

Jesus is Light of the world. "To be a steward is not an option"(30th Sunday)

God delivers his people, the remnant of Israel. Bartimaeus, the blind man receives sight. As we reflect on Jesus, 'the light of the world' through the miraculous healing of Bartimaeus - sight to the blind, we also share our thoughts on what ways we can continue to be that light -light of Christ to this world, by being faithful stewards of our gifts.

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. Stewardship could seem to be an optional discipline, like choosing to be vegetarian. But stewardship really isn't optional for a follower of Christ. Jesus himself, more than once talked about being a 'good steward'. The letters of Paul and Peter talk about this too. In fact, 'Stewardship' is a New Testament word.

We speak of ourselves as 'children of God'. Is that a metaphor? Are we simply saying that God treats us like sons and daughters? If I truly am a daughter or son of God - the Father, then all the people on earth are my brothers and sisters. If I truly am a daughter or son of God, then everything I have comes from God. If I truly am a daughter or son of God, the god and I are in this together. I am a partner in the continuing work of co-creation and redemption of this world. That's why, stewardship is not optional for a follower of Christ. Let's be clear: Stewardship is not just about raising money. It's the way of *life* of a Christian.

In the first letter of St. Peter, he reminds us, "As each one has received a gift, use it to serve one another as good stewards of God's varied grace." Throughout Holy Scripture, there are constant reminders that we are called to be stewards of all of God's gifts, our time, our talents, our financial resources, our communities, the earth we live, and our relationships with family and all those around us. We must truly recognize that everything belongs to God, and we are stewards or caretakers who are expected to use the gifts in service to one another. Stewardship effort is an important and significant event in our parish life. It is one that will change our lives, and which will change the life of our parish.

As we approach stewardship Sunday, you will be asked to make a specific commitment to our parish, of your time, your talent, and your treasure. We ask for your commitment in writing for each of these important elements of stewardship. Two weeks ago, you heard from a young couple from our parish about how they practice stewardship. In two weeks, you will hear from another parishioner. We are thankful to them for their acts of stewardship in standing before our parish and sharing with us how stewardship is positively impacting their lives.

For many Catholics, it is a misunderstood concept. This is one of the reasons why you will be receiving a mailing this week. Please read our parish annual report, ministry guide and appeal when they arrive at your home. Stewardship is based on the spiritual principles of the teachings of Christ. It is a way of thanking God for all His blessings by returning a portion of the Time, Talent, and Treasure gifted to us. We are asking all of you to spend some time praying and thinking about the true meaning of stewardship and how it can impact your life.

We are asked to look at stewardship as the joyful return to God of the first fruits of what He has bestowed upon us. In Stewardship of Time, Talent, and Treasure we give back to God by giving of our financial resources to our Church, to the archdiocese, and to charitable organizations in the community. Remember, in sharing our gifts and blessings, the focus is primarily on God and our relationship with Him.

Secondly, the difference is in the motivation for giving. Know that Stewardship is an integral part of our spiritual life and we give because we are grateful to God for what He has given us. Thirdly, as we practice stewardship, we find we grow spiritually and that our faith is deepened and nourished. In fact, we find that our lives are changed for the better. Please take some time to read the annual report and ministry guide we are sending you and to listen carefully to what your fellow parishioners have to say about their commitments from the pulpit. Then, I hope you will prayerfully consider to your personal commitment to God and our community. Amen