

Dear **Parishioners** of St. Michael's, St. Paul's, Japanese Martyrs, and St. Mary's:

This year, I want to try to make the **topic of stewardship** a priority in our parishes, realizing that it is a helpful topic to understanding how much the Lord has blessed us in terms of our time, talent, and treasure – all of which belong to the Lord.

This year, with the pandemic, there has been a **lot of worry about the “treasure” part of our stewardship**, as it has affected the finances both at the end of last year's fiscal year (which ended on June 30, 2020) and this fiscal year as it has limited the usual fundraising, such as parish festivals, parish dinners, and other events we haven't been able to host. (Thanks be to God, we are able to be back in Mass at this time!)

Each week we report our actual collection and budgeted amount for that particular week in the bulletin. That number fluctuates a bit depending on the season with some larger gifts and more infrequent donations. But it gives an “overall” idea of where we are and where we need to be in accomplishing our tasks.

Many realize the importance of giving so that we can pay the bills. However, **stewardship is more than just “paying our bills.”** Stewardship is **giving out of a sense of understanding that God has blessed us with so much.** With all that He has entrusted to us, how do we show our generosity to the Lord?

Fortunate for all of us, we have benefited from the generosity of those who have went before us, and their own investment in us and the future. This is evident through our catechesis programs and buildings by the care they have shown in the past so that we can continue on.

Many of you have heard the “Dave Ramsey” show on the radio. It is a program where the host, Dave Ramsey provides financial advice to people who call into his program. Although Dave is not Catholic, he is a strong and faith-filled Christian and he **advocates “tithing,”** the practice of giving 10%, a tenth of one's income to charity. But Dave didn't invent this; it is very Biblical, finding its root in the Old Testament, the expectation of giving away a tenth of one's income or “fruit of the land” as a way to acknowledge God's goodness and generosity, and that everything we have comes from His Hands.

At first, this idea of “tithing” might seem like an awful lot. Yet in terms of stewardship, often our non-Catholic brothers and sisters are sometimes ahead of us. Although we do have some parishioners who “tithe” to the parish. When I hear them speak about their decision, it is clearly one made out of gratitude, and **those who make this “leap of faith” find that the more generous we are with the Lord, the more generous He is with us in return,** and that everything we give away freely comes back to us in many different ways and many times over. It takes some deliberation but comes with many blessings. I

have experienced this in my own life with stewardship as well, a much greater sense of God's blessings as I have worked to give my "tenth."

I also wanted to address some **"shared costs" that are paid by our four parishes together** on a pro-rated basis since they are shared by each of the parishes. These include expenses for priests, mileage, and parish bookkeeping. These costs are "shared" on a pro-rated basis depending on the size of the parish, in a way that is meant to be as fair as possible.

Each of the four parishes has its own identity, administrative council, checkbook and other bank accounts and "set of books" in an accounting sense of the word. All funds are kept separate and are not put together so that anyone from St. Paul's can ever wonder if they are paying the bills for Japanese Martyrs or St. Michael's is paying for St. Mary's or any other possible configuration. When St. Paul's needs a new roof, it is St. Paul's money that pays for it. When St. Michael's needs work on their parking lot, it is St. Michael's money that pays for it.

I want to assure everyone that **I try to be as transparent as possible with all the parishes and their finances.** Everyone deserves this, and I put a high priority on it. Having a degree in accounting has helped me greatly in working on these matters, and I want to be able to contribute to the good care of our buildings, worship, and catechesis programs so that we can continue in the very best way all that our parishes do in participating in the mission of the Lord Jesus that He entrusted to us to carry on.

I hope these words have helped a little bit, and perhaps given some "food for thought and prayer." I am not doing my job as pastor if I avoid these "hard topics" that sometimes need to be brought up. It is important as they touch our spiritual lives as Catholic members of our spiritual communities that we call parishes.

Please know of my **continued prayers and gratitude for your generosity** of all things – time, talent, and treasure! And in this difficult time, when we are not able to have the fundraisers that we are used to having, I want to thank everyone for your extra generosity which allows us to meet all of our obligations for this challenging year.

With my sincere gratitude and united in Our Lord Jesus Christ,

Fr. M. Steffl

September 19, 2020