

## Stewardship

Hello, I am Dan Niemerg. When Father Joe asked if I would give a talk on stewardship during Mass, I wondered what I would say. Stewardship, what does it mean? In simplest terms, it is the act of putting God's priorities before our own. Good stewards give the first portion of their gifts of time, talent, and treasure to the Lord's work in gratitude for his many blessings he gives to us.

Good Stewards do four things....

1. We receive God's gifts gratefully
2. We nurture or use God's gifts responsibly
3. We share God's gifts justly and charitably
4. We return those gifts to God abundantly

Jesus wants each of us to be his disciple. To be his disciple we use the four things that good stewards do. We must receive all the gifts he gives us with gratitude. If we are grateful for these gifts, we praise God and honor him for giving us the gifts. We must use these gifts to serve and help others in our parish, community, and in the world. When we share these gifts as disciples of Jesus, we are living as Jesus wants us to live as good stewards.

In my own life, I can look back and see the many blessings that God has given to me. Growing up in a large Catholic family with good values, there was plenty of work to do on our dairy farm, and mom and dad made sure we had time to learn about God. I am very thankful for the Franciscan Sisters that taught me in grade school and kept me in line out at Bishop.

I remember, as a child at home during advent, we would kneel and pray the rosary in front of a statue of Jesus. If we prayed well, we could put a piece of straw in a manger for baby Jesus. I remember riding my bicycle to Mass during my summer vacation just to serve. I also recall attending Midnight Mass on Christmas Eve. After Mass, we would eat a very special Christmas breakfast. Going to Holy Week services, sacrificing during lent, and other times in church and at home helped me grow in my faith. My parents helped shape me to who I am today.

Life was not as complicated back then as it is today. On Sundays, we would go to Mass. We only did necessary work on that day. Sunday was a time for relaxing and thanking God for the many gifts we receive. My parents made sure we helped our parish with the picnic and during special breakfasts in the church hall. Sunday was a time for us to praise and thank God for our gifts.

When I graduated from college and started teaching in T-Town, I also started teaching religion to my fifth grade students. Teaching is an important part of my life. I think teaching our faith is being a disciple for Jesus and a way to give back to God for the many gifts he gives to us. Teaching is stewardship in action.

When Sister Ann was going to retire a few years ago, I had retired from education and I was once again volunteering to teach religion for our parish. I went to Father Joe and asked him if he had a replacement for Sister Ann. After he said no, I told him that I would be interested in doing the job for a couple years. A couple days later, Father Joe offered me the position. I am so grateful that he did. Doing this work for the parish makes me feel like a steward for the

parish. I feel that I am using the talents God gave me. Occasionally, I get to serve Mass, read in Church, and be a Eucharistic minister. Helping others learn about our faith is practicing good stewardship. Showing the children how we can serve others by raising money for the missions is stewardship in action. I hope the children too are learning to be good stewards.

Finding people to volunteer as a teacher, a walker, or a morning supervisor is a big part of my position. When I called one person and asked her if she would teach religion, she wanted to say no, but she said yes. Teaching is way out of my comfort zone, she said. But, she was willing to give it a try. God will help us when we face challenges, if we ask for his help. God is willing to lead us on the right path and show us the way.

Each and every one of us has much to be thankful for. God has given us many gifts. God invites us to share in his Kingdom. Are we putting God's gifts to good use as stewards for the parish? Is there something you could be doing for the parish? We all want to get to heaven. Are we doing what really matters to God? Volunteer where and when you can, and share God's gifts as good stewards. Stewardship should be practiced by all parishioners.

In summary, stewardship can change our lives forever. Stewardship helps us take responsibility for the mission of Christ. Our time, our talent, and our treasure are gifts that God gave us to share with others. Stewardship is a way to bring people closer to God. We are all God's children. He loves us every moment of our lives. Practicing good stewardship is a way to thank God for the many gifts and blessings we have received from him.