

# The Vineyard

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

## Insightful Stewardship

Some basic truths are right there before everyone's eyes, but not perceived. When such a truth is discovered, it's not because of a long process of reasoning. It simply comes in a sudden flash of insight. It just plain dawns on a person.

For example, children, even teenagers, sometimes think that everything their parents do for them is simply what mothers and fathers do - wash the clothes, make and serve the meals, earn the money, care for them when they're sick; fulfilling every need. Children take all this for granted, like the air they breathe.

When do sons and daughters suddenly realize that all this was hard work, sacrifice? Many adults say that they themselves didn't get this flash of insight until they had children. Suddenly, they saw everything differently.

When do God's sons and daughters realize that everything they have really comes from God, belongs to God, and that they are stewards and managers of goods that don't belong to them. . . .that God intended that they use these gifts for the benefit of others?

It dawns on some people early in life, some on their deathbed, and others miss it entirely.

If and when that insight does come, it often doesn't come from a long reasoning process. It's one of those deep down truths that simply dawns on a person in a flash of insight. It is, in the end, a grace from God.

**To catch that insight, and live by it,  
is called stewardship.**

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*"Then the Lord God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it."*

Genesis 2:15

# Reflecting on the Readings

## May 1st - 2nd Sunday of Easter

In our world today it might be easy to become a “doubting Thomas”. We renewed our baptismal promises on Easter Sunday, including the promise to make our faith “constantly grow in our hearts”. God gives us the grace through baptism to proclaim our belief and “rejoice with an indescribable and glorious joy.” As good stewards, let us live our baptismal promises, banishing doubt and trusting in our God.

## May 8th - 3rd Sunday of Easter

In the gospel reading today two disciples recognized Jesus in the breaking of the bread and rushed back to witness to others. Do we recognize Jesus as the Risen Lord in the Eucharist? Do we rush out to tell others the good news? This Easter season would be a great time to begin living our faith with energy and gusto!

## May 15th - 4th Sunday of Easter

There are very few friends and family members that we cannot identify by their voice, but do we know the “voice” of Jesus? Do we hear His voice through the people and events in our lives? Do we hear His voice in prayer, when we stop speaking and listen - listen for God’s will for us? As faithful stewards hearing His voice our response must be, “Yes, Lord!”

## May 22nd - 5th Sunday of Easter

In today’s gospel Jesus tell us, “Amen, amen, I say to you, whoever believes in me will do the works that I do, and will do greater ones than these, because I am going to the Father.” Faithful stewardship requires action. While living the gospel can sound like an abstract idea, it can be as simple as offering a kind word to a harried co-worker, saying a prayer while waiting at a red light or holding the door for someone who needs help - especially when we are in a hurry.

## May 29th - 6th Sunday of Easter

In today’s gospel Jesus refers to the Holy Spirit as “the Spirit of Truth, whom the world cannot accept.” In our 21st century world, the truth can be difficult to see in a culture focused inward toward “self”. When walking a stewardship path becomes difficult, let us remember to call on the Holy Spirit to help us find the right path to live as God intends.

## June 5th - 7th Sunday of Easter

Jesus came from the Father to accomplish a mission. We, too, have been called to do our part to follow in the footsteps of Jesus. Each of us has a distinctive calling- a mission unique to each individual and entrusted to us by the Father. In today’s gospel Jesus prayed for the disciples He was about to leave behind and His prayer extends to each of us as we work to fulfill our mission as faithful stewards of God’s gifts.



## June 12th - Pentecost Sunday

Today’s second reading is often quoted when parishes renew Time & Talent; “There are different kinds of spiritual gifts, but the same Spirit; there are different forms of service, but the same Lord.” Another line in St. Paul’s letter speaks directly to the heart of stewardship; “To each individual the manifestation of the Spirit is given for some benefit.” Each person’s gifts are unlike any other. How does the Spirit manifest itself in you?

## June 19th -Trinity Sunday

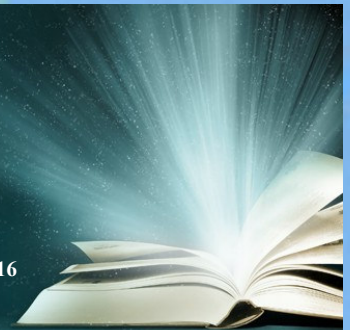
St. Paul’s directives to the Corinthians in today’s second reading are just as appropriate for our modern parish communities; “...encourage one another, agree with one another, live in peace.” We all have our own opinions, yet stewardship calls us to work together for the betterment of all. Faithful stewards recognize that cooperation and collaboration are critical for the health of every parish community.

