

FROM THE PASTOR'S



32nd Sunday in Ordinary Time – November 11, 2007 C

LIVING A STEWARDSHIP WAY OF LIFE

- Makes us Pleasing to God
- A Blessing to Others
- Brings us True Happiness

If the title of this column is actually true, 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
- Live a life that is a blessing to others
- Be truly happy

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

What is a Stewardship Way of Life?

A stewardship way of life involves the following:

- Becoming more and more aware that all is *gift* and *blessing*—all that we are and have is gift from God. This means *accepting the biblical truth that we own nothing*. As scripture reminds us 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 seeing ourselves as stewards or managers of his gifts and blessings. Our job or mission is manage and use wisely and responsibly all that God has placed in our care. Today's Gospel concerning the three people with talents is about accountability, God asking three men to account of their stewardship.
- As we grow into a stewardship way of life, we will gradually develop a lifestyle that is marked by *generosity*. An infallible sign that we do in fact believe and accept the biblical truth that God owns it all is a life of generosity. On the other hand, tendencies to hoard is a pretty good sign that we believe our stuff is ours to do with as we want.
- 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 the God's blessing to bless the lives of others?

Stewardship of Time

TIME is a very precious gift. We often say today "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 did we choose to use our time?

To what extent do we squander *TIME*, watching near useless stuff on T.V.? To what extent do we use an *excessive* amount of time on recreation? To what extent do we use time to foster our relationship with God and volunteer in some ministry that blesses others?

I would like to suggest spending one hour of our time each week in our Adoration Chapel is a very good way for us to use one of the 168 hours of the week. I would even suggest 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 our *TIME*.

All of you who do not have the physical capacity to volunteer should know that you play a very valuable role in the life of the parish by your hours of prayer. Our church made St. Therese of Lisieux, the Little Flower, the Patroness of the Missions even though she never spent a day on the missions. Our church recognizes that every success on the missions (and also in our parishes) is based on the hours of prayer of good praying people. So older people or homebound parishioners **NEVER** feel useless. Your hours of prayer is of *infinite value* to the mission of the church and parish.

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

- You Seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit
- Talk to some people who do volunteer
- Come speak with one of our parish staff

Being a Steward of Our Abilities and Talents

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

I am most grateful for hundreds of you who are already living this word of the Lord. In doing so you are *blessing*

our parish or wider community. Thank you. Many others are perhaps sitting on their talents and not using them to bless others. In today's gospel, Jesus had a severe warning for those 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 Work Places.

Every place we live our lives gives us the opportunity to live a life of faithful stewardship. To put this very briefly, we can say that whenever we try to be the best that we can be at this time we are being a good, if imperfect, steward 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 workplace. Such values help to transform our workplaces. We are also being good stewards in the work place when we try hard to be a good employer or boss, good employee or co-worker. Our presence in the workplace can be one in which the light of Christ shines through us. We are a blessing to others. Or we can be a pain in the butt in our workplace, always complaining, gossiping and tearing others down.

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

- To what extent have we bought into and internalized the biblical value of stewardship - that all that we are and have is gift and blessing, that we own nothing. All belongs to God.
- To what extent do we believe and act on the truth that our job or mission is to use wisely and responsibly the gifts of **TIME, TALENT & TREASURE**, to bless others. Or do we still tend to believe the world's view: it's mine to do with as *I* choose?
- To what extent do we believe that living a stewardship way of life leads more and more to a *life of generosity*. The more we see life as gift and blessing, the more we are moved to generously share it with others.

The Mass, Its Rituals, Roots and Relevance in Our Lives - by Joan Carter McHugh

Next weekend we will have on sale the above titled book on *The Mass*. I read this book about six months ago and loved it. So now I want to share it with those of you who may be interested in deepening your understanding and appreciation of the Mass. The following is the structure of the book. The author takes each part of the Mass beginning with the *Entrance Song* and writes the following on each section:

- **Introductory Remarks:** Sometimes these introductory remarks connect a part of the Mass with stories from the author's life.
- **Explanation:** Words of explanation about each part of the Mass.
- **History:** The history of each part of the Mass.
- **Reflection:** The reflection section of each part of the Mass was often my favorite part. In the "Reflection" section, the author told stories from her own life or the lives of other people that connected a particular part of the Mass to daily life.

Penitential Rite

The following is a sample of the author's introductory remarks on the Penitential Rite.

The first time I planted a vegetable garden I got out a shovel and started digging, thinking that I could just drop in the seeds randomly along the way. I had no clue as to the amount of preparatory work involved, such as tilling the soil, to properly prepare the earth to receive the seeds. At this point in the Mass, we are tilling the soil of our minds and hearts, preparing to receive Christ in His Word and in the Eucharist. What does this "tilling" mean, practically speaking?

