



Volume 1 September/October 2011 Issue 4

The Vineyard

A bi-monthly publication from
the Archdiocese of Milwaukee
Parish Stewardship Office

Stewardship Monday through Friday

As we leave what many consider to be the leisure months of summer behind us, our focus begins to shift. The first days of September signal a return to school for students and often a return to a faster pace in the workplace for adults.

Each week many Catholics spend 40 or more hours working and approximately 1 hour worshipping. It's easy to see that living a stewardship way of life must mean more than attending church once a week, then returning to "real life" until the next Sunday. As disciples of Jesus we are called to be faithful stewards in all parts of our life, including the workplace.

It is important to remember that among the gifts God has given each of us are the ability and talent necessary to succeed, and our co-workers and customers. Instead of thinking about their jobs as a necessary evil; something that takes them away from developing a deeper spirituality, good stewards try to see God in all of their daily pursuits and interactions.

Here are some small steps that can help each of us feel God's presence and live as faithful stewards in the workplace:

- Set a prayer to come onto you computer screen when you start work.
- Pray silently while at the copier...pray in thanksgiving for your success and for the intentions of your coworkers.
- Say thank you to another employee who has, by his or her good work, made your work easier or better.
- Build a habit of thanking people whose work usually goes unnoticed; fast food servers, gas station cashiers, the building maintenance crew, bus drivers, the "mail person".
- Choose a time once a day when you can enjoy a moment of stillness and quiet contemplation.

Taking one or two of these small steps will open a new "compartment" in your life so that your faith can shine in!

- REFLECTING ON THE READINGS
- TIME TO TALK ABOUT TALENT
- PRAYER TO CELEBRATE LIFE
 - THE PRAYER PLATE
 - A CHILD'S VIEW
- RECOGNIZING THE SACRED
 - MORE WITH LESS

In this issue

"The life of a Christian Steward, lived in imitation of the life of Christ, is challenging, even difficult in many ways; but both here and hereafter it is charged with intense joy."

Stewardship: A Disciple's Response
U.S. Bishops' Pastoral Letter on Stewardship



Reflecting on the Readings

September 4th

23rd Sunday in Ordinary Time

In today's second reading, St. Paul reminds us that we cannot help but live as faithful stewards when we obey the commandment to "...love your neighbor as yourself." From love, God gave His only Son for our good – without hesitation, without "strings". It's easy to give back, to share with those we love. If we love God, we share without reservation.

September 11th

24th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Today's readings focus on forgiveness. We are told the importance of seeking forgiveness from those we have wronged before seeking forgiveness from God for our own faults and sins. A stewardship way of life calls us to reach out to others; to find common ground on which we can work together to build God's kingdom here on earth. Sometimes, before we can reach out, good stewards must make the effort to forgive.

September 18th

25th Sunday in Ordinary Time

In today's gospel, workers in the vineyard all received a full day's wage, even though some had only worked for one hour. Those who had worked hard all day resented the fact that those who labored less received the same reward. If we consider the "full day's wage" to be our ultimate reward of salvation, we know that we do not "earn" salvation; it is a gift freely given by our generous God. Whether one comes early or late to the vineyard, does not increase or decrease the opportunity for receiving this gift. What matters is that we **do** arrive, embracing and living our faith. Faithful stewards evangelize, sharing the good news and inviting all into the vineyard.

September 26th

26th Sunday in Ordinary Time

In today's second reading St. Paul extols us to regard others as more important than ourselves and to work for the greater good rather than expending our efforts solely for our own benefit. Sharing all we have to benefit all, extending ourselves to serve the greater good, this is stewardship in action.

October 2nd

27th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Today St. Paul reminds us that God is always with us. In today's world, reassurance and personal peace can be difficult to find. St. Paul reminds us to pray, to communicate our fears and needs to God. Good stewardship is built on prayer as each person once secure in his or her personal relationship with the Lord, can begin to reach out to others with energy and conviction.

October 9th

28th Sunday in Ordinary Time

In his letter read today St. Paul assures the Philippians, and us, that God will supply whatever we need. Embracing this simple truth requires trust. We can sometimes be disappointed when we place our trust in people, possessions, wealth, position and any other material things.

