



The Vineyard

A bi-monthly publication from
the Development Office
of the Archdiocese of Milwaukee
and funded by the *Catholic Stewardship Appeal*

Skipping Meals can be Hazardous to Your Health

Following is a reflection that I came across some time ago. The writer's message strikes a chord, especially as we move into autumn and begin to reconnect in our parishes and schools. I hope you find it as thought provoking as I did.

"This is a thought that came into my head a couple of Sundays ago just as the Pastor started preaching, and I prayed that God's word would nourish and grow His people. It occurred to me that just like physical food, God's word nourishes us incrementally.

What I mean by this is that just like our three meals a day, it's barely possible to tell what good they're doing for us. After all, skip one and most of us can survive pretty well. But of course skip many, and our bodies will certainly begin to suffer. We'll start losing weight, getting sick, and eventually, dying of malnutrition (as sadly, so many people in the world do...).

Similarly, you may not be able to tell in yourself what effect one Sunday sermon has on your 'spiritual growth'. You might walk out of church not thinking (or recognizing) you've learned anything useful or been grown by what you've heard. Indeed, miss one sermon and in God's providence you probably won't fall away. But stop 'eating' God's word altogether, and you'll lose 'spiritual' weight, get 'spiritually' sick, and eventually 'die spiritually' of malnutrition.

*I often can't tell whether my infant son has had enough milk in one sitting, but the fact is, day by day he's growing chubbier and longer so it becomes obvious in hindsight that he is getting enough! The point is, just as physical food nourishes and grows us incrementally so does spiritual food. On both fronts you have to **trust this is the case and keep eating**, not skipping meals.*

Just as a mother can't see the growth of her children as much as great-aunt Mavis clearly can on her half-yearly visit, so you can't necessarily see your own growth day to day and week to week. But keep eating from God's word, because His word says that by it, you are growing, and He is doing His work of maturing and completing you (and me!) till the day of Christ Jesus."

See You at Mass!

- REFLECTING ON THE READINGS
- PRAYERS OF A FAITHFUL STEWARD
 - STEWARDSHIP IN ACTION
- PUTTING THINGS IN PERSPECTIVE
- ENHANCED OFFERTORY PROGRAM
- ICSC 2012 - STILL TIME TO REGISTER



"Not only in material creation do people discern God present and active, but also, and especially, in the human heart."

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

In this issue

Reflecting on the Readings

September 2nd

22nd Sunday of Ordinary Time

In the second reading today, St. James issues a challenge. He calls us to *“Be doers of the Word and not hearers only...”* These words could be a very precise definition of a faithful steward; one who serves others, takes an active role in parish ministries, and who - in word and deed - lives as a disciple of Jesus. Faithful stewards certainly are, by any definition, “Doers”.

September 9th

23rd Sunday of Ordinary Time

Today Isaiah shares encouraging words, *“Say to those whose hearts are frightened: be strong, fear not! Here is your God...”* We know that there is much fear in the world today - perhaps more - than existed in Isaiah’s time. Faithful stewards draw on their personal relationship with God for comfort, direction and strength in good times and bad. How are we tending that relationship? How are we staying close to Him?

September 16th

24th Sunday of Ordinary Time

In today’s second reading, St. James stresses that faith is really not alive without action. This premise echoes a question that we have heard posed today; if you were put on trial for being an active follower of Jesus, would there be enough evidence to convict you? For good stewards, who actively live out their faith, the answer is a resounding, “Yes!”

September 23rd

25th Sunday of Ordinary Time

In today’s gospel, Jesus continues to turn society’s idea of greatness upside down. He admonishes His disciples for arguing about who among them was the greatest. His lesson to faithful stewards is that true greatness comes from the good we do for others, not from the acclaim of the world. Faithful stewards, recognizing how they have been gifted, act from humility to serve others.

September 30th

26th Sunday of Ordinary Time

Today St. James cautions us about spending our energy simply to store up wealth, sometimes even by dealing unfairly with others.