The late Fr. Henri Nouwen, one of the most beloved spiritual writers of the twentieth century, offers a clarifying insight which came to him one night while he was watching a program on Dutch television. The speaker, he said, poured water on hard, dried-out soil, saying "Look, the soil cannot receive the water and no seed can grow." Then, after crumbling the soil with his hands and pouring water on it again, he said, "It is only the broken soil that can receive the water and make the seed grow and bear fruit."

"After seeing this," Nouwen said, "I understood what it meant to begin the Eucharist with a contrite heart, a heart broken open, to receive the water of God's grace".

During the Penitential Rite in the Sacred Liturgy, we have an opportunity to "break open" the hard soil of our hearts by admitting our powerlessness over sin and our need for a Savior. Like AA, which asks its members to work the Twelve Steps as a means of becoming accountable for their behavior by trying to change themselves instead of others, Jesus asks His disciples to "let go and let God," to seek a conversion of heart by surrendering our lives to Him. The Eucharist empowers our transformation, making us "one spirit" with Christ (cf. 1 Cor. 6:17). Christ becomes really present in the Eucharist so that we may become His Body.

Penitential Rite: Explanation

The following is an excerpt from the author's explanatory piece on the Penitential Rite.

As our encounter with Christ in His Word and Sacrament draws near, the Church calls us to a moment of

truth to see God as He really is—all-loving, all-merciful and all-forgiving - and to see our-selves and our sins “through a formula of general confession” (General Instruction, 29). As a people of God we have sinned, and we come to Mass to celebrate the Eucharist for the forgiveness of our sins.

The Penitential Rite is a means by which the community can acknowledge their need for a Savior, Jesus Christ, because of our collective and personal sinfulness. The Church provides this rite to make the communal sinfulness of all who have gathered manifest. We must not confuse this with sacramental confession (the Sacrament of Reconciliation), which is a sacrament in itself.

History - Creed

The following is an excerpt from the author’s piece on the history of the Creed.

The Creed gives expression to the essential beliefs of Catholicism, which in the first three hundred years was severely challenged by heresies, especially that of Arianism, which began with Arius (260-336), a popular priest in the church of Alexandria who taught that Christ was not divine and therefore could not be one in essence with the Father. Leading the opposition was a brilliant young deacon from Alexandria, St. Athanasius (297-373).

Determined to settle the dispute, the recently converted Christian Emperor Constantine ordered the first General Council of bishops to be held in the city of Nicaea in Bithynia in 325. Three hundred and eighteen delegates attended. We can imagine the long hours, days, and possibly weeks the bishops spent on the precise wording of the Creed. Every word was debated and forged from heated discussions. With the eyes of the world focused on them, Arius and St. Athanasius each fought for their beliefs, the latter suggesting the word “consubstantial,” designating that the Son was of the same substance as the Father.

The word “consubstantial” (Greek, homoousios) was adopted and became an important bulwark of the faith. The Creed beautifully and clearly asserts the divinity of Christ:

*We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
The only Son of God,
Eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made, on in Being with the Father.
Through him all things were made.*

The Council closed with a state banquet given by Emperor Constantine. Arius and his followers were banished, but they managed to keep the heresy alive for many years. St. Athanasius became the bishop of Alexandria and spent his life vigorously defending the Church from this heresy, an effort which earned him the title “Father of Orthodoxy.”

At the Council of Constantinople in 381, words were added to the Nicene Creed that declared the divinity of the Holy Spirit. This was done in order to nullify the efforts of Archbishop Macedonius and his followers who taught that the Holy Spirit was not God, but only a creation like the angels but on a much higher scale. Thus today we say: We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son. With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified. He has spoken through the Prophets. Since the wording of the Creed stems from the Two Councils, it is technically referred to as the “Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed.”

Fraction Rite—Reflection

The ‘fraction rite’ of the Mass is that moment when the priest takes the large host and breaks it in small pieces. As I noted above, the author of this book does four things with each part of the Mass. The fourth piece is a *Reflection*. In the author’s *Reflection* piece on the fraction rite, she quotes Fr. Raniero Cantalamessa, a Franciscan priest who is a preacher to the papal household in the Vatican. Fr. Cantalamessa shares how the ‘fraction rite’ (which refers to Jesus’ body being broken for us) impacts him:

Then I understand that to “do” what Jesus did that night, I must, first of all, “break” myself. . . Lay before God all hardness, all rebellion towards him or towards others, crush my pride, submit and say “yes”, fully to all that God asks of me. I too must repeat the words: Lo, I have come to do thy will, O God! You don’t want many things from me; you want me and I say “yes”. To be Eucharist like Jesus signifies being totally abandoned to the Father’s will.

Have a blessed week,

