



Thirty-Third Sunday in Ordinary Time November 16, 2014 A

STEWARDSHIP OF TIME AND TALENT

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 using well the gifts and talents given to us by God.

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.

- *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.

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

God—The Gambler

We listened today to the parable of the three men who received various kinds of talents from God. The parable places before us a gambling image of God who risks entrusting people with his gifts. Like a gambler or investor, God has no guaranteed return on his investment. It seems that he wants us to have a

gambling spirit too with the qualities and talents he has given us. If we succeed, both God and we will be winners.

The first two fellows play along with the gambling image of God. They believe that their Master expects them to share his enterprising spirit. In contrast, the third fellow considers God to be a tough taskmaster and feels intimidated by him. Instead of being enterprising with his talents, he arranges a funeral service. So as to lose nothing, he risks nothing. After the Master returns, rather than taking responsibility for his “poor show,” he tries to blame his Master. He takes the problem from where it is, namely, with himself, and places it where it is not. The Master isn’t very sympathetic to the fellow’s excuses. He calls him a “worthless, lazy lout.” The Master’s words jar our sensibilities. Today, we would probably say that the third guy is timid and insecure—an underachiever. Perhaps, he suffers from a poor self-image.

Fr. Roland Faley, O.F.M., writes: *“The point is clear. Those who build on their baptismal commitment by a steady and active growth in virtue and apostolic zeal will be more than amply rewarded. Those who do nothing with this gift will lose whatever they have in final separation from God’s reign. It is the difference between industry and idleness in the Christian life.”*

If we don’t utilize our faith, help it to grow and share it, we, too, run the risk of being called “worthless, lazy louts” by the Lord. As followers of Christ, we must remember that faith is a risk as much as it is a security. It is a “letting go” as much as it is a “holding on.” A growing faith keeps us constantly on the move, calling to us like it called Abraham, to leave well-trodden paths for less-traveled roads.

The parable seems to be telling us that life is a precious gift to be nurtured, appreciated, and *shared* with others. “Give freely what you have received freely,” the Lord tells us elsewhere. Our lives are not given to be hoarded and tightly held on to. No, we are called to bless others with the gifts and talents the Lord has blessed us with. It may be a special gift of listening to the woes of others. It may be a “Hi, how are you?” telephone call. We may have a special gift for making money. This gift should be utilized and balanced with a gift of generosity.

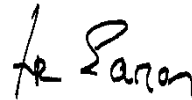
The woman or wife in today’s first reading is a wonderful example of an industrious type of person. Her ‘fear of the Lord’ does not paralyze her. Rather, it moves her into action. She uses “her hands to make clothes” (hurray for our Art and Crafts group!). She

also “reaches out her hands to the poor, and extends her arms to the needy” (hurray to all our parishioners involved in outreach ministries!). These qualities are seen to be much more important than a vanishing physical attraction. “Charm is deceptive and beauty is fleeting.”

We have parishioners who share their gift of time and talent in a public, visible way, e.g., cantors, musicians, lectors, Extraordinary Ministers of the Eucharist, etc. Others share their gift in a behind-the-scene way, e.g., the men and women who volunteer their time in the backroom of our Thrift Store, sorting through used clothes, restoring donated furniture and fixing broken computers and appliances; and many others who quietly serve in many ways in the parish, like Joe Eisen and Lee Dague who are on campus several days a week doing electrical work and many other things, thus saving the parish a lot of money.

Again, a big thank you to all who volunteer their time and talent especially because of their love for Jesus.

Have a blessed week,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Fr. Faley". The signature is written in a cursive, somewhat stylized script.