



## The Epiphany of the Lord C January 6, 2019

### Reflections on our call to be good stewards of all God has placed in our care

Very few of us Catholics grew up being taught about the concept of stewardship. At least our parents and teachers did not use the term *stewardship*. On the other hand, they probably did try to impress on us the importance of ‘giving back’ to our community.

Unfortunately, all too many people see stewardship as another word for fundraising. Perhaps all too often, it has been used in this very narrow way. While the biblical concept of stewardship does include how we manage our money, it encompasses a whole lot more. In fact, stewardship is about how we handle *all* of life. The good steward sees *all* of life (health, time, talents, kids, work, home, money, position, etc.) as gifts from God. *The good steward is one who seeks daily to use well the blessings of life.* God has not given us gifts to squander like the prodigal son in Luke 15, or to use them just to create a lavish lifestyle for ourselves. Unfortunately in our world today, all too many people have created such a crazy lifestyle for themselves that they can give little or no time, talent or treasure to bless people outside their own families. I doubt God will see them as responsible stewards of his gifts. We are blessed and gifted so that we in turn can bless and gift others, especially the poor and our Church family. Stewardship is something I am learning about all the time. I am very much a student in this area and the same can be said when it comes to practicing what I am learning. Some years ago I read an article called *Seven Secrets of Successful Stewards* by Paul Wilkes, a writer who has spent a great deal of time visiting Catholic parishes across the country. The following are four thoughts from Wilkes’ article:

- *The good steward feels good about sharing.* Invariably, we feel good after we sense that our giving has made some difference in someone’s life, e.g., visiting a sick or lonely person, listening to someone’s heartache, purchasing gifts for a needy family.
- *Good stewards look for opportunities to help out or make a difference.* Wilkes writes: “*The good steward joins in God’s own generous nature by quite simply and directly addressing the needs of the moment.*”
- *Good stewards live the “attitude of gratitude” message.* Wilkes writes [and I love this piece]: “*Good stewards have good memories, recalling where they came from, the struggles of their parents, the struggles of their own lives, those peaks and those valleys that shaped them and brought them to this very moment. And they find themselves deeply grateful. It’s an ‘attitude of gratitude.’ Good stewards know they didn’t earn their time, talents or treasure. These are truly gifts from a generous God—miraculous and randomly scattered over the human race—who asks only that we also be generous.*” The good steward gives not out of guilt but out of gratitude. This deep sense of gratitude for life’s blessings moves the good steward to be as generous as possible with life’s gifts.
- *The good steward gives according to his life’s situation.* At one stage in our lives, we may not be able to give much money, so we give of our time. At another stage, we may be in a better position to give of our time or money. We may have a particular talent or skill that can be a blessing to others.

### Some questions to consider as we reflect on our use of time

Time is a very precious gift. Most of us might complain that we don’t have enough time to do all the things we want to do. All of us are gifted with the *same* amount of time: 24 hours each day, 168 hours each week. The question is: *How am I choosing to use my time?* Henry David Thoreau once said: “***It is not enough to be busy, so are ants. The question is what are we busy about?***”

This week, I invite you to look at *how* you use God’s precious gift of time. More specifically, I invite you to answer the following questions:

How much time do you give to fostering your relationship with God? About 435 parishioners commit themselves to spend one hour each week in our Adoration Chapel (some spend several hours a week in the Chapel). There are 96 fifteen-minute periods in each day. If not even one 15-minute period is designated as

- “my appointment with God,” can we honestly say that nurturing our relationship with God is an important priority in our lives?

- To what extent are we committed to *making time* to strengthening our relationship with family members and close friends?
- How much time is given to watching television, fiddling with our iPhone and iPad, surfing the internet, chatting on Facebook?
- How much time a month is given to volunteering inside or outside the parish?

If you are homebound or physically unable to be actively involved in a ministry, please remember that your *daily prayer* for God's blessings on our parish team and volunteers *is itself a very important ministry*. When our Church declared St. Thérèse of Lisieux the patroness of the missions—though she never spent a day working in the missions—the Church was communicating the message that prayer for God's blessings on apostolic works is very important.

When it comes to using our gifts to be of service to others, we most likely lack imagination. I would love it if you would email me creative, outside-the-box ideas on how people could use some of their time and talent to bless others.

As we embrace the stewardship vision of life, I firmly believe that:

- We gradually become the person God created us to be.
- We become a blessing to our own family, co-workers, neighbors, Church family and other communities we may belong to.
- We journey on a path that will lead to the wonderful inner feeling that comes with giving of ourselves to God and others. A life of stewardship is a key to happiness.

In their Pastoral Letter on *Stewardship—A Disciple's Response*, the U.S. bishops state: *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.*

**Prayer to Radiate Christ.** Ideally, we should seek to be good stewards of God's blessings *all* the time and not just when we are volunteering. Each day allows us to be good stewards in our homes, on the phone, when emailing, texting, talking to others, at the store, at work, recreating, dining, etc. Ideally, we seek to be Christ-like

at every moment of every day and at every place and time. 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 through Christ, our Lord. Amen*

- Bishop Robert Morneau

I am most grateful to all of you who week after week give of your Time, Treasure and Talent to our parish. We have a vibrant parish because of your generosity. Thank you.

Have a blessed week,

*Fr. Aaron*