

Dear Parishioners,

Happy Pentecost! Today we celebrate the birth of our Church which came to life through the power of the Holy Spirit who graced the Apostles with the fire of God's love to preach the gospel, to baptize thousands of people, and to spread the Good News throughout the entire world. This is how our Church was born. How sacred, powerful and beautiful this gift is. But, how deeply do we appreciate this gift? What do we do with it?

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.**

Think about the greatest gifts God has given to us. What do they do? They increase with an abundance that cannot be measured. Jesus had the ability to feed thousands of people with just a few loaves of bread and some fish. He was able to take a small portion of the simplest, most basic food and make of it a nourishing meal so that those who heard him could be strengthened by his love.

In each of the Sacraments of the Church we use the most basic elements of life and yet they offer us grace beyond human understanding. The gifts God gives us grow in abundance and value for us. We have to remember, though, that they are not given simply for us to use for our own benefit. The gifts God gives are an expression of love for us that must also be given back as our expression of love for God.

So, what kind of expression of love do we make? How willing are we to provide for the Church God has given to us? Do we see the Church as a gift? How willing are we to take care of the poor? Do we see the poor as God's gift to us? How willing are we to respect the sanctity and the dignity of all human life? Do we see the value of our lives as a gift that is eternal?

Sometimes it is a temptation for us to give back just a small portion of our excess; maybe just a little bit we might have in reserve with the notion that, "It's the thought that counts." No. We are called to make a commitment to giving the best we have to offer, not the least: the best of our time, the best of our talents, the best of fruits and treasures. God has the power to miraculously transform the least of this world into

something great for us. We as humans do not have that capacity, and so the expression of love we have for God demands real sacrifice and sacrifices are not easy, nor are they cheap.

We are so willing to go into debt to buy a kind of lifestyle we want to afford for ourselves. But, when we look at the totality of our lives, and the value of our faith, how willing are we to give back to God an expression of love?

True Christian stewardship demands that we will make whatever sacrifices are necessary, even when it means we have to deny ourselves, simply because we love God; simply because we are able to see how richly God has blessed our lives. It is that vision of how blessed we are that enables us to express our love for God in our charity. God certainly deserves that much from us.

In joyful hope,  
Fr. Tim Seigel