

Dear Parishioners,

This past Sunday evening the leadership of our parish attended a special workshop conducted by Terri Regan, who works as the business manager at St. John Neumann Parish in St. Charles. The topic of her workshop was parish stewardship. At first she gave a moving witness talk of her own faith journey in which she described how she made the decision to commit her life to living as a more faithful steward of the gifts God has given her. Her story was an inspiration to me. As I listened to her I jotted down a few notes of how her story impacts my own life. I would like to share these notes with you. Remember, these are my own thoughts inspired by her story.

"Faith is a gift that must be nurtured by community and sacrifice. It is nurtured by making connections, which demands searching and prayer. It is nurtured by giving it away."

"So, we are responsible for the gift. Giving up control of the gift we have is part of being responsible for it; this could even mean not understanding the 'why' question."

"We read in Matthew 21 the parable of 'A Man Had 2 Sons'. In this story a father asks a first son to go and work in the vineyard and the son says no, but later decides to go. When the father asks the second son he says yes, but doesn't go. Jesus asks the question, which son did his father's will? This story is a good model for faithful stewardship. We strive to live our yes to God's will even when our wills say no. Stewardship is a living process."

In our highly individualized world of today it is easier for us to believe that our faith is nurtured by personal efforts like individual prayer. Many people today believe they do not need organized religion, or doctrine to be people of faith. Mrs. Regan beautifully reminded us that our faith also has communal elements, our Church is universal, and we are called to live in communion with each other.

Our faith is a gift that grows in value as it is lived out in a spirit of sacrifice and praise. We are responsible for the needs of the poor and when we neglect those in need we are being more than selfish, or greedy, we are depriving others of our love and generosity. A big part of living as faithful

stewards demands that we make connections with others in our lives even when that means taking a risk to share our time, our talent, and our treasure with a community that hungers deeply for such treasures. Our families, parish, Church, and local community all demand something from us but if we don't care about that, our thoughtlessness deprives others of the gift of our faith. At the same time, that gift remains stagnant; it does not grow.

My hope is that in the coming years we will come to a deeper understanding of the stewardship mindset. STEWARDSHIP DOES NOT MEAN GIVING MONEY TO THE DIOCESE. That is only one very small part of the overall calling to faithful Christian Stewardship. Stewardship is actually a much larger, even more difficult concept. Stewardship is a way of life; it is a commitment to hear God's calling to us to go and do his work in the vineyard.

In joyful hope,

Fr. Tim Seigel,
Pastor