Trusting is not always easy, and it can be frightening to take a leap of faith. St. Paul assures us that God will not let us fall. If we trust in Him, we will never be disappointed.

October 23rd

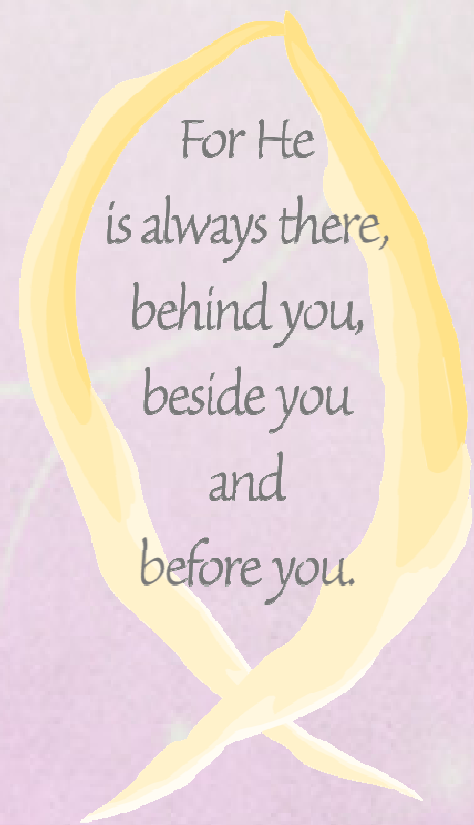
29th Sunday in Ordinary Time

The stewardship message in today's gospel could not be more simple or straightforward; act from love. When we act from love for God, we work to spread the good news through our words and actions. When we work from love for others, we gratefully and joyfully share our gifts for the greater good. Disciples serving God and others - what better definition of a good and faithful steward?

October 30th

30th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Today's gospel underscores the importance of practicing what we preach. Good stewards know that actions really do speak louder than words. God has made His expectations clear. Living stewardship is how we answer that call.



For He
is always there,
behind you,
beside you
and
before you.

It's Time to Talk About Talent

Fall is the time when many parishes ask parishioners to renew their commitment to sharing their talent with the parish community. Here is an example of one parish's way of engaging parishioners in advance of their annual volunteer sign-up drive;

"Soon we will be asking every parishioner to consider sharing their talents with our parish community. Sometimes people tend to define "talent" narrowly – as a specific set of skills and they consider the annual renewal as simply signing up for jobs that need to be done. True stewardship of talent, however, is so much more.

Often we hear that people feel they have no "special" talents. Not true! We all have gifts for ministry. Gifts for ministry are broadly defined to include our personality, life experiences, strengths and weaknesses, preferred ways of learning, working and interacting with others. And sharing your talents with our parish community is ministry! By sharing your time at the school, in the Christian Formation program, to enrich our liturgies, as a committee member or in any of our parish ministries, you are answering the call to live as a faithful steward.

As you contemplate how you would like to share your talents, spend some time exploring the many aspects of your giftedness. Complete the sentences below and invite your friends and family to do the same. You might be surprised at what this exercise will reveal!

A gift of which I've been aware since childhood is...

Others tell me I have the gift of...

One of the dreams I want to accomplish in my lifetime is...

Some of my passions are...

A new interest of mine is...

An emerging issue I am concerned about is...

Ministry opportunities come in all shapes and sizes. Every person in every circumstance has a valuable talent to share. Please prayerfully consider taking your part in the active life of our Parish.

*Share your talent. **Fulfillment is guaranteed!**"*



Celebrating Life

Loving God, we thank You for the gift of life.

We celebrate and embrace the joys, excitement, challenges and hard times that are part of living to the fullest. We know You created us and that we are very special to You.

As we celebrate life as a family, we ask You to watch over each of us. We have plans, but we trust that things will happen according to Your plan for us.

We do not ask that all things go our way, but we pray that You will be at our side in good times and bad. We thank You, God, for everything that lies ahead for all that makes life worth living.

We thank You for the precious gift of life. Guide, guard and be with us as we give You thanks for this greatest gift.

Amen





Coming to an understanding of stewardship as a way of life is a very personal experience. Some of us change our perception of stewardship little by little. Others experience a conversion moment; a significant event that reshapes our stewardship response.