## June 26th - Body and Blood of Christ

In today’s first reading, Moses encourages the people of Israel to remember all that the Lord has done for them. True stewardship flows from the understanding that everything we have, our talents, our treasure, our very lives, are gifts from God. When we stop to consider how very blessed we are, we can’t help but respond by sharing with joy!

*“God so loved the world that He gave His only Son so the everyone who believes in Him might not perish but might have eternal life.”*

John 3:16





# Spring into Stewardship

## Dividing Gifts Multiplies Them

A man planted a garden for relaxation. He turned the soil, planted seeds and watered diligently. He waited impatiently to see how big his herb plants would become and how tall his flowers would grow, but the plants struggled.

The man purchased fertilizer and books about gardening, and his plants began to do better, but he never used the herbs for cooking or brightened his home with a bouquet.

One afternoon, after working in the garden, the man realized that he had locked himself out of his house. He had no choice but to wait for his neighbor, to whom he had given a spare key, to return from work. When his neighbor arrived with the key, she commented on the plants in his garden. On an impulse, the man cut some of the herbs and a large bouquet of baby's breath for her.

A couple of weeks later, as the man worked in his garden, he noticed that the herbs he shared were fuller than before and the baby's breath plant blossomed with many more tiny white flowers. He began to make a practice of giving herbs and flowers to his neighbors. He was surprised to see that rather than dying out, all the plants grew stronger than they were before. The more he shared the fruits of his labor, the more bountiful and joyous his efforts grew.

Stewardship is sharing what we have been given with others for the benefit of all. Stewardship is not something we do, it is who we are as disciples of Jesus. By practicing true stewardship in our lives, we will receive much more than we give. Try it – you'll like it!

### A Faithful Steward's Spring Prayer

*Wondrous Creator,*  
We thank you for this day!

For the sun that brings warmth and  
hope for humankind  
For the darkness which brings rest and renewal...  
*Help us to be good stewards of Your creation*

*Giver of Life,*  
We thank you for this day!

For the rain that blesses the earth  
For the earth that brings forth food to nourish our  
bodies and beauty to nourish our souls...  
*Help us to be good stewards of your creation*

*Father of Humankind,*  
We thank you for this day!

For our family and friends whom you have set  
as our companions on the journey,  
For each human made in your image  
as a gift to our world,  
For every new breath, every new chance,  
every new possibility...  
*Help us to be good stewards of Your creation*

*Amen.*

### *Is Yours an Award-Winning Parish?*

The International Catholic Stewardship Council annually recognizes parishes that give witness to stewardship in many areas of parish life. The Council recognizes parishes that have best promoted the spirituality and practice of stewardship in individual categories including video, parish-created print materials and capital campaigns.

Parishes may also apply for the ICSC Certificate of Recognition for demonstrating an overall stewardship effort in areas including pastoral areas such as prayer and worship, formation and education, offering hospitality, cultivating leadership, communications and promoting stewardship of time, talent and treasure.

The Archbishop Murphy Award recognizes long-term, outstanding efforts in promoting stewardship as a way of life.

**The deadline for submitting all award applications is June 30th, 2011.**

For additional information and application forms contact Barb Vite ([viteb@archmil.org](mailto:viteb@archmil.org)).

*Let your light shine!*



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.

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

## A Reflection on Sacrifice

by Michael Ricci from St. Dominic Parish, Brookfield

Good morning. I'm Michael Ricci and today I come to you not as the guy who asks you to shake hands once a month, nor the audiovisual man, nor as a Parish Trustee. Rather, I am here simply as a member of this vibrant community, as a fellow parishioner who shares your love of God and St. Dominic Parish. Today, I would like to share some of my thoughts on stewardship and specifically how we can grow through sacrifice.

In planning my speech, I was having a difficult time determining where to start so I turned to the smart ones in my family, my wife Lois and our son Trevor. If you want an answer, ask a 10 year old. So I asked Trevor what it meant to sacrifice. Being a baseball fan, his reply was, "you mean when they bunt in baseball". Some follow up questions ensued and eventually we settled on the fact that the hitter freely gives himself up so the runner can advance...sacrifice.

