

The Changing Mystery of Stewardship – A Thankful Response to God's Gifts

The last time I spoke to you about my stewardship journey, I said that giving on my time, talent and treasure was a way to give back to God. I was wrong. I now know that there is nothing I can give to God except my love and devotion. I mean he is God – what does he need? I can never repay God for the gift of salvation through the sacrifice of his son Jesus. All of the gifts I have received from God must be given in service to others.

My participation in the **Stewardship Committee** and other ministries at St Joseph Church has allowed me to change my relationship with God. I turn more frequently to God in time of joy and sorrow. I have developed a deeper sense of trust in God's ways especially when I can see no clear reason for the way things happen. I am developing a deeper gratitude and appreciation for the beautiful world that we live in and for the presence of God's love in others I meet. I hope that God's love is more clearly seen in me too. All this gives me courage to accept my weakness and increase my dependence on God. I also have gained a stronger sense of peace in my life.

I do not know what God has planned for me, but I am not worried. I know he will let me know one way or the other. The Holy Spirit always helps me in my conversion process so that I am able to say "Yes" to God's call. I may not always want to say "Yes" but I am mysteriously compelled to do so. Most of my efforts are small and do not seem to matter much. I trust that God knows what he is doing. I like to think of my small works as a drop in the pond. I hope that God will see fit to make many ripples from my drop.

In all of my ministries, my small works are combined with the works of others. I am amazed at the final results. Together we serve God and our parish community to help bring about the Kingdom of God. Participating in various planning committees, decorating the church in the **Environment & Art Committee**, tallying our parish treasure as a **Money Counter**, proclaiming the word of God as a **Lector** and offering the most precious body and blood of Christ as an **Extraordinary Eucharistic** minister are ways that I provided stewardship. All of my stewardship ministries have increased and strengthened my faith conversion for God always has lessons to teach me. Through the other people that also participate in stewardship ministry, I find that their faith work has made ripples in me – I always learn about more our faith through these holy people.

The conversion of my heart through service has allowed me to give more freely of my time, talent and treasure. When I give of my treasure – and I do often still struggle with this - I try not to think of a faceless entity but I try to specifically imagine who I may be helping. My weekly contribution I know helps support this building and the wonderful staff who manage it. What would we do without Fr. Terry, Patty in our office and our dedicated maintenance men Ron and Jim who keep everything clean and in good repair? Many parish communities are consolidating or are required to share priests. My Sunday contribution keeps our parish financially viable. Just think in other countries, many people are not free to openly worship let alone have a beautiful building to come together to give thanks to God. When giving to the **St Joseph Helping Hands Food Pantry** I see an elderly person with medical expenses or a family with hungry children who have just lost a job and needs help making ends meet. If someone from our immediate family was hungry would we not offer to cloth and feed them and their children? All of the world's people are our family in Christ. My generosity increases as my faith and trust in God increases. I trust he will always provide for my needs in ways I cannot imagine.

Is your life missing something or do you feel isolated or unfulfilled? I will ask that you keep an open mind when you hear the call of stewardship. When you say to yourself "I should do that sometime" jump on the moment and really try it just once. We all schedule all of our various appointments like going to the doctor, getting our hair cut, watching football so why not schedule an appointment for stewardship? OK this is a shameless plug – the Environment & Art Committee will be decorating the church for Christmas on Saturday, December 20th and we could really use your help – so mark your calendar now!

I invite you to experience God's love and joy through stewardship in a very personal way by serving in any of our parish ministries. Bring the love of Christ's presence that is in each and every one of you to others so that the light of Christ will have the ripple effect that God intended. Do not let God's light die within you! Let others experience the love of God that is in your heart.