

Good morning and welcome to St Joe's Church. My name is Steve Kline. You may recognize me from 8 o'clock mass or when I attended the 10 o'clock mass and helped usher.

Today, I'd like to share with you some thoughts on Stewardship and your Gifts. I know you've heard the term "Gifts" before. We all have them and we all receive them. And we all have gifts which we can share.

Last year, when Father Terry showed the Diocese of Wichita videos, the priest talked about the five phases of gifts – a gift is given, received, accepted, transformed and then shared.

We've also heard that as part of our Stewardship to the church, we should consider sharing our gifts. The gifts mentioned are those of Time, Talent and Treasure.

Well, this is a little different spin on the thought of sharing the gift of Treasure and Time...

"Good Morning, it's nice to see you!" A simple greeting. Father Terry likely greeted you when you entered the church today. And likely, you accepted and acknowledged the greeting.

When you went to your pew, you saw people you recognized, and probably repeated what Father shared with you... another good morning or "hello." So, you received a gift, acknowledged it, and shared it.

There is another group of parishioners that greets you at most masses, most often a group of fellas, standing in the back of the church. They are the ushers. These parishioners share their time participating in the gift of Treasure.

Several years ago, I came to mass in the morning and looked at the guys standing in the back and did a quick head count. Normally, you'll see four men collecting the churches Treasure after the homily. That day, there were only two or three of the regular group.

So, I asked them if they needed a hand.

And so it started. I began serving as an usher at the 10 am service and then, when we switched to the 8 am mass, I made a new group of friends. Now, whichever mass I attend, I will check with the ushers before the opening procession to make sure they have a full staff.

So this Ushering role, what's it all about? Is it hard? Awkward? What is expected of you?

Actually, it is pretty simple. And it provides you an excuse to get up and stretch your legs after the homily when everyone else is still sitting.

The usher's primary role is to collect the weekly offering. After the homily and the petitions are read, the ushers begin at the front of the church and pause in each pew to collect the weekly contributions. Each usher then places the gifts of Treasure they've received into the collection basket. The basket is brought to the front of the church for Father Terry to bless. Then the basket is taken to the back of the church and placed in bags for depositing in a secure location.

After the Eucharist, we periodically return for second collections for the Food Pantry or any other scheduled second offering. These are handled the same way, but placed in a separate bag to aid the money counters.

The ushers actually do a few other things.

We greet parishioners as they enter the church. And at the end of the service, we also distribute bulletins and any other special handouts – like palms in the Easter Season.

There are a few less noticeable roles, which occur infrequently. Once a year, we assist Father Terry counting attendees at each mass. When the pews are full, we help folks find a seat. The Easter and Christmas seasons are the masses when our parishioners fill us to capacity. If the pews are full, we'll set up folding chairs so folks have a seat.

Ushers are also asked to aid parishioners who may become ill or are not feeling well during the service. It may happen every year or two, but it's important to know that someone is there to help.

So, in a slightly different manner, my fellow ushers and I are Stewards in the Gift of the Treasure.

The next time you enter the church, consider stopping and asking the ushers if they'd like a hand today. Especially if it is an afternoon or evening mass. These masses are not staffed as regularly as others. It's a simple way to share your gifts and it's a free pass to get up and stretch in the middle of the service without creating a stir.

Now, there is another group of parishioners who serve further in the Stewardship of Treasure. It is an important one and really doesn't take as much time as you might think.

Don't you often wonder what happens to the offering once collected? What is the step between the ushers collecting the weekly offering and the publishing of last week's offering in the bulletin. It's counting.

St Joe's has a group of stewards who serve the parish in the ministry or role of money counting. Each week, a different group is assigned to gather all of the mass's weekly Treasures and tally up the total.

My wife and I work with Noel Cusick and his wife Kathy as a team. Sometimes, our daughter and teenage sons join us too. One weekend every 8-10 weeks, we meet at the church on Sunday night and gather the offerings from the masses.

The cash, checks and loose change are separated from the weekly envelopes. The Checks are then separated from the cash and loose change. Then the envelopes are opened and verified that the amount in the envelope matches the written contribution amount.

We take careful attention to separate the weekly offerings from the special second collections, the helping hands collections, the young people contributions and any other special Treasures

shared. Any Helping Hands checks above the amount of \$50 are noted, as the contributors receive a thank you note from the parish. Perhaps you've received one.