Last weekend, I was driving by Church and saw several young men in their military dress blues...sacrifice. May God watch over all the men and women who serve this country. This week, an e-mail from a friend letting me know of the condition of a 21 year old who has battled Muscular Dystrophy his entire life and my thoughts turned to his parents...how they have sacrificed. Parents with their children...sacrifice. A couple takes in an elderly parent who can no longer manage alone...sacrifice. Parish Staff and countless volunteers who run the great programs we offer throughout this Parish...sacrifice. Parishioners building the Church we are in...sacrifice. Jesus on the Cross...the ultimate sacrifice.

What do these examples have in common? They all sacrifice willingly. They give something highly valued for the sake of something with an even greater value. To a person, I am confident they would say the decision to sacrifice was easy. They would say they receive much more than they give. And isn't that the case with all of us? Do we not receive great joy when we know we have given freely? I certainly do.

We are all at different stages in our life, with varying abilities to give. However, we share a great commonality. All that we have has come from God. He has blessed us in many ways. He has given us our very lives, our families, our earthly belongings, this community, each other. He has asked us to be good stewards...to watch over those less fortunate. He has challenged us to become Christ, each one for the sake of all. He has called us to sacrifice.

Living as faithful stewards requires us to answer questions within our own hearts; Imagine what our world would look like if we all Gave to God what is God's? Will my gifts really make a difference? Is this the right time for me to stretch, to sacrifice? I would offer this is the perfect time to sacrifice for all is possible when we put our trust in the Lord. The question that remains is not what you will give as that is for you to prayerfully consider with God, rather, I would ask you to join me and consider how the joy we will receive when we freely sacrifice will help us grow in our love for God, this Parish, and our community.

May God bless all of us as we build his Church.

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:

*I did extra chores to earn pennies for the school penny drive*

*I helped my cousin feel better when he was sad*

*Instead of playing football after school I helped set the table for the Community Banquet*

*I held the door open for others*



# Bulletin Bits & Pieces



## *Listen....*

One definition of the word “theme” is a “distinct, recurring idea”. Another definition of the word, “ a melody that is repeated, often with variations, through a piece of music” speaks directly to the heart of stewardship.

In a movie score, the theme changes to reflect what is happening on screen. The melody may be loud and strong, or quiet and gentle. Perhaps only a few notes can be heard, but somewhere, the melody is always there.

So it is with the message of stewardship in the “music” of our lives. Wonderful things happen and we are particularly thankful. We remember how blessed we are and the urge to give back to God is loud and strong. Life is going smoothly - quiet, gentle notes. During difficult times we may barely hear the stewardship call, but it is there.

The melody of stewardship, in its many variations, underscores the symphony of our lives as Catholics.

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## *Can you hear it?*



*“All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their property and possessions and divide them among all according to each one’s need.” Acts 2:44*

The **Catholic Stewardship Appeal** raises more than \$7.6 million annually to support archdiocesan ministries and programs that benefit 210 parishes and more than 643,000 Catholics throughout southeastern Wisconsin.

Stewardship is relational. None of us exists in a vacuum. We are responsible to our God and to each other every day of our lives. If stewardship calls us to share, obviously life is not just about us and “our” parish. By participating in the Appeal we come together to combine our shared resources to accomplish much more than we can as individual parish communities.

**In 2010, approximately 20% of Catholics registered in our parishes participated in the CSA. Imagine the good we could do if each parish increased participation by just 4 or 5%!**

The early Christians reached out to support their greater community. Now it’s our turn.

**For information about ministries and programs supported by the Catholic Stewardship Appeal go to <http://www.archmil.org/catholicappeal/home.htm>**

### ***A Reflection on the Spirit***

The Spirit is the part of us that responds to beauty and goodness,

that inspires us to give of ourselves,  
that calls us to worship,  
and draws us away for peaceful reflection.

The Spirit is the tender place where hope  
flutters its transparent wings,  
the gentle place where the candle of faith  
steadfastly burns,  
the green place that nurtures love,  
the dark place that harbors grief.

The Spirit is a quiet place where we can be alone  
with our beliefs in the Divine.

It is a place of compassion  
where we can reach out to others  
in the practice of those beliefs.

The Spirit joins us together even when we are strangers  
and gives us the words to speak to each other.

The Spirit lifts us above the ordinary  
and opens our eyes to even the smallest wonders.

The Spirit is the painter, the dancer, the teacher,  
the healer, the dreamer that each of us carries within.

Lord, grant us the grace to always live by and in...  
your Spirit.

Amen.