

As a young man, I attended both Catholic grammar and high schools. I also served as an altar boy for many years. Later I married, had children and had them baptized. I watched family and friends leave the church, complaining about this or that, there were many reasons. For years, I went through the motions and attended mass on a regular basis but it was more symbolic than substance. The desire for a closer relationship to Jesus Christ had always been there but never materialized.

One night after religious education ended for my youngest son, I ran into Father Terry on the way out and asked if our church offered a bible study because I lacked clarity and understanding on many church issues. He let me know the stewardship group would be starting up soon, to consider it. I had no idea what to expect but after speaking with my wife, we accepted with open minds and hearts.

I'd like to explain how my Catholic faith and Love of Jesus Christ has developed and grown over the past 18 months.

I now set time aside each day to simply talk to God, reflect and thank him for all he has provided. I have a greater appreciation of my surrounding which in turn has enriched my life. I find myself stopping to say "thanks God" for the smallest – simplest things. I realize all that is good in my life - comes from God. There's now truly a connection to the Holy Spirit in most of my daily activities.

I've also put emphasis on "having FAITH" where my family and finances are concerned. This was a difficult idea to grasp at first because like most families – we live pay check to paycheck. My kids get sick. Things break. Life is busy and expensive. We have money issues like most but there's been a huge disparity between what's needed and what's wanted. God has blessed us with more than sufficient income – I realize this now. As proclaimed in the Gospel of Luke "Much will be required of the person entrusted with much and still more will be demanded of the person entrusted with more." Through continued faith and increasing our Sunday offering, I believe God will continue to provide and bless us.

My prayer life has changed too. Before Stewardship, I prayed for things, sometime material or perhaps particular outcomes to problems. "God if I only had this or that my life, my life would be better, please provide it to me somehow". I was wrong. I pray now that "God's will be done" where my needs and those I pray for are concerned. God's given me all I need to be happy – right now. I don't need anything else but my relationship with Jesus Christ and guidance from the Holy Spirit.

Finally, during one stewardship session we completed a gift inventory. The gift inventory was a lengthy list of questions I answered which helped out line gifts that perhaps I had or didn't realize I had. One highlighted area for me was teaching. This fall I plan to continue my conversion and use my gifts to serve as a substitute Catechist. I've been called to serve and donate my time to share my faith with God's community. I trust God will help me succeed.

I encourage all of you to take time to reflect and open your hearts to God. Think about gifts you've been given and pray for guidance.