Stewardship as a way of life is counter-cultural, calling us to share all of our resources, financial and other. Faithful stewards pray for the grace and the courage to remember that all we have has been given to us only in trust, to be used and shared for the good of all, particularly those most in need.

October 7th

27th Sunday of Ordinary Time

Near the end of today’s gospel, Jesus rebukes the apostles for trying to keep children from coming to him. He reminds his disciples, and us, that the kingdom of Heaven belongs to those with childlike trust. It is easy to become cynical in today’s world, questioning who and what to trust. Faithful stewards keep it simple - praying for the wisdom and strength to trust in God as Father and Guide.

October 14th

28th Sunday of Ordinary Time

In today’s gospel we hear the famous story about the difficulty of a rich man trying to get into heaven - a reading often when discussing financial stewardship. Yet the first reading from the Book of Wisdom speaks to the heart of true stewardship. The writer prays and pleads for the wisdom to do God’s will and proclaims that everything, even worldly riches, pale by comparison. Good stewards who are given this gift of wisdom, and live by and through this gift, need nothing more.

October 21st

29th Sunday of Ordinary Time

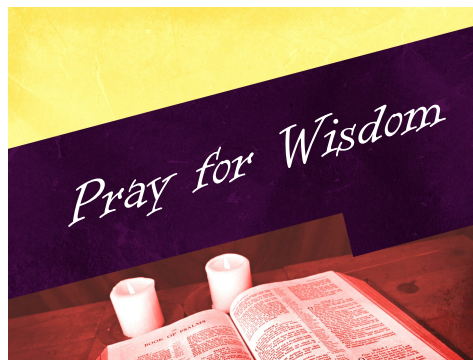
The dialog between the Lord and the disciples at the end of today’s gospel is ordinary and understated. He reminds them once again that whoever wishes to be first in God’s kingdom must be the servant of others. This encounter, like many others recognized as important only in hindsight, changed the hearts and lives of the disciples in due time.

Whether in private prayer, or in our daily encounters with others, good stewards pray for minds and hearts open to the small moments that can strengthen our relationship with God and with others.

October 28th

30th Sunday of Ordinary Time

In today’s gospel we hear Jesus say to Bartimaeus, *“Go your way, your faith has saved you.”* Can it be this simple? Is “faith” all we need to be welcomed into God’s kingdom when our day comes? These questions bring us back to St. James who tells us, *“Humbly welcome the word that was planted in you and is able to save your souls. Be doers of the word and not hearers only...”* Faith, lived as authentic stewardship, is that simple.



Prayers of a Faithful Steward

The early days of autumn can be among the busiest days of the year. Students return to school and extracurricular activities, and end-of-summer yard work and pre-winter home repairs fill our “to do” lists, competing with business and other obligations for our time. Sometimes it’s best to slow down, take a breath and listen for God’s voice as we try to focus amidst all that swirls around us.

Prayer for Focus

*Where should I begin, Jesus, to unclutter my life?
I have yielded to temptation and filled my days with more commitments than I can comfortably manage. Help me to make myself a little less busy.*

Free my time.

I have crowded my space with too much baggage: with gadgets and conveniences and possessions. Help me to let go of whatever I cling to.

Free my hands.

I have filled my head with trivial distractions: news and weather, gossip and prejudices. Help me to focus on more important concerns.

