

RENEWAL: LIVING A JOYFUL LIFE

SAINT ANNE - SAINT CATHERINE Faith Community

A Letter From Our Pastor

Dear Parishioners,

I wish you the blessings of hope, patience, strength and peace in these unprecedented times. I recently heard about a story which reflects how the Spirituality of Stewardship is all about gratitude. An elderly man was diagnosed with COVID-19. He spent months in the hospital on a ventilator which enabled him to breathe to stay alive. Fortunately for him and his family, he recovered due to the extraordinary care of the medical staff. Soon after his discharge, he reviewed his itemized hospital bills. His ventilator expense alone was \$69,000 which was not covered by his medical insurance. Following up, he made an appointment to see the billing personnel at the hospital to discuss the bill. He raised the issue with the hospital personnel regarding the ventilator expense. He began to cry. The people in the room became very upset themselves with the man's emotional response and attempted to assure the elderly man that the hospital would work out a reasonable payment schedule. The elderly gentleman thanked them for their understanding and kindness and then said "I am not worried about paying the \$69,000 ventilator bill. I am upset with myself. You see, I have been breathing God's fresh air free of charge



all of my life and never thanked God for that gift. I never realized what a gift I possessed until I was infected with COVID-19 and needed the use of a ventilator to breathe."

What I love about this simple story is how the elderly gentleman's experience transformed his heart and mind. He realized how all that he had were gifts from God that he had taken for granted. When we are graced with awareness of all of our blessings, it fosters a profound sense of gratitude. That naturally leads us

to put into action our gratitude by sharing our gifts of time, talent and financial resources with others.

I have included in this newsletter an adapted article ("The Joy of Sharing") by a wonderful spiritual writer on stewardship. Please, please take the time to ponder the wonderful explanation of what stewardship truly is.

God love and thank you for your generous hearts!

Fr. Peter

Fr. Peter Quinn, Pastor

Witness Talk: Jeff Gottschalk

During the 2020 Stewardship Renewal, parishioner Jeff Gottschalk, shared his witness story with our Faith Community. Jeff exemplifies living a life based on the principles of stewardship. It isn't easy to share your personal spiritual journey publicly, and we are thankful for his willingness to give the talk – and to let us reprint it here.

Good morning, I'm Jeff Gottschalk, and after my family and I rejoined St. Catherine's in 2007, I became involved in ministries as an usher/greeter at the 11:15 Mass. I also did other things like joining the Men's Group for a while, teaching faith formation a few times, serving as a Eucharistic Minister, a Lector. I've been a member of Saint Vincent de Paul, as well as the pastoral council and most recently, our finance and administration council. I've even lived Cursillo since then and have led Lenten faith sharing groups and attended Ultreyas. So, you could say I've done a little of this, and a little of that. In all of these cases I was encouraged to try something new. I try to keep an open mind and give it a go, and I have always learned something new, met great people, helped out in some way, and have really grown spiritually as a result. I am truly blessed.

For me, stewardship results from humility and generosity of spirit.

Humility is important, because despite what I think I have accomplished in my life, I really haven't accomplished anything by myself – it's always been with the help of God and with others. Whatever I have in my life, it isn't really mine. In fact, **everything in my life is a beautiful gift from God**, and I need to always remember that. Generosity of spirit is something the late Fr. John Sassani taught me during spiritual direction on my Cursillo weekend. It's about wanting to **take the gifts God has given me and using them to give gifts to others**, going above and beyond for my neighbor, and putting them ahead of me, like Christ did when he washed the feet of his disciples.

I don't have enough time to tell you how I started living a stewardship way of life or the many ways I am trying hard to do so. But, I can tell you it started as an usher. My wife insists I confess to you. When Fr. David White asked me to be an usher, I accepted because it would give me an excuse to use with my family for why we needed to be at Mass early – which meant we actually had a chance of getting to Mass on time for once!

But you know, I grew to really like simply greeting and holding the door for folks, being hospitable to them and making them feel at home here at Mass – because this IS home. I have seen and met so many wonderful people as an usher.



Now speaking of things like ushering makes me think of the weekly offertory collection. When I was little, I loved to put my parent's money in the collection basket. It was my favorite part of Mass back then. As a parent, I loved watching my kids when they were little react the same way, and helping them put the money in the envelopes, etc. They had so much FUN doing that and they all had big smiles on their faces. Do you all know what I'm talking about?

