

Dear Parishioners,

At the heart of Christian Stewardship is an attitude of deep appreciation for all the gifts God gives us. Because we are grateful for the many ways God blesses our lives we embrace a commitment to cherishing and carefully tending them.

In their pastoral letter, Stewardship: A Disciple's Response, the United States Bishops offer four characteristics for Christian stewardship. A Christian Steward...

1 – Receives God's gifts gratefully,

2 – Cherishes and tends them in a responsible and accountable manner,

3 – Shares them with justice and love for others, and

4 – Returns them with increase to the Lord.

To cherish and tend the gifts that God gives us means that we are going to be responsible for them. Think of the most beautiful gift you have ever been given. Let's use the birth of a child as an example of one of the most precious gifts God gives us. Mothers and fathers are given the awesome, miraculous power to be co-creators with God in the way they love each other. How do we cherish and tend the gift of that power? We see a wide range of possibilities in this area. Many mothers and fathers are not at all open to the possibility of giving birth and so when there is a pregnancy some very difficult decisions must be made. We know the scope of those decisions. Some choose to end the pregnancy, or to have their newborn child adopted into a family that would love to welcome and raise that child as one of their own. Some mothers and fathers who were at first reluctant often discover the richness and miraculous beauty of giving birth and in this decision they choose to be responsible and accountable for the gift of their child.

As Christian Stewards it is important to go through that process of assessing the gifts that God has given us and the value they have in our lives. Now, let's use the example of the Church. Do we cherish the gift of the Church into which we have been baptized? Are we willing to tend it carefully, to be responsible and accountable for it? How deeply do we value the gift of our faith? Again, there is a wide range of responses to the call to living as Christian Stewards. We all respond to it differently. Jesus gives us several different examples in the Gospels which tell us what we have to do.

- “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind and with all your strength... You shall love your neighbor as yourself (*Mark 12: 30-31*).”
- [G]o therefore and make disciples of all the nations. Baptize them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit (*Matthew 28:19*).”
- “If anyone wishes to come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me (*Luke 9:23*).”
- “But if I washed your feet – I who am Teacher and Lord – then you must wash each other’s feet (*John 13:14*).”

These are just a few examples of how the Gospels call us to live as Christian Stewards in the world today. We have all received an abundance of gifts from God whose love is unconditional; it cannot be measured or even fully comprehended in this lifetime. When we take the time to do an inventory of the many ways God has blessed our lives it is amazing to discover the sense of gratitude we have for them. With this gratitude we are better able to realize what we must do to cherish them, to care for them, to be responsible and accountable for them.

So often it seems we take many of God’s gifts for granted in the same way we might put a material gift up on a shelf never to be used again. As Christian Stewards we strive to see the value of God’s gifts in our lives and we try to cherish them in a way that says our lives depend upon them.

In joyful hope,
Fr. Tim Seigel