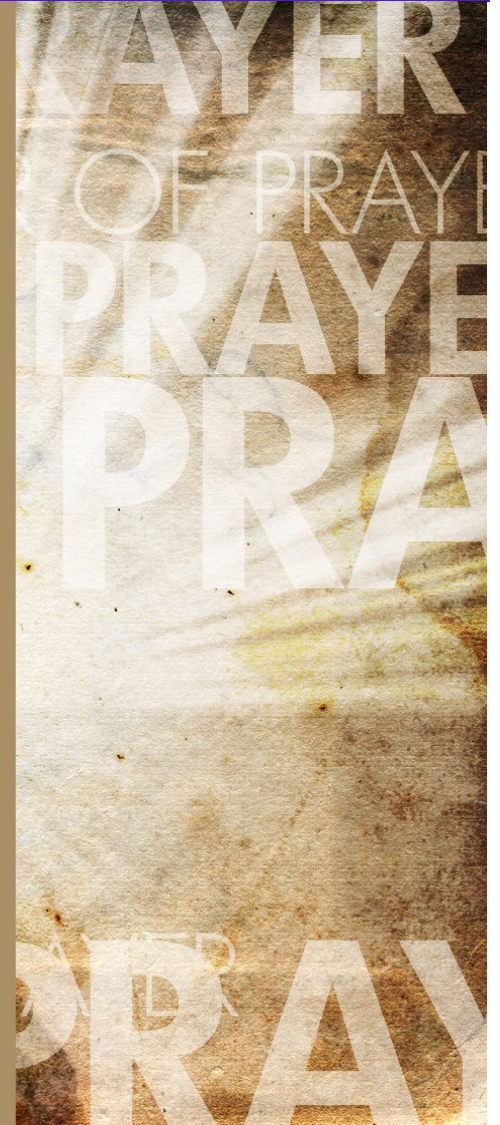
Free my mind.

Jesus, my life is cluttered with more idols than I realized. I have given them a reverence they do not deserve.

Teach me to renounce their claim on me, and end my divided allegiance. Guide me to a simpler life and more generous service.

Amen.

- Bishop Kenneth E. Untener (1937-2004)



*Be still... and know
that I am God.*



GOD, of love and mercy, you call us to be your people; you gift us with your abundant grace.

Make us a holy people, radiating the fullness of your love.

Form us into a community, a people who care, expressing your compassion.

Remind us day after day of our baptismal call to serve with joy and courage.

Teach us how to grow in wisdom and grace and joy in your presence.

Through Jesus and in your Spirit, we make this prayer.

- Called and Gifted for the Third Millennium, USCCB



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.

Here are two stories from parishioners sharing ways they have encountered stewardship in action.

Through a Simple Prayer...

“Several years ago, when our three children were younger, we had a delightful little neighbor girl who enjoyed eating dinner at our house a few nights a week. Our family would recite our traditional “Bless Us O Lord” prayer, while she listened. After a few meals at our house, we asked her to share her family prayer with us. She proceeded with her prayer, which ended with these thought-provoking words, “We are so happy to be in this family.” I remember thinking WOW, what a wonderful way to thank God for our food and call to mind the true blessing of family - our comfort, our rock, our support.

We have continued this tradition and it has traveled to our extended families and to other families who have eaten dinner in our home. Creating an atmosphere of faith and gratitude is important to us. What a simple way to call to mind our gratitude for our family on a daily basis. We are truly blessed!”

Through an 8th Grader’s Smile...

“Several of the 8th grade students sure served up something special at our parish school’s 1st grade back-to-school ice cream social. These students (along with the generous support of their parents) graciously gave of their time and talent scooping ice cream, helping with all the tasty toppings, taking great care to decorate the room with balloons, and assisted in cleaning up after many, many messy children.

*These students always had smiles on their faces and looked as though they really wanted our 1st graders to have a great back-to-school event. As organizers for the social stated afterwards, “We never would have been able to pull this off without their help.” These young people were so willing to **serve** our 1st grade families and it was evident that the 1st graders truly looked up to them as role models.*

How wonderfully blessed we are to have a community where giving of ourselves is second nature and helping out whenever there is a need is the norm and not the exception.”



“It was years ago, but it seems like only yesterday. I was suddenly confronted with serious surgery, which I never thought would happen to me. It always happened to others. The memory is still there, and I recall vividly the days before surgery. I really received the grace to ask myself, “What do I own, and what owns me?” When you are wheeled into the surgery room, it really doesn’t matter who you are or what you possess. What counts is the confidence in a competent surgical staff and a good and gracious God. I know that my whole understanding and appreciation of the gifts and resources I possess took on new meaning. It is amazing how a divine economy of life and health provides a unique perspective of what really matters.”