Once all of the envelopes have been opened, the amounts confirmed and the various contributions separated, we begin counting. All cash is totaled and double checked. All checks are stamped for deposit. A tape is run on a calculator to add the amounts of the checks and then double checked for accuracy.

The empty envelopes are sorted into numerical order for the Parish office staff to record the contributions. The task is made simpler by a sorting table with slots for each numbering sequence – 0-100, 100-200 and so on.

Finally, a total amount of checks and cash is recorded on a deposit slip for the Parish's bank. A different deposit slip is created for the different accounts and the entire deposit is secured for the bank.

Normally the process takes 1-2 hours. While counting, Noel and I catch up on family news and any other pertinent local happenings. He always has a few great stories.

As a substitute, I have counted with other teams. Sometimes the partners were parishioners, whom I've not met before, and it provided an easy method to meet them and get to know a little about them.

Being a money counter is not as intimidating as the title sounds. It just takes some organization and a little bit of time. For the record, we have never had to remove our shoes and socks to finish our counts.

More counters are always welcome. It has been a good opportunity for my wife and children to learn a little more about the business of the church and to work together in a stewardship effort. If we can interest more folks in counting, everyone's number of assigned Sundays will go down, which everyone will appreciate.

So, if you don't want to Usher, think about joining the money counters. You'll make some new friends and get a better understanding of the church contributions along the way. Check with me after the service or Contact the parish office if interested.

I hope that my message today shows that Stewardship and service to St Joe's through the gift of Treasure can be addressed in a more ways than you realize. These are two more ways you can exercise your stewardship to St Joe's Parish. Thank you.

My Dear brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ, I thank you for these few moments to allow me to share with you my journey as a catechist, my first step in my pursuit of stewardship at St. Joseph Parish. It all began approximately ten years ago, when, by the grace of God, I opened up my heart to the Holy Spirit. Among many things, the Holy Spirit filled me with a great desire to learn our Catholic faith, and I was given the gift of clarity and understanding regarding the Faith. It was at this time my own Children, Carly and Taylor, were enrolled in St. Joseph's Religious Education Program. I had grown very disappointed at the lack of catechesis being taught as I would weekly ask my Children what they had did in class. As I expressed my displeasure to my wife, Susan, she would challenge me, saying- why don't you teach? The thought was intriguing to me, however I just couldn't see myself as a teacher; much less an Religious Ed Teacher. I am a very introverted person with a great fear of speaking before groups of more than two people. Also, I led a very busy lifestyle and I wasn't at the point where I thought I could give up one night a week to teach, much less give up the time to prepare. I never even thought about the extra curricular activities that went along with teaching. Needless to say, my complaining continued. This changed when the Parish Bulletin began running an ad searching for potential catechist. This was the perfect opportunity for my wife to again challenge me and say- well, why don't you teach? Well, the seed which had been planted earlier, had begun to germinate. I reflected upon the new found desire for the faith I had received from the Holy Spirit, which had inspired me to study about the teachings of Jesus Christ, and I began discerning becoming a catechist. After the third week of seeing the ad, I finally succumbed to the prompting of the Spirit and called the RE office. This would be the beginning of a wonderful journey. A journey filled with

opportunities to share The Faith and the Teachings of Jesus Christ with the Children of this Parish. This fall, I will be entering my ninth year as a catechist, one year teaching sixth grade, the last seven teaching the eighth graders. Being a catechist has been awesome! Each year my knowledge of the Faith has increased and my relationship with Holy Trinity has deepened. As an Eighth grade catechist, I have the privilege and responsibility in preparing the students for Sacrament of Confirmation. This includes, not only, classroom preparation but also weekend retreats such as the Source & Summit Retreat, mini-retreats such as the ones given by Fr. Terry Deffenbough, and Generations of Faith which brings the R. E. Families together to learn and share the Faith. We also introduce to the students to different works of stewardship such as visiting the aging in Nursing Homes and preparing and serving meals at the St. Victor Soup Kitchen.

