

Dear Friends,

*“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 (Stewardship: A Disciple’s Response).”*

What do we do with the gifts God gives us? This is a simple question to answer if we know what gifts we have and their value in our lives. Parents see their newborn babies as the most precious gifts of all. They devote the best years of their lives caring for their children, and then one day, they watch their children leave home. Parents end up giving the greatest treasures of their lives to the world. Parents watch their children give their love to spouses and their own children. While the parent–child relationship can only really end in death, parents know that, while they sacrifice mightily for the good of their children, they have to let their children go.

Our faith is God’s gift given with an abundance we can never measure. Christ says we only need faith the size of a mustard seed, and that is enough to move mountains if we really believe. But what do we do with that gift? Often times the gift of faith is treasured by putting it in a nicely decorated box that gets stored away in a closet where it is only rediscovered when we are looking for something else. Gifts that are stowed away have very little value in our lives. Gifts that are given away always grow in value.

- When we teach our children to pray we see their own faith in God blossom from that curiosity of seeing baby Jesus in the church at Christmas to a life of prayer and praise to Christ who lives within each soul.
- Through our faith we are able to live in harmony with a community of believers who dedicate their lives to worshiping God with joy, unity and peace.

- Faith enables us to forgive the sins of others who harm us, thereby bringing reconciliation and peace where once there was discord.
- Because we are people of faith we are able to share generously with the poor the blessings of our own bounty, without regret, without worry.
- Our faith enables us to see the Church as a gift we treasure; one we care for with accountability to God who has given the gift to us.

When we share the gifts God gives we do so in justice and love because that is how they have been given to us. God's love for us is always just. God's justice is not meted out to us in the same way we think justice should be measured. We see justice as blind and balanced. The image of the blind woman holding the scales symbolizes our understanding of justice. For Christians, the perfect image of justice is the cross which reveals the depths of God's love. It is perfectly sacrificial. God, the owner of everything that is, gave the best gift of all, his Son, for the salvation of the world. **God will never be outdone in generosity.** However, when we honestly assess the many ways God has blessed our lives, we come to understand more fully that these gifts are given in an intimate, abounding love that grows the more it is given away. As God has loved us, so we are to love one another.

In joyful hope,
Fr. Tim Seigel