

LIVING A STEWARDSHIP WAY OF LIFE

- makes us pleasing to God
- is a blessing to others
- brings us true happiness

If we believe the above heading, then all of us should earnestly strive to live a life of faithful stewardship. For which of us does not wish to:

- live a life pleasing to God?
- be a blessing to others?
- experience true happiness?

Well, I strongly believe that living a stewardship way of life will deliver all of the above. My guess is that some of you reading this column already know that this is indeed the truth. (If you would like to share with me on this, I would love to hear from you.)

What does a stewardship way of life?

A stewardship way of life involves the following:

- Becoming more and more aware that everything is *gift* and *blessing*—that all that we are and have is a gift from God. This means *accepting the biblical truth that we own nothing*. Scripture reminds us that we come into the world with nothing and we leave the world with nothing (Job 1). A stewardship way of life involves recognizing *God* as the sole creator and owner of all that we are and have, and accepting the fact that we are merely the stewards or managers of God's gifts and blessings. Our job or mission is to manage and use wisely and responsibly all that God has placed in our care.
- As we grow into a stewardship way of life, we gradually develop a lifestyle marked by *generosity*. A life of generosity is a clear sign that we do in fact believe and accept the biblical truth that God owns it all. Conversely, when we hoard our gifts and talents, we assign ownership of our good fortune to ourselves and not to God, doing with them as we please.
- As we seek to develop a stewardship way of life, we are aware that one day we will have to account for our stewardship here on earth. How well did we use God's gifts to bless the lives of others?

In their *Pastoral Letter* on Stewardship, the U.S. bishops affirm: "*The Christian steward is one who receives God's gifts gratefully, cherishes and tends them in a responsible and accountable manner, shares them in justice and love with others, and returns them with increase to the Lord.*"

Stewardship of Time

TIME is a very precious gift. We often say that we don't have time for this or that. When it comes to being a good steward of time, the key question is:

What do we make time for?

Everyone is given the same amount of time, 24 hours each day, 168 hours each week. God's question to us is:

How do we choose to use our time?

To what extent do we squander *TIME* watching senseless TV shows? To what extent do we use *excessive* amounts of time on recreation? To what extent do we use time to foster our relationship with God or to volunteer in some ministry that blesses others?

I would like to suggest spending one hour of our time each week in our Adoration Chapel. It is an excellent way for us to use one of the 168 hours of the week. I would even advocate that *every* retired person in our parish should do this. You have the time. Come spend an hour with Jesus and pray for all those families who are stressed out with hectic lifestyles, pray for peace in our world, pray for Catholics who no longer come to Mass, pray for your own spiritual transformation. What a wonderful way to use the *gift of time*.

Those of you who don't have the physical capacity to do volunteer work should know that you can play a very valuable role in the life of the parish by your persistent prayers. Our church made St. Thérèse of Lisieux, the Little Flower, Patroness of the Missions, even though she never spent a day in the missions. Our church recognizes that every success with the missions (and also with our parishes) is achieved through unrelenting prayer by good and faithful people. So older people or homebound parishioners ought **NEVER** to feel useless. Your hours of prayer are of *infinite value* to the mission of the church and parish.

Using some of our *TIME* to volunteer is another way of being a good steward. So many of you already do that. If you have not volunteered and have a desire to do so but are not sure what you should volunteer for, I suggest you:

- seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit
- talk to active volunteers
- speak with Monica Sutton, Ascension Ministry Coordinator, or come see me.

Being a Steward of Our Abilities and Talents

In his first letter to us, St. Peter (4:8) writes: "*Put your gifts at the service of one another.*"

I am most grateful for the hundreds of you who are already living this Word of the Lord. In doing so, you

are *blessing* our parish and wider community. Thank you! However, many others are perhaps sitting on their talents and not using them to bless others. In one of his parables, Jesus has a severe warning for those who bury their talents. Failing to share our talents is like stealing from our communities. Talents and abilities are given to us *primarily* to bless others.

Being a Good Steward in Our Homes and Workplaces

Every place we live gives us the opportunity to be faithful stewards. To put it briefly, whenever we try to be the best that we can be at this time, we are being good, if imperfect, stewards of the Lord.

In our homes, we are good stewards when we try to relate well to the people we live with. We are being good Catholic lay men and women and good stewards when we bring the values of honesty and integrity to our work to help transform the workplace. We are also being good stewards when we endeavor to be kind and compassionate employers or bosses, employees or co-workers. Our presence in the workplace can radiate the light of Christ and bring blessing to others. Or we can be a pain in the butt, always complaining, gossiping and tearing others down.

Stewardship should be a part of the Christian DNA. No mother gets up in the morning saying: “I think I’ll volunteer to be a mother today.” No, motherhood is part of her DNA. In a similar manner, living the way of a good steward should be at the heart and center of every disciple’s life. Our baptism calls us to be good stewards of God’s blessings.

I urge each and every one of you (and myself) to continue to reflect on the rich biblical essence of Christian stewardship. Let us keep asking ourselves:

1. What speaks to us most in the above article?
2. What challenges us most?
3. To what extent do we embrace the Christian truth/belief that all of life is gift and that we own nothing? Our job is to manage well God’s blessings and use them responsibly to bless the lives of others.
4. To what extent do we believe that a stewardship approach to life leads to a true and lasting happiness?

Prayer to radiate Christ. Ideally, we should seek to be good stewards of God’s blessings *all* the time and not just when we volunteer. Each day allows us to be good stewards in our homes, when on the phone, emailing, texting, talking to others, at the store, at work or recreation, dining, etc. Ideally, we should seek to be Christ-like at every moment of every day and at every place. To help us to be like Christ, we could often say the following prayer.

*Jesus, help me to spread your fragrance
everywhere I go today.
Flood my soul with your spirit and life.
Penetrate and possess my whole being so utterly
that all my life may only be a radiance of yours.
Shine through me and be so in me
that every soul I come in contact with
may feel your presence in my soul.
Let them look up and see no longer me,
but only Jesus! Amen.*

- Blessed John Henry Newman

Stewardship Prayer

*Generous and loving God,
you call us to be disciples of your Son Jesus
and good stewards of your many gifts.
Open our minds and hearts
to a greater awareness and deeper appreciation
of your countless blessings.
Transform us through the power of your Spirit
to nurture a stewardship way of life
marked by faith-filled prayer,
service to our neighbor, and generous sharing.
Teach us to be faithful servants of your gifts.
With Mary’s help, may we return ten-fold
the gifts entrusted to us.
We pray this through Christ, our Lord.
Amen.*

- Bishop Robert Morneau