

Good Morning! My name is Barb Runde and I am one of the people Father Joe has asked to speak on Stewardship. As Father told us last week stewardship is not just about raising money. It is about thanking God for all the blessings we have been given by using our time, talent, and treasure. It is a total giving of ourselves. It is a way of life that helps us to center our lives on God first. If we are able to center our lives on God we tend to become a more joyful and fulfilled person. Sometimes it requires us to make some radical changes in our lives which is never easy.

When I was young-- you know way back in the old days, we were taught about our religion using the Baltimore catechism. One of the first questions in that book was, "Why did God make you?" Answer: He made me to know Him, love Him, and serve Him in this world and the next. To me this is stewardship: using our time, talent, and treasure to know, love, and serve God. I also think in order to do that we have to be willing to sacrifice and commit. Two words people in our society today do not want to hear.

I first learned the meaning of stewardship from my parents. Even though at that time I'm sure my parents didn't know what stewardship was, they practiced it and expected us kids to do the same. Dad faithfully dropped his weekly church envelope in the collection basket every Sunday and expected us to drop our envelopes in there too. Even though we didn't receive an allowance, we were expected to put something in that envelope. My brothers were altar servers and whenever Sister Agnes called and needed a server for a special service they were expected to do it. As you can probably guess this wasn't always something they wanted to do. But Mom told them that was a sacrifice they needed to make for God as their way to thank Him for the blessings they had received. Thus the lesson of sharing time and having to sacrifice and commit. When I was in high school the Notre Dame Sisters here at T-town taught religion on Saturday morning at Shumway. I and my friend Marlene were asked by the nuns to help with this. I really had no interest in giving up my entire Saturday morning to help teach religion to third graders. However, mom again prevailed with her talk on using your time and talent to help others as a way of thanking God for all he had given me. Marlene and I alternated teaching on Saturdays at Shumway from Sept to May. Even though my initial response was negative, I ended up enjoying this ministry and I really believe it made me a happier teenager. Yes, we learned stewardship from our parents: sharing our time and talents along with making some sacrifices and commitment.

If you really want to see stewardship practiced all you have to do is look at our religious education program. The people involved in this program are sharing their time and talents with our parish by helping to provide a way for our children to learn and know about God. They are definitely serving our parish. Whether they supervise kids before class, teach, or walk kids to church they are sacrificing their time and committing themselves to be servants to our

students. What a gift we have in them! I feel I have to share one example of a person who really sacrifices to give of her time and talent. Rita has taught first grade religion on Monday and Tuesdays for many years. She is a nurse working in the ICU department at the hospital. She works from 7pm to 7am. So after her shift on Sunday evening she comes to school around 7:45a.m. on Monday morning to teach her first grade class. She is doing this for us and our children! Talk about sacrifice and commitment!

Stewardship involves all of us making a commitment to use our time, talent, and treasure a priority. As I told my fifth graders this week, we really need to think about all that God has given us in our lives before we say: No, I don't think that's for me. WE ARE ALL IN THIS TOGETHER! St. Paul didn't travel the known world inviting people to solitary relationships with God. He called them into community: into the body of Christ, there for each other. All of us have some kind of talent we can share with others. Not everyone is comfortable working with the religious ed program. There are many other ministries in this parish that could use your talents, all you have to do is look at our ministry sign-up sheet. Would you be willing to commit some of your time and talent to one of those? Maybe your talent is just being a good listener to someone else's problems or a good crier with someone who really needs to unburden their problems. Perhaps as a parent of a teen-ager your renewed commitment is to get your child to religion class and not cave in to all their excuses. That can be a tough job!

In closing, I would just like to say that our children can see and tell where our priorities are by what we do more than by what we say. Are all of us parishoners at St. Francis showing our children where our priorities are? Do they see how sharing our time, talent, and treasure with God and others comes first in our lives? Do they see us giving God our best; not just what we have left over. Are we willing to try to be good stewards? We already have a good parish with wonderful and caring people. Hopefully by practicing stewardship we can become even better. We can all truly center our lives on God and become more joyful and fulfilled people.

Thank you!