

After paying off my car ten years ago, I kept making car payments – just to myself, investing the money to prepare for my next vehicle purchase. As that perhaps nears, I reached out to my investment manager recently. As we take time to reflect on the Stewardship of our Treasure, part of the question is how much are we investing in the Lord in and through our parish community? But it's also important to look at how we are stewarding all the rest, as well, for our good and the good of others.

I am obviously going to invest in myself—the parish provides our housing, but sometimes I get other things that I want for around the house. Food, car maintenance and gas, clothes and the other basic necessities of life that line my credit card statement. Putting away money for retirement is important. I invest in Caesar as well, and the community at large, in the form of sales, income, and self-employment taxes. What to do with the rest, the disposable income? That is an important question.

Beyond the personal needs we start thinking about wants. Vacation and recreation are important, and the occasional treat. Gifts for family or friends for the various festivities of the year. For my gifts to charity, I try to pick things connected to actually building God's Kingdom. The parishes and school are obvious choices, but there are a few other ministries for which I have a particular affection.

Budgets for our disposable income, what we choose to invest in, speaks volumes about our priorities and values. How much is about ourselves? How much is about the Lord? How much is about others? How much are we willing to sacrifice for the Lord and others? To actually give things up and go some without?

Every year at this time we ask our parishioners to reflect on how they will financially invest in our parish in the year ahead. It's helpful to us for our own budgeting. But even more, it's helpful to you as a part of your own journey of faith, an invitation to pause and reflect on your stewardship. What place does God hold in your budget? Where is the Lord calling you? And how do those other parts still work for good?

There is one thing I should probably correct. It's not really my money. It's mine right now, but soon will not be, and in the grander scheme, is a gift from God. Thank you for the ways in which you share the gifts of God in your own life to build up His Kingdom and continue the work of Jesus Christ.

In Christ,

Fr. Matthew Oakland