- Archbishop Thomas J. Murphy (1932-1997) as quoted in *Stewardship: A Disciple’s Response*

New Enhanced Offertory Program

Coming soon to a website near you!

The way many Catholics participate in active ministry is through financial support of their parish. Conducting an annual renewal of pledged support is a “best practice” that has benefits for parishes *and* for individual parishioners.

An enhanced offertory process gives parishes the chance to thank parishioners for their on-going support, educate them about the full spectrum of parish ministries and can become the foundation of a broader parish stewardship initiative. By pledging their financial support, parishioners have the opportunity to prayerfully plan their giving.

The *We Are Called* program includes elements and timelines designed to be flexible according to parish needs and resources. Sample letters, brochures, bulletin articles and homily “helps” are just a few of the resources available. Within the first weeks of September you will receive an e-mail when the entire program, including a narrated power point explaining the process and components, becomes accessible on the parish stewardship page of archmil.org. If you would like more immediate information about the *We Are Called* program contact Barb Vite via phone at (414) 769-3331 or e-mail viteb@archmil.org.



Renewing Financial Support for Parish Mission and Ministries Process and Components Overview

"Parishioners must accept responsibility for their parishes and contribute generously - both money and service - to their programs and projects. The success or failure of parish programs, the vitality of parish life or its absence, the ability or inability of a parish to render needed services to its members and the community depend upon all."
U.S. Catholic Bishops' Pastoral Letter *Stewardship: A Disciple's Response*

All people search for meaning, and want to be part of something life-giving and consequential. As people of faith, Catholics want to reach out in joy and hope to make a difference, to join in building God's earthly kingdom. One way that most Catholics actively participate in ministry is through financial support of their parish.

An Enhanced Offertory Process provides the opportunity to...

- ... thank parishioners for their on-going generosity
- ... educate and inform parishioners about the full spectrum of parish ministries
- ... encourage parishioners to embrace the mission of the parish
- ... offer an opportunity for parishioners to fulfill their need to give
- ... begin to form parishioners in an understanding and practice of sacrificial giving
- ... invite parishioners to prayerfully consider increasing their financial giving
- ... encourage parishioners to pledge their support, helping the parish to plan responsibly
- ... enable and expand the mission of the parish
- ... lay the groundwork for a broader plan of stewardship education and formation



Come to Chicago...

THERE IS STILL TIME TO REGISTER!

The International Catholic Stewardship Council (ICSC) is a professional organization recognized internationally as a source of education, networking and information to advance the ministry of Christian stewardship as a way of life. At ICSC conferences participants...

Come together as a Eucharistic people

The annual conference is a wonderful time of grace; a time where you not only learn more about stewardship, but are inspired and spiritually nourished by the gathering.

Are inspired by engaging and knowledgeable speakers

Over 70 presenters share their experiences of stewardship, providing insightful presentations addressing interesting and timely topics.

Exchange new ideas

ICSC conferences draw together Catholics from all over the world to cultivate friendships, network and share new ideas in parish stewardship

Come away with a renewed sense of energy and faith

Participants return to their parishes refreshed and invigorated, ready to share the beauty and richness of the Gospel call to stewardship with others.

If you want to:

- ◆ learn more about stewardship best practices
- ◆ see examples of stewardship communications from parishes nation-wide
- ◆ hear some of the most inspiring, nationally known stewardship speakers
- ◆ share ideas, discover new methods and get recharged and reenergized

...then, come to Chicago!

Non-member parishes attending the conference for the first time, may take advantage of the archdiocesan membership to register at the member rate.

**For more information about the 2012 conference,
or about parish membership in ICSC**

**go to <http://catholicstewardship.org>
or contact Barb Vite by phone (414) 769-3331 or e-mail: viteb@archmil.org**