

Dear Friends,

Last week I wrote about what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. We are, first of all, students of Jesus, who strive to learn what it means to follow him. Embracing the call to follow Jesus Christ means that we make the commitment to take up our crosses each day and die to ourselves for the good of all, especially those who are poor.

That word commitment is the key to understanding what it means to be a disciple. We are responsible for how we live our faith. When we make the commitment to be serious about this responsibility we are being both disciples and stewards. Discipleship and stewardship are one and the same.

So how do we go about making that commitment to live as Christian disciples? Let's look again at what the U.S. Bishops wrote in their pastoral letter *STEWARDSHIP: A DISCIPLE'S RESPONSE*. They said a Christian Steward is 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."* These are the four characteristics of Christian Stewardship.

So, a disciple of Christ who is a steward is grateful for God's gifts: all of them, even the ones that seem to be the most challenging. Gratitude for a gift begins when we receive it. All life is a gift: the joys *and* the sorrows, the moments of elation *and* the moments of despair, the moments of excitement *and* the moments of boredom, the times of intimacy *and* the times when we find it hard to be with others. Every moment of our existence is pure gift. How do we receive the gift of life? Are we truly grateful for all that we have? Are we grateful for who we are?

Gratitude is so much more than an emotion; it is a measure of our commitment to live as Christian disciples on a daily basis. It all depends upon how we view this life we've been given. This vision of our lives is clarified for us when, in our prayer, we are able to look at the day and at

all that has happened; when we are able to look deeply into our souls and find that we are grateful for all that we have, for all that has happened and for all that we are.

When we are grateful for the gifts we have been given, we tend to take better care of them. This is true of our material possessions. This is true of our talents, our characteristics, our feelings. This is true of our relationships, especially our relationships with God, our families and friends, our community and our Church. When we are grateful for the gift of faith we are going to live it more carefully, with deeper respect and joy, no matter what happens.

So, I leave you with this question, a question I have to ask myself as well, how grateful are we for all the gifts God gives us? The answer to this question will be reflected in the commitment we make to live as Christian disciples who are stewards of all God's good gifts.

In joyful hope,
Fr. Tim Seigel