Life as a catechist has led me to many encounters with Jesus Christ. Whether in the classroom, on a retreat, or serving at the Soup Kitchen- these encounters with Jesus Christ were real, deepening my relationship with God. This has led me down many avenues; many of which I could of never imagined going down. I have grown to love the Catholic Faith and I thank God for the gift of allowing me to share this Faith with the Children of St. Joseph Parish. I encourage anyone who feels a pull or a tug to becoming a catechist to respond to that feeling- for that is the way the Holy Spirit works. Now, I know not all of us are called to be a catechist, however we are all called to use the gifts that we have been blessed with to serve our Creator Father. I encourage all of you to take time to reflect upon the gifts that God has blessed you with. Take these gifts to prayer and ask God how you can use those gifts to advance His Kingdom here in this Parish and on

this earth. The best thing that we can do is to open our hearts to the Holy Spirit more and more each day. As we learn how to do this, we'll begin to hear him speaking to our hearts. I have learned that the Holy Spirit speaks in many ways- He speaks through the silence of prayer, The Spirit speaks through our family and friends, the Spirit speaks through our Pastor and fellow parishioners and the Holy Spirit may even speak through our Parish bulletin. I have witnessed recently the life of the Holy Spirit growing within this Parish, through our Pastor Fr. Terry and through our dedicated Stewardship committee. I ask you to turn to our Heavenly Father in prayer and listen for what he is saying to you. He may lead you to places you hadn't planned to go. He may open doors to new relationships or a new ministry. Whatever God has to say to you, it is a message of grace, love and promise. May God bless you all,

Gary Blue

GOOD MORNING. MY NAME IS GLADYS HEFFERNAN AND I'M GOING TO SPEAK TO YOU ABOUT MY STEWARDSHIP AS A WAY OF LIFE. I WAS TAUGHT WHEN I WAS VERY YOUNG TO BE HELPFUL TO OTHERS WHENEVER POSSIBLE. MY PARENTS AND THE PRIEST AND NUNS CONTINUALLY PREACHED THAT EVERYTHING I AM IS THROUGH THE GRACE AND GIFTS OF GOD. I DID NOT EARN IT AND I NEEDED TO GIVE BACK BY MAKING USE OF MY GIFTS AND TALENTS.

WHEN I WAS TEN YEARS OLD, I STARTED TURNING PAGES FOR THE NUNS WHEN THEY PLAYED THE ORGAN AT MORNING MASS. SERVING OTHERS WAS EMPHASIZED IN MY CATHOLIC EDUCATION AT ST. WILLIBRORD'S.

THROUGHOUT MY LIFE I HAVE BEEN INVOLVED IN MANY MINISTRIES BUT TODAY I WILL EXPLAIN MY MINISTRY OF BRINGING JESUS IN THE EUCHARIST TO THE HOMEBOUND.

ACCORDING TO SCRIPTURE GOD SAID "WHATEVER YOU DO FOR THE LEAST OF YOUR BROTHERS, THAT YOU DO UNTO ME." I BELIEVE WE WERE ALL CHOSEN BY GOD FOR STEWARDSHIP WHEN HE GAVE US OUR PARTICULAR GIFTS. IT IS OUR JOB TO DETERMINE HOW TO USE THESE GIFTS. THROUGH THE GIFTS OF GOD I HAVE BEEN BLESSED WITH THE ABILITY TO BE OF SERVICE IN MINISTERING TO THE SICK.

I BEGAN MY UNIQUE GIFT AFTER HAVING HAD HEART SURGERY. I HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO WORK AT ST. FRANCIS HOSPITAL IN THE HEART

REHABILITATION AREA. I SERVED HEART PATIENTS BY HOOKING THEM UP TO HEART MONITORS AND TAKING BLOOD PRESSURES WHEN THEY CAME TO THE REHABILITATION CLASS. WHEN A PATIENT WAS SCHEDULED TO GO HOME AFTER SURGERY FROM THE MAIN HOSPITAL, I WAS SENT ACROSS THE STREET THROUGH THE TUNNEL TO GET THEM IN A WHEEL CHAIR AND BRING THEM TO THE CARDIAC REHAB SECTION. THIS WAS TO ENCOURAGE THEM TO PARTICIPATE WHEN THEY BECAME STRONGER. THEY ALWAYS FELT THIS WAS IMPOSSIBLE UNTIL I TOLD THEM I HAD GONE THROUGH WHAT THEY WERE EXPERIENCING. TO SEE THEIR FACES OF FIRST DISBELIEF AND THEN THE EXPRESSION OF HOPE WAS VERY REWARDING. THEY COULDN'T BELIEVE THEY WOULD BE STRONG ENOUGH TO DO WHAT I WAS DOING.

