

Stewardship

Whenever I drive past the church, there is a sign outside that says, "Stewardship is a way of life. So, exactly what does this mean?"

To me, Stewardship is service. Sharing a portion of the time and talent, the abilities and gifts of treasure God has given me, in serving others, not myself. It means living the Christian values of my catholic faith: of loving God and neighbor; in reaching out to others with loving compassion, kindness, generosity and respect.

About two years ago, when I last spoke to you regarding Stewardship, my life had undergone a major transition, of being a wife to living alone. However, serving in several ministries at St. Joseph helped me accept this new life I was living. Proving to me, that God is always with me, even when I'm lost.

Since then, I've found that stewardship is the gift that keeps on giving, for it has enhanced my faith journey in positive ways.

Stewardship has presented me with a talent I was not aware of: teaching catechism to the youngest of our parish at Sunday morning mass. Actually, teaching was the farthest from my mind. I had been a nurse not a teacher. But, having raised 5 little mustard seeds in the faith, gave me confidence to do the job. Along the way, these children in their youthful innocence have enlivened the joys of my faith. There are wintry Sunday mornings I'd rather be at my kitchen counter with a hot cup of coffee and the Chicago Tribune, but I am here. Because as Pope Francis recently said, the best gift we can give our children is our faith. And I believe that.

Stewardship has given me the privilege of serving mass, what was denied me as young girl, but as a grandmother I'm allowed to do. Now, I am honored to be of service to Him: preparing the altar cloth for celebration of His presence, pouring the water into the chalice after communion, has been a spiritually powerful Saturday evening experience for me.

Tomorrow, I will begin the Advent Season by offering Communion to the Homebound of our parish. Because generous parishioners shared their time and spiritual talent, my late husband Don and I were recipients of this grace-filled ministry that supported us through difficult times, and I felt it important in giving to others, what was given us. So, I'm so very pleased to be part of a ministry and a parish, that when one cannot come to church, the church will come to you. That it will stand by you, in time of need; that it will come to you in gladness, sharing with you the gift of the Holy Eucharist. These long-devoted parishioners, unable to attend mass, still a part of our parish family, humble me with their grateful thank you's. As I leave their homes, I am sincerely thankful to have an active life and get to mass. Even so, I realize that someday I will be like them, a thought that causes me discomfort, but until that time they will continue to inspire me with their God-given faith.

It is through Stewardship I thank God for the precious and invaluable gifts I have received. He who comes to me with joy in the Holy Eucharist and has given me all I have. Stewardship has deepened my relationship with God, to live my faith more fully, to appreciate what I have versus what I don't have.

In closing, during the Advent season, I'm encouraging you, to rethink the Time, Talent and Treasure, given to the parish. If anyone of you, a mother, father or grown child want the spiritual experience of serving mass, I invite you to share in this serving ministry. If you desire a profound spiritual experience of carrying on your person, the Body of Christ, to the Homebound of our parish, then I invite you to take part in this joyful ministry. In doing so, remember the message Christ gave to his followers, "Whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did it for me." For when you and I serve one of God's people, we serve Him.

Lillian Smith

