciples before ascending, He does the same for us---He blows life into us telling us, “Go out, breath and make a difference!” And before we “Go”, I ask you to consider how God is calling you to be his steward right here and now. You can do this. I am evidence of that- I never thought I would be an Extraordinary Minister let alone speaking in front of all you today, but God has His plan. Don't miss your part!

Thank You!!!!

Good evening. My name is Allan Burgos. Our family became member of the St. Joseph parish as soon we as moved into our first home in Dyer. That was over 12 years ago.

The opportunity to serve the Lord through the Ministry of the Eucharist came quite awhile after we moved in. While ecstatic and excited, I had doubts of whether it was indeed a calling. It took a great deal of prayer and discernment before I finally became a Eucharistic Minister. I can honestly admit that my life has turned upside down. It was a struggle between doing good, being worthy enough, and being my old self at the same time. I know now that I could not be my old self and a Eucharistic Minister at the same time. The choice was mine.

My conversion did not go unnoticed. Since then, my family has attended church-sponsored rallies at Planned Parenthood facilities to defend the life of the unborn. Recently we also attended the "Standing Up for Religious Freedom" rally. It has also become a norm for my family to pray before meals in public places like restaurants. These are just a few ways that my family and I have grown and become involved in the parish.

Slowly, the practice of meditating and praying the Holy Rosary, invoking the intercession of the Blessed Mother, became routine for our family. It is very powerful. In particular I like the slogan from the Family Rosary Crusade by Fr. Patrick Peyton: "The family that prays together stays together." This has become our family slogan too.

My personal journey to conversion was full of support. My family was with me from the very start. We became stronger and more devout together. The conversion process was slow, but sweet.

Now, a while after I have become a Eucharistic Minister, I still have mixed feelings. On one hand, I have a feeling of unworthiness knowing pretty well that I am imperfect and a sinner. On the other hand, I am always humbled that despite my weakness and sin, the Lord still calls me to minister His very flesh and blood. It is an awesome opportunity to really be "One with the Lord".

As St. Augustine has said, "We are to become what we pray". In the same way as a Eucharistic Minister "we must become what we give". I am a witness to Christ and must live as the Body of Christ that I minister.

Thank you.