LATER ON I HAD CANCER SURGERY AND UNDERWENT 26 RADIATION TREATMENTS FOLLOWED BY 48 CHEMOTHERAPY TREATMENTS. THE HOLY SPIRIT GUIDED ME TO THE CANCER SUPPORT CENTER IN HOMEWOOD TO BECOME A VOLUNTEER, WELCOMING PEOPLE NEWLY DIAGNOSED WITH CANCER. IN THESE SESSIONS I WOULD TALK TO A PATIENT AND EXPLAIN MY OWN EXPERIENCE WITH CANCER AND ENCOURAGE THEM TO PARTICIPATE IN THE MANY OUTSTANDING PROGRAMS THAT WERE OFFERED. IT MEANS A GREAT DEAL TO PEOPLE WHEN THEY HEAR YOUR STORY AND KNOW YOU ARE STILL ALIVE AND FUNCTIONING AFTER HAVING UNDERGONE EXPERIENCES



SIMILAR TO THEIRS.

DURING THIS SAME PERIOD, MY PREVIOUS PARISH WAS INVITING PARISHONERS TO JOIN THE MINISTRY OF CARE. KNOWING HOW REWARDING THIS COULD BE, I SIGNED UP.

WHEN JOINING ST. JOSEPH'S PARISH FIVE YEARS AGO, I WAS HAPPY TO CONTINUE MY MINISTRY. I SUGGESTED MY HUSBAND JOIN ME AND HE AGREED. TO BRING JESUS IN THE EUCHARIST TO FELLOW PARISHONERS IS A GREAT PRIVILEGE, THE SHUT INS ARE VERY APPRECIATIVE OF OUR VISIT AND WE ASSURE THEM THAT WE ARE THE ONES WHO ARE GRATEFUL FOR THE OPPORTUNITY. WE HAVE MET AND CONTINUE TO MEET MANY WONDERFUL PEOPLE. MANY PEOPLE WE MINISTER TO ARE YOUNGER THAN WE ARE. WE REALIZE HOW FORTUNATE WE ARE, AND OUR PETTY ACHES AND PAINS AND PROBLEMS ARE MUCH EASIER TO TOLERATE. WE HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO RELATE TO OTHERS IN OUR OWN SPECIAL WAY TO INSTILL HOPE WHEN POSSIBLE. WE LEARN A GREAT DEAL FROM THE EXAMPLE OF OTHERS AND THEIR COURAGE TO ENDURE SUFFERING. WE ARE BLESSED FOR EVERY DAY WE ARE ABLE TO MINISTER TO OTHERS RATHER THAN HAVE OTHERS MINISTER TO US.

AT THE PRESENT TIME WE ARE SCHEDULED FOR VISITATIONS ONCE EVERY FOUR WEEKS. WE MERELY TELEPHONE THE PEOPLE BEFORE

HAND SO THEY KNOW WHEN TO EXPECT US. IF MORE PARISHONERS JOIN  
US IN THIS MINISTRY WE WILL VISIT LESS FREQUENTLY SO THE TIME  
INVOLVED IS NOT THAT GREAT.

I HOPE THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL ENCOURAGE AND NUDGE YOU TO JOIN  
THIS MOST REWARDING MINISTRY. YOU WON'T BE SORRY. THANK YOU.

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A.D. 2012

Greeting beloved of Christ,

As a fellow parisher ask you help in the service of the Lord.

As a young child I learned how to serve and the joy in doing so.

To listen and follow the call of Christ to help spread the Kingdom of God on earth.

At times you don't always feel like doing anything and would like to do other things; but the heart overrules the body.

The Holy Spirit reminds you of the Love of God and all He has done for you and the honor of being called chosen by God. Jesus isn't out done by service; He showers His blessings of peace and joy on you.

As an Extra minister of Holy Communion altar server, choir member, sacristan and environment and art committee the joy increases.

I am Connie Peschel a member of the most of my life; except went to the Convent and ten years beyond my control.

I was baptize received my  
Communion and Confirmed here

Not to sever in any ministry  
at Mass seems unnatural  
Come share the joy in the  
service of Lord.

God is ever faithful in good  
time and the ~~times~~ that are  
hardly you grow from the experience

Yours in His Love  
Connie Pechel