

Once a year, we have an opportunity to stop and reflect on the many blessings God has given us and to reflect prayerfully on our stewardship of those gifts. It is an important and significant event in our parish life, and I invite each of you to reflect on the stewardship of your time, talent and treasure today; bcs Stewardship is a *Christian way of life!* St. Peter reminds us, “*As each one has received a gift, use it to serve one another as good stewards of God’s varied graces.*” (1 Pt 4:10) Throughout Holy Scripture, there are constant reminders that we are called to be good stewards of all of God’s gifts.

In our first reading today -Mac., we find the great courage with which the seven brothers with their mother, giving back to God the gift of their own life. Before their martyrdom, we hear they spoke the noble words: “It was from heaven that we received everything”. In the 2<sup>nd</sup> reading, Paul is reminding us, of “God who has loved us and blessed us with everlasting gifts through his grace”!

This is true for us. On our own, we have nothing, but with the Lord, we are blessed. EVERYTHING that we are and we have: our time, our talents, and our treasures...every blessing is a gift from God. Everything we have is on loan to us from God and we are responsible for caring for it...for being good stewards of the gifts, God has given us.

First, we begin with our TIME. I am breathing& my heart is beating; God gives me the gift of life and the gift of time. How do I use my time to give back to Him? Jesus desires an intimate relationship with us, but WE have to make the time for it in our lives. Do I make it a priority, do I have a place in my schedule set aside, to spend enough time with Jesus ?; Sunday Mass, daily prayer, spiritual reading, going to Adoration- all that will allow my relationship with Jesus to grow? B& S, Our lives are ridiculously busy, we know. But I guarantee that if you plan to spend any “unexpected” free time with the Lord, or you make spending time with Jesus, *a non-negotiable part of your day*, he will overwhelm you with the gift of his love, that helps you grow in relationship with him.

Reflecting on our TALENTS: All that *I am* is a gift from God...my intellect, my health, my voice, my ability to have relationships with others. How do I use what I have to build up his kingdom? Do I volunteer to be in some ministry? SBC has MANY hands-on opportunities to be of service to the Church and to members of our community, who are in need in some way: feeding the hungry, parish ministries, SVDP ministry..

Finally, we look to our treasure. All of our material and financial resources are blessings from God. While our worldly blessings and success are the result of our hard work and efforts, ultimately it is a gift from God. Without life, without our talents, without health, without God, we would have nothing. God is the ultimate source of all of our blessings. We are called to use our financial resources to help others. There may be a temptation to give only from our excess, from the surplus, but we are called to give back to God first...to make it a priority.

B& S, how stewardship can make a difference in your life?

1. Our focus of giving should be primarily on our relationship with God. 2. the difference is in the motivation for giving. Stewardship is an integral part of our spiritual life and we give because we are grateful to God for what He has given us. We give freely because we want to, not because we have to. 3. the difference is in the result of the giving. As we practice stewardship, we find we grow spiritually and that our faith is deepened and nourished. In fact, we discover that our lives are changed for the better.

This week we have mailed all parishioners a stewardship letter, inviting you to prayerfully consider on your financial stewardship to our parish and to make a personal commitment for this year. Please take a little time to read the letter and info we have sent you and to listen carefully to what your fellow parishioners have to say about their joy in sharing their gifts.

Most importantly, As I reflect on the many ways that you all serve in our parish community by giving of your time and talents, as I reflect on the generosity of this parish by giving financially your treasures, my only response is one of gratitude! My heartfelt THANK YOU. I can't say thank you enough to each of you. We are a very generous parish in the Archdiocese. SBC is known for its generosity. I am personally grateful for your continued faithfulness and generosity!

As the disciples learned, every good blessing comes from God. I invite you this week to spend some time praying and reflecting on where God is inviting you to spend more time with him to get to know him better, to put yourself at the service of the church and others, to give more of your treasure to be used in service of the gospel mission. As we celebrate the Eucharist today, we thank God for all that he has given us, and we pray for the grace to be good stewards.

Fr. James Chitteth cfic