

Dear Parishioners,

People often think that when we talk about stewardship we are talking strictly about money. While it is true the Church cannot minister without the generous charity of parishioners, stewardship is not limited to the amount of money we give. Stewardship has a much deeper definition than financial support.

As a matter of fact, we equate the word stewardship with another word: discipleship. What is a disciple? A disciple is a person who has two very important things to do: (1) the disciple is a student; (2) the disciple puts what is learned into action. Jesus Christ is our teacher. By baptism we are his disciples. This teacher/disciple relationship begins with baptism, which for many of us is not a choice. However, by the time we are confirmed we make the choice to live as disciples. So, for the forty-two students who were confirmed last week, I want to say ***congratulations!*** I am so happy for you. I read the letters you wrote and was humbled by the fact that you chose to be confirmed in our faith. I am happy for our parish too because you have so many good qualities to offer. I truly welcome your enthusiasm and your generosity. And our parish will continue to be a source of support and encouragement for you.

Confirmation into our faith is the beginning of Christian discipleship. Confirmation is the final Sacrament of Initiation. So now is a time for the newly confirmed, and all of us, to consider some very important questions: Have we finished learning from our teacher Jesus Christ? Is there more that we can learn, or do we think we already know it all? For me personally, I know that I still have a lot to learn and so it is always important for me to read the gospels, to sit quietly in prayer on a daily basis, to use

the Catechism of the Catholic Church as a rich source of information, and to ask a lot of questions. I learn from attending Mass about what it means to be united with the Body of Christ in the Eucharist and to celebrate in communion with the saints. I learn from ministry, I learn by watching others. The day I stop learning how to be a Christian will probably never come in this lifetime.

Learning is just the first part of the definition of the word “disciple.” As Christian disciples we are also supposed to put what we learn into action in our daily lives. This is what stewardship is all about. In 1994 The Bishops of the United States came out with a pastoral letter entitled ***Stewardship: A Disciple’s Response***. In this beautiful document they define what it means to be a Christian steward in this way:

“Who is a Christian Steward? One who receives God’s gifts gratefully, cherishes and tends them in a responsible and accountable manner, shares them in justice and love with others, and returns them with increase to the Lord.”

Over the next four weeks I will write about these four characteristics of the word “Stewardship.” I believe you will see that while money is an integral part of what it means to be a Christian steward, the word “Stewardship” means so much more. As Christian stewards we follow Jesus Christ which means that stewardship has everything to do with our faith, with our spirituality, and with our decision to be disciples who learn from the Master and put what we learn into action in our daily lives.

In joyful hope,
Fr. Tim Seigel