Many Catholics throughout our archdiocese share the gift of their real life stewardship stories with fellow parishioners; stories that teach, encourage and inspire all of us as we continue our growth as faithful stewards.

This section of each newsletter is devoted to examples of lay witness, offered in word and action, that speak to the heart of stewardship.

All examples are printed with permission, for your personal inspiration and for use in your parish stewardship efforts.

This wonderful witness is shared by the Willer family from St. Mary Parish in Menomonee Falls.

The Prayer Plate by Kathleen Willer

While deciding what to write about for the “Covenant Corner” I immediately thought of the “Service” portion of the St. Mary parish Covenant. But then I remembered something very simple that our family has been doing for years, which I think falls somewhere between the “Worship” and “Formation” pillars of the covenant. I would like to share this simple thing with you.

We have a special plate, different from all the other dinner plates, that is set at our table each night at someone’s place. This person has the privilege of leading our family in prayer before dinner. Sometimes, a “Bless us O Lord...” is said. But usually, thanks are offered; for our warm home, our food, and even for our freedom. Frequently, the “Prayer Plate person”, be it adult or child, will thank God for each family member by name. And we pray for those who need our prayers.

Since the prayer plate rotates to the next person each night, I have to make adjustments when our youngest sets the table as she always gives herself the plate! I am pleased that she is so eager to have the special plate and to lead us in prayer and I have also noticed that none of our four children mind having the plate; they seem to be honored by it. I believe this tradition will help our children to be comfortable leading others in prayer and worship, and I hope they are impacted by it enough to carry it on with their own families some day.

Just last night, as my youngest son was clearing his place (it was his turn with the Prayer Plate) he said, “whoa, I better be careful; this is the most important plate in the house!” And he’s right. The most important plate in our house is not our wedding china with the real gold rim. It’s not even the china handed down to us over four generations on my husband’s side. It’s that Prayer Plate.

In some of our parishes, children and youth share their good deeds and thoughtful reflections through their weekly envelopes. In their own words, our children remind us how simple, beautiful and meaningful living as faithful stewards can be ***From a Child’s View:***

I wrote a letter to a soldier to cheer him up.

I stood up for my friend when he was being picked on.

I watched my little brother at McDonald’s play land so he could play too.

I cleaned my room, and it was a real mess!



Bulletin Bits and Pieces

Stewardship: Beholding the Sacred in our Lives

Stop for a moment. Take a look around you. What do you see that you can describe as sacred? You may first see obvious things such as a bible, a favorite rosary that was blessed, the inside of a church. What about the sacred you encounter every day of your life that may not immediately strike you as such? What about nature, the rhythm of your day, the fruits of your labors, the person standing next to you?

The ancient and traditional notion of the sacred was tied up with the notion of blessing, but not as we generally understand the concept. In ancient Hebrew times something was blessed and made holy when one acknowledged to God that He had provided it as His most purposeful and personal gift. Thus, one praised God and blessed God for His gift. When the rain was not just some natural phenomenon, but God's watering of the earth to make it fruitful, then it became holy for the steward of the harvest.

But if one took things and people for granted and simply thought of them as random objects or events that occurred in the course of time with no personal affection or concern associated with them, then they were considered profane, unblessed.

Stewardship gives us a lifetime of ongoing insight into the awe-inspiring gifts that God has given to us; the people, the things and the events in our lives. What is sacred is what we continue to discover as God's gift, not simply when we receive *new* things, but when we notice that these gifts have been there all the time. Now look around again. The sacred is all around you. *Can you see it?*

More With Less

From "Pray Always and never Lose Heart"
A Treasury of Prayers for the Christian Steward

Holy God of Wonder,
a 26 - letter alphabet creates
a never-ending list of words.



Ten simple digits,
zero through nine,
produce countless
numerical combinations.



Twelve musical notes
give birth to all of the music
in the world.



Through these reminders,
Father, keep us aware
of how very little we need
in order to have more.

Teach us in Jesus' name.

Amen

Stewarding Relationships

Good stewards know the importance of stewarding relationships; with our family members, co-workers, friends, fellow committee members and all those with whom we interact.

Part of being a good relationship steward is remembering that we each tend to approach problems from our own perspective, so it is best to look at any challenge from more than one side.

Some people complain because God put thorns on roses, while others praise Him for putting roses among the thorns.