So, if giving treasure can be so much fun, why, when I became an adult, did I suddenly feel put upon to give money at the offertory? I sure was not smiling about putting my hard-earned money in that basket. I tried to put in the bare minimum or the best I could do with what I had on me at the time.

And yet, I was not putting a lot of money in the basket. In fact, I think I was putting the same amount in that my father used to put in when I was a kid. Except that back then that was worth more than it was when I was doing so. One day I realized that what I was giving was not adequate or appropriate. I recalled a friend from college who was Mormon and gave 10% of what they made to their church. And I thought, wow, I am not even giving 1% let alone 10%.



STEWARDS

IN ALL SEASONS

Stewardship in the Time of Coronavirus

When the country shut down in March due to the spread of the Coronavirus, we all struggled to continue our lives under difficult circumstances. It was amazing to see how so many people stepped up to continue living their life of Stewardship...in prayer, service and sharing.

As we were in the middle of Lent at the time of the shutdown, some of the Lenten faith sharing groups continued to meet via Zoom. Our Prayer Chain continued throughout, and no doubt was a great comfort to all who called upon them. Although we could not attend Mass in person, our priests and the staff started taping the Masses and offering a mid-week message of updates and encouragement. The Easter Vigil Mass was especially touching with Rita's Baptism, Confirmation and First Eucharist all caught on video. As the weeks dragged on it was so reassuring to "attend" Mass if even in our pajamas or with a cup of coffee! We were even treated to a Zoom Adoration session and how wonderful was it to have access to Bishop Barron's Word on Fire videos during this time of isolation.

Our Faith Community stepped up and continued to support our parishes financially through Online Giving and mailing in their weekly contributions. Some of the rosary groups started meeting on Zoom, recording their sessions and including them with the weekly Mass emails. A group of parishioners started calling parishioners in April to check in on them and see how they were holding up. Neighbors checked in on neighbors to be sure they were ok, helping by doing the grocery shopping, picking up prescriptions, making meals and just being another person to talk with....from a distance. Backyard lunches, happy hours and visits became the norm as the weather warmed up. As we were allowed to gather in small groups, the staff arranged for outdoor adoration and gathering to say the rosary together on church grounds.

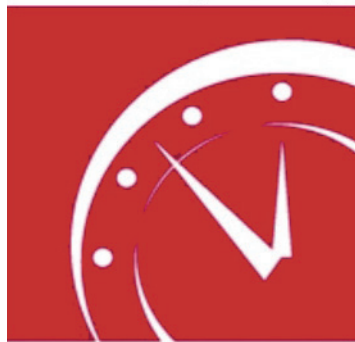
The Reopening committee was formed in May and began working on how to reopen once we were allowed and felt it was safe to gather together. Keeping up with the requirements set out by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and the Archdiocese of Boston kept the committee on their toes. With Confirmation and

First Communion canceled in the spring it was most important to get those events back on the calendar. The Reopening Committee assisted the Faith Formation staff with the Confirmation Mass in July and the First Communion Masses in September. The Committee also organized several outdoor Masses in August and September. It was a wonderful feeling to see everyone in person and celebrate Mass together again. The joy of being able to receive the Eucharist again was overwhelming. We've now moved indoors and been able to gather for daily Mass and weekend Mass at both St. Catherine's and St. Anne's.

This pandemic made us all grateful for our many blessings from God and our Faith Community rose to the challenge to share those blessings with others. A life of Stewardship is a joyful life in prayer, service and sharing, even and maybe especially in times of the Coronavirus.

Stewardship

All things are possible with God



Devote Time



Share Talent



Give Treasure



A way of life

Called to Generosity: *What it means to respond*

How generous is generous?

"Always be joyful; pray constantly; and for all things give thanks; this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus."
1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

As a child, I often wondered about my mother's generosity. We had little money, and my parents worked hard. Yet my mother always seemed to give her time and attention to people. I just didn't get it! Now, I understand that my mother knew the generosity of others in many ways through the years. She was a woman of deep faith whose thankfulness for God's love called from her a tangible response. As her gratitude grew, so did her generosity. Now, I am grateful for the lessons I learned from my mother, lessons of generous and selfless sharing.

