

Letter from Father Chris

Stewardship – a spirituality of gratitude and trust

Stewardship is first and foremost a spirituality. It is a way of connecting with God and connecting with our faith. Stewardship has to do with how we view ourselves and all of God's creation. Stewardship has to do with **trust** in God, and **gratitude** for all we have received from God.



In the opening Chapter of Genesis, God creates everything out of a “formless wasteland.” On the 6th day, God created “man in his image; ... male and female he created them.” One of the first things God says to Adam and Eve is “have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, and all the living things that move on the earth ...” This dominion assumes a respect for what God has just made. In other words humanity is given creation to use, but not to waste. Another way to translate Gen 1:29 would be: “I’ve just created everything so you be **good stewards** of what I have given you.”

Adam and Eve get into trouble in the next 2 chapters of Genesis. They eat of the fruit from the one tree that God tells them not to eat. They do this so that they would be “like God.” Just as the serpent promised, after eating the forbidden fruit, their eyes were opened and now they knew both good and evil. What the serpent did not tell them was that Adam and Eve only knew “good” before they ate the forbidden fruit, because that’s what God wanted for them. Their self-centeredness got the best of them. They forgot that they weren’t just made for themselves. They forgot that they were not just made **by God**; they were made **for God**.

The creation story is one of the best examples of the value of stewardship as a spirituality. If Adam and Eve had **trusted** in what God had said – if Adam and Eve had spent their time in **gratitude** for what God had given them (instead of looking for more), they and we would still be in the garden of paradise.

True gratitude cannot come without trust. Trust in God requires us to recognize that everything we have comes from God. As in the Garden of Eden, trust requires us to recognize that God is in charge of our lives. Trust exhibits itself when we give control of our lives over to God. When we think that we are in control, we have a false belief that the world is created in our image and somehow we are in charge. This means that while we make the best choices possible in order to build the Kingdom of God and to be good disciples, God is ultimately in control of our lives and our world.

Gratitude flows from trust. Once we recognize that God is in charge and knows the number of hairs on our heads, then gratitude follows. In other words, gratitude requires us to look at the gifts we have, not what we don’t have.

God’s greatest gifts to us include our relationships with God, with family and with friends. People are more important than things. When we come to this awareness, we also recognize that God has given us what we could not have gotten for ourselves. God has put people in our lives to love and to love us. This reality helps us to be detached from our possessions and puts things in their proper perspective. When we **trust** in God and when we are **grateful** for all that God has given us, there can only be one response: **We share**. Tithing is not a four letter word. Tithing is really a way of showing our trust in God and gratitude for the great gifts that God has given us. Tithing also nurtures that trust and gratitude. Tithing means that we are willing to give a percentage of what we’ve been given back to God. Tithing includes spending time in prayer. Tithing includes sharing our God-given talents with those who need it. Tithing also includes sharing our treasure with God’s Church and with those who are most vulnerable.

We do not talk about stewardship because the church needs to balance a budget (although running in the black is always a good practice). Rather stewardship is really about authentic Christian spirituality. Stewardship is about our need to give, due to our trust in God, and our gratitude for the great gifts showered upon us. “For where your treasure [time, talent] are, there your heart will be” (Mt 6:21)