

Living Christianity [Radically] December 2007

A monthly publication for pastors and parish staff prepared by the Department of Stewardship and Development

THANKS BE TO G D

The season of Thanksgiving, Advent and Christmas offers the perfect time in our liturgical and secular calendar to reflect on the blessings in our lives. Really, any time is a good time to pause to thank God for the simple gifts of a sunrise, a stranger's smile, a meaningful conversation, our faith and parish faith community, and the essentials of food, clothing and shelter. Oprah Winfrey writes what she is grateful for in her "gratitude journal"; St. Ignatius called it his Examen, a noticing of different internal movements where he felt drawn toward God. Whatever we call it or however we do it, it is important to say "Thanks Be To God" daily.

Being grateful and thanking God, the Giver of these gifts, is integral to a life of stewardship and Christian discipleship. It is in recognizing and using our gifts that we contribute to building God's kingdom on earth. "As each one of us has received a gift, use it to serve one another as good stewards of God's varied grace" (1 Pt 4:10) Each person has been blessed with a myriad of gifts; Jesuit writer Gerard Manley Hopkins spoke of these everyday blessings when he wrote "the world is charged with the grandeur of God." We can notice this grandeur, too, when we stop, pray and reflect...and then act in a way where we experience God's hand leading us.

In 1992, the U.S. Bishops Pastoral Letter "Stewardship: A Disciple's Response" was published. This work accelerated what was already a rapidly growing stewardship movement among American Catholics. Some thought it was strange that this pastoral letter said very little about money. Instead, the Bishops asked us primarily to live our lives as disciples of Christ, and in so doing to:

Be stewards of our creation, the world in which we live.

Be stewards of our vocations, that is, to make the best use of our God-given talents.

Be stewards of the Church. This implies the giving of our time, talent and treasure to our parish.

Stewardship blossoms from true "Thanks-giving": I give because I see how blest and grateful I am.

Fra Giovanni Giocondo (c.1435–1515), a Renaissance pioneer, accomplished architect, engineer, antiquary, archaeologist, classical scholar, and Franciscan friar, is remembered most today for his letter written to Countess Allagia Aldobrandeschi on Christmas Eve, 1513. Here is a portion:

"Life is so generous a giver. But we, judging its gifts by their covering, cast them away as ugly or heavy or hard. Remove the covering, and you will find beneath it a living splendor, woven of love by wisdom, with power. Welcome it, grasp it, and you touch the angel's hand that brings it to you.

Everything we call a trial, a sorrow or a duty, believe me, that angel's hand is there. The gift is there and the wonder of an overshadowing presence. Your joys, too, be not content with them as joys. They, too, conceal diviner gifts.

Life is so full of meaning and purpose, so full of beauty beneath its covering, that you will find earth but cloaks your heaven. Courage then to claim it; that is all! But courage you have, and the knowledge that we are pilgrims together, wending through unknown country home."

All thanks be to God.

STEWARDSHIP BULLETIN INSERTS

Adapted from the Archdiocese of St. Louis

December 2, 2007

1st Sunday of Advent

"For you do not know on which day your Lord will come." Matthew 24:42

Preparations for the Christmas season remind us how much we all want to be generous. We all want to give good gifts to one another. Yet, often when it comes to giving back to God our response is, "Not yet!" We put off sharing our time, talent and treasure for another day. We say we will give when we have more time or more money. Yet, none of us knows when God will come and ask for an accounting of how we used the gifts entrusted to our care. The start of Advent reminds us not to put off our stewardship. The Lord is coming!

December 9, 2007

2nd Sunday of Advent

"Therefore, every tree that does not bear good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire." Matthew 3:10

Do you bear good fruit for Christ? Or do you spend your time, talent and treasure constantly acquiring more toys, clutter and junk? As we are immersed in the Holiday shopping season now might be a good time to evaluate what gifts do we give to God?

December 16, 2007

3rd Sunday of Advent

"Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind regain their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, and the dead are raised..." Matthew 11:4-5

When Jesus cured the sick we called it a miracle. Yet God has blessed us with many good things – our eyesight, our hearing, our talents, our health and so much more – and we often take it all for granted. The good steward recognizes every blessing in life as a miracle from God and strives to use those gifts for God's honor and glory.

December 23, 2007

4th Sunday of Advent

"The Lord's are the earth and its fullness; the world and those who dwell in it. For he founded it upon the sea and established it upon the rivers." Psalm 24:1-2

How can we take credit for the good things

in our lives when Psalm 24 reminds us that God created absolutely everything and everyone on the earth? Surely we all have an obligation to return a portion of our good fortune to the Lord, for without Him nothing would be possible.

December 30, 2007

Feast of the Holy Family

"And be thankful." Colossians 3:15

This short phrase can be the key to a life of great peace and joy. When you take time to be thankful you realize that you have been abundantly blessed. When you take time to be thankful you are more open to enjoying and sharing the many blessings in your life. As the old year ends and a new year begins, resolve to be thankful. This is the first step to living as a good and faithful steward of all God's blessings.

SAVE THE DATE

Leadership Day- February 2, 2008

Guerin College Prep

***"Taking the Spirit to the Streets:
Bringing People Closer to Christ"***

Stewardship Sessions:

A Spirituality of Money- Susan Pudelek

School as Charism of Parish - Fr. Paul Burak

Gifts Discernment: Spiritual Gifts, Enneagram, Myers-Brigg - Sue Lehocky, Dana Connell, Vanessa White, D.Min., Ann Marie Morgan

The Holy Use of Money - Mary Anderson, Rich Goode, Anne Marie Tirpak

Starting Stewardship- Fr. Tom Dore, Joe and Diana Garvey

Sustainability and Congregational Life of Parishes Going "Green"- Fr. Mike Nacius, Barbara Steinbegle and Laura Nutini, Elaine Harrison, Bob Kolorowicz

?Que Significa Actualizar una "Actitud de Gratitud?" - Fr. Bill Tkachuk

Building Capacity Through Corporate and Foundation Support - Jessica Bullock

No tengo tiempo, talento ni dinero-como puedo practicar corresponsabilidad? - David Reyes

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