What does generosity have to do with our lives in faith? We might be thinking, "But isn't it enough to go to Mass on Sunday and put a little money in the collection, or give to a local charity?" How generous is generous, after all? This is where generosity is connected to gratitude: as we become more mindful of the many ways we are blessed with life, love, resources and more, we also face the need to be more generous. Generosity is the fitting response to God's overwhelming love!

The challenge: We may not like to admit it, but we are surrounded by a culture that values "me first." Even when we have decided to grow as a good steward, we will be tempted to think, "But I earned the money -- it's mine to do with what I want," or "Enough is enough -- I need more time for myself!" And such thoughts or comments will find plenty of reinforcement from the world around us. We will have to be committed to continue on our path to a more generous lifestyle. Still, when we really give this thought, we realize that each of us has a need to give selflessly. It is in such giving that we find meaning, purpose, and holiness.

Let's get practical. Growing in a generous spirit is not something that will happen overnight. It is much more likely to take place one step, one decision to share after another. We will also find many more opportunities for generosity once we begin looking for them. We will consider practical steps toward generosity on the next page.

Let's be spiritual. "Christian stewards respond in a particular way to the call to be a disciple. Stewardship has the power to shape and mold our understanding of our lives and the way in which we live." (*Stewardship A Disciples Response*, 42) Just as generosity is tied to gratitude, it is also tied to trusting God in all things. Growing in trust is an intersecting point where faith and life meet. We learn to trust that God who has given us every good gift will be with us in all things. We grow in a desire to give generously in response to such great blessings. This life of trust, gratitude and

generosity is a way of living as a follower of Jesus. Jesus, who gave attention to those who were sick and suffering, the lonely, and those in need of spiritual companionship; Jesus, who even when tired and in need of time for himself "stopped everything" to teach those who came seeking him; Jesus, whose very life was poured out in sacrifice for our sake and for that of the whole world. How can we not respond by giving of ourselves, our time and attention, our talents and resources? To grow in generosity is to see ourselves as a reflection of Christ, called to share Christ's presence with others, as we surely are!



to God's love by Leisa Anslinger

Practical Ways to Grow in Generosity

Generous is as generous does. Generosity begins with a desire that grows into an act: a desire to give in response to what one has been given; an act of giving that expresses one's gratitude and trust. Here are some practical ideas for ways to grow in generosity:

Give first to God: Give God the first fruits of your time in prayer and by making and fulfilling a commitment to spend your time wisely and willingly with your family, by fulfilling your work responsibilities, and by serving in your parish and community; give God the first fruits of your financial resources by making and fulfilling a pledge of financial stewardship to your parish as well as other organizations.

Give time, prayer, attention: Generosity in time and attention to God and others will transform us; begin and end each day in conversation with God; pray for those who have asked for your prayers, and for those whose needs are known only to God; give your attention to someone who is alone; find a need that your time and talent can fill, and fill it!

Give financially or materially: Jesus spoke often about money, not because he placed an over-emphasis on financial wealth, but because he understood how money can take hold of us. Search your heart about this. What material resources do you have that another may need? What financial resources can you share, even beyond what may seem comfortable? Make a commitment to stretch a bit. If you truly do not have financial resources to share, find a way to be generous with your time; you will likely find that you don't miss that money or time as much as you might expect, and that giving in such a way is satisfying.

Give sacrificially: The mission we share in Jesus' name is that of bringing the Good News to the world. This Good News is the message of undying, sacrificial love. We are created in God's image, meant to be a reflection of Jesus who is perfect, generous self-giving. Like our Lord, we must open our hearts to the will of the

Father, who desires that all human physical, spiritual, emotional and material needs be met. We know that such needs will be met through the sacrificial generosity of good and faithful stewards.

St. Anne – St. Catherine Faith Community Annual Stewardship Renewal

The theme for the 2021 Renewal is **"Living a Joyful Life."** Pope Francis has said *"Joy springs from a grateful heart"* – and gratitude is what stewardship is all about!

As you read through this newsletter, you can see that gratitude, joy and stewardship do go hand-in-hand! Joy is something that can last forever and it is directly related to the amount of our lives that we turn over to Christ.

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 encapsulates this year's theme perfectly: *"Always be joyful; pray constantly; and for all things give thanks; this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus."*

Because of the COVID-19 restrictions that are in place, we will not be conducting our Annual Stewardship Renewal in the usual way this year.

Instead, we ask that you prayerfully reflect on the areas of **PRAYER, SERVICE** and **SHARING** in your own life, and then take the time to write out your personal commitment to God for the coming year.



cut here and keep the commitment card for your reference

St. Anne – St. Catherine Faith Community Living a Joyful Life

My Commitment to **PRAYER** this year will be:

My Commitment to **SERVICE** this year will be:

My Commitment to **SHARING** my financial resources this year:

- If you don't have enough room, consider using a journal for your thoughts.
- Retain your commitment reflection and revisit it throughout the year.
- Are you looking for some ideas? Do you want information about a ministry or group? Call the Stewardship Council at 978-320-4212 or email Debbie Rhodes at DebbieR@LWCatholic.org.

The Joy of Sharing

When we recognize that God is the origin of all life, the giver of everything that we have and are, the source of our freedom and giftedness, the healthy person responds by thanking God through prayer, by serving God and God's people through ministry, by sharing our financial resources with those in need. Stewardship is a way of life based upon conversion of heart.

Why conversion? Because too often our hearts lack the vision and compassion that makes us true followers of Jesus Christ. The prophet Ezekiel makes this statement: "A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will remove from your body the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh" (Ezekiel 36:26). When the Holy Spirit breaks into our lives, our hearts become prayerful, our ministry joyful, and our generosity extravagant. Faithful stewards do four things:

- receive God's gifts gratefully
- nurture God's gifts responsibly
- share God's gifts justly and charitably
- return those gifts to God abundantly

Gratitude is the cornerstone of stewardship. Everything is a gift from God for those who see life with the eyes of faith. Stewards express their gratitude by a life of



generosity. Stewards are serious about naming and developing the gifts and talents given to them for the sake of the community. As one poet asks: "What have you done with the garden entrusted to you?" (Antonio Machado). Responsibility and accountability are part

*"A new heart I will give you,
and a new spirit I will put
within you; and I will remove
from your body the heart of stone
and give you a heart of flesh"*

~ Ezekiel 36:26

of our call as disciples. Stewards share. What has been given to us is not simply for our own use. Recipients are to become benefactors. We return to the Lord and our needy sisters and brothers a just and sacrificial portion of all that comes our way.

Using the image of a garden we might ask ourselves the question – how well have we or are we tending the following gardens of our life?

- the garden of our body (physical garden)
- the garden of family and friends (social garden)
- the garden of the globe (ecological garden)
- the garden of our emotions (psychological garden)
- the garden of the mind (intellectual garden)
- the garden of the city/nation (political garden)
- the garden of money (economic garden)
- the garden of our soul (spiritual garden)

Obviously, these gardens overlap and intersect. But each of them calls for a certain amount of tending and care. Each person must decide on how we allocate our limited time and resources in attempting to be good stewards of these many gardens.

Stewardship of Prayer

Stewards nurture their relationship with God by having a prayer life. Whether that is two minutes or two hours a day, listening and responding to God is at the core of the disciple's life. At times the prayer will be that of thanksgiving. At other times the prayer will be that of praise or petition or forgiveness. Whether private or communal prayer, the purpose is to stay connected to God so as to do the divine will. Of the 168 hours per week, of the 144 daily ten minutes slots, how much time do we use in prayer?

Stewardship of Service

Ministry is about gifts and needs. We name and nurture the gifts God has given us; we place these gifts at the service of those in need. Ministries are many in number and find expression in the areas of worship, education, community, social justice, leadership, and evangelization. The Epistle of St. Peter reminds us "As each one has received a gift, use it to serve another as good stewards of God's varied graces" (1 Peter 4:10).

A theology of ministry and service emphasizes that it is not so much that we do things for others but rather Jesus is doing something for others through us. Being aware of the difference between "for" and "through" changes our whole manner of service. That is why prayer is so important: it keeps reminding us that all stewardship is ultimately the work of the Lord taking place through the actions of faithful disciples.

Stewardship of Sharing

"The budget is a moral document" (Jim Wallis). How we earn and spend our money is both a highly personal issue as well as a social concern. Having access to someone's checkbook is also having access to that person's value system. Stewards are generous people. Again, they have a grateful heart realizing that all gifts come from the Lord. They feel a grateful obligation (3%, 6%, 10%, 20%) to the Church and other charities. They refuse to be co-opted by a culture of greed and live a life of hoarding. The greater the generosity and the greater the sacrifice, the greater the joy. Joy, according to some authors, is impossible without generosity. And as one author states, joy is the infallible sign of God's presence.

Adapted from "Parish Committee Guidelines of the Diocese of Green Bay"



Witness Talk: *continued from page 2*

That was around the time when online giving started and I signed up right away, making a point of giving more automatically, so I didn't have to worry about what I had in my wallet on Sunday. **I started giving on purpose for a reason, rather than just being lackadaisical about it.**

Then, as **I started getting raises or promotions at work, I started becoming really grateful, thinking and praying, "Wow! I am really blessed! I don't think I even deserve this! Why is this happening to me? God is so good!"** And that's when I started to feel the spirit move within me to give some of that away. So, I've continued my push to give greater amounts to our Faith Community, because after all, I've been given so many spiritual gifts from this Faith

Community. I've signed up to do a Charitable Giving fund from Fidelity Investments, because I can put money into it without being taxed and that increases how much I can give to the church. It's like the good steward who takes the one talent and turns it into more.

Turning now to helping our neighbors, I joined SVdP so I could go out and meet folks in financial need, listen to them and their problems, maybe pray a little with them, and be a good steward of the SVdP funds to help them. I really saw those people were just like me and they needed help. **I started looking at lots of moments in my life as stewardship opportunities, becoming more generous with my time, talent and treasure, in the process.**

And as I started doing all those things, you know what happened? **I started smiling big smiles a lot more often.**

Thank you Jesus for being my Lord and Savior! Thanks to all of you for listening and for all you do for others in your lives. It really makes a difference! And in case you want to try something new, or just to keep doing what you already are doing please prayerfully reflect on your gifts and complete your commitment form and return it on Commitment Sunday.

In closing, I'd like to read a prayer that I think is relevant: "Lord Jesus, you satisfy the deepest longing of our heart and you feed us with the finest of wheat. Fill me with gratitude and give me a generous heart that I may freely share with others what you have given to me." Amen.

Saint Anne - Saint Catherine Faith Community

75 King St.

Littleton, MA 01460

978-486-4100

www.LittletonCatholic.org

107 N. Main St.

Westford, MA 01886

978-692-6353

www.StCatherineParish.org

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Weekend indoor Mass is by **REGISTRATION ONLY**.

Register on our websites. (No Internet access? Call 617-944-1927 from 9am-5pm.)

Saturday 4:00 p.m.* - St. Catherine

Sunday 8:30 a.m. - St. Anne

Sunday 10:30 a.m. - St. Catherine



*Live-streamed online at:

www.littletoncatholic.org/

www.stcatherineparish.org/

Weekday indoor Mass/Service - **NO REGISTRATION** required.

Monday & Tuesday: 8:00 a.m. Mass - St. Anne

Wednesday 8:00 a.m. Service - St. Anne

Thursday & Friday: 8:00 a.m. Mass - St. Catherine.

Reconciliation by appointment only:

Father Peter Quinn 978-320-4201

Father Joe Rossi 978-320-4202

FAITH COMMUNITY UPDATES

WITNESS TALK WEEKENDS – all weekend masses Nov 14/15 and Nov 21/22

Hear the inspiring stories of fellow parishioners and how they are trying to more fully live out their Catholic Faith – and a life of Stewardship.

Wouldn't YOU like to be more... *Joyful?*

Then you won't want to miss this!

Save the date to **join Leisa Anslinger LIVE (via Zoom)**
in a presentation for our Faith Community:

7pm Wednesday November 18th

You might recognize Leisa's name—she is a contributor to this newsletter and her monthly IMPACT articles can be found in our bulletin. Leisa is the Director at the Center for Pastoral Vitality at Archdiocese of Cincinnati. She also is the Director of Catholic Life and Faith, a center for leadership development to help pastoral leaders engage their people in living faith.

She is the author of books, articles, and numerous e-resources for evangelization, catechesis, and stewardship. Leisa is a frequent presenter at national and diocesan gatherings as well as parish leadership days and parish missions.

