



Christian Education

A series of Sermons and Occasional Papers
From the clergy and members
of Holy Trinity Church
Forbes Park, Makati

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Comment: Insert Comment here
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Readings for this Sunday:

First Reading Genesis 18:1-15
Second Reading Romans 5:1-8
Gospel Matthew 9:35-10:8

This morning we will be thinking about Stewardship and our Treasurer and Chair of our Stewardship Committee will be giving a presentation about our current pledging situation. My job today is to try and put the message that Bruce and Sam will give into a theological and Biblical context. Fortunately, the Bible has much to say about Stewardship. If you read last weeks and read this week's newsletter you will see just a small part of both the Old and New Testaments teaching about Stewardship. In a very real sense every Sunday is Stewardship Sunday. At every Eucharist we bring the gifts that God has freely given to us and just as bread and wine are transformed so we ourselves our souls and bodies are also transformed into His service. This leads us to what Christian Stewardship really is.

Christian stewardship is grateful and responsible use of God's gifts in the light of God's purpose as revealed in Jesus Christ. Christian stewards, empowered by the Holy Spirit,

commit themselves to conscious, purposeful decisions.

Stewardship is lived out in:

1. Living and telling the Good News. Jesus tells us to go out into the world and preach the Kingdom of God. In our Gospel reading today Jesus tells us that the harvest is plentiful.
2. Sharing God in seeking justice, peace, and the integrity of creation in an interdependent universe. In the Old Testament we read of God creating the world and fulfilling His promise to bring his people to a land flowing with milk and honey.
3. Wisely employing God-given human resources, abilities, and relationships.
4. Sharing the material resources we hold and giving them in service, justice, and compassion. Jesus tells his disciples to love one another. Jesus had compassion on the harassed crowds.
5. Providing for future generations, sharing in the life, worship, and responsible stewardship of the Church and of its mission. In the First Epistle of Peter we read “In His great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.”

Both for the individual and for the community, stewardship should be a joyful act for the sake of God’s world.

Stewardship has also been defined as:

“What I do, with all that I have, after I say, “I believe”. In other words, using the gifts God has given us to do the work God is calling us to do.

There are three aspects of stewardship. These are -

Ordinary Stewardship, which is the regular practice of returning to God a portion of all that God has given us. It involves teaching ourselves how to create a life built upon the notion that all that we have is a gift from God. This includes the holy habits of keeping the Sabbath and tithing and the concept that giving regularly of our time, talent, and money to God’s work on this earth is as much a spiritual practice as prayer and worship.

We are not good at this.

Extraordinary Stewardship involves the special occasions that arise in the life of Christian communities that call us to give beyond our ordinary habit. They involve increased risk and encourage us to experiment with sacrificial giving in order to help the community realize an especially important goal, such as a special appeal. We are good at this because we know that there are generous individuals and families who will stand up when needed.

Legacy Stewardship is the way in which we address the matter of disposing of the accumulations of our lifetime. Who will use your “stuff” when you no longer need it? It is the opportunity to leave a planned gift that constitutes both a legacy to generations yet unborn and a final witness to those whom we hold most dear. Some people have placed legacies into our funds. These are for future generations not resource for this generation to use when we have fallen short in our needs.

Stewardship is a not program. Stewardship is a process, a process of conversion. When

God breaks in on a sufficiently prepared person, a new belief and practice of stewardship is developed and a joyful generosity emerges.

Good stewardship centers upon the conversion of persons, not the collection of more Pesos. Good stewardship enables church members to talk about money in ways that transform lives. God loves us just where we are in our spiritual journey ... but God doesn't want us to stay there. Change is always necessary for life to survive.

Do we look at life from the viewpoint of scarcity or abundance? If you want to be rich, give. If you want to be poor, grasp.

We know that money represents power, security, and identity in our culture. Our relationship with money is a powerful force in our lives and that money can control our lives.

We also know that many of us hear about stewardship and feel defensive. Congregations often are looking for a "quick fix" for what they believe is their financial problems. Many so-called stewardship programs do not work because they focus on moral imperatives; "should's" and "ought's", manipulative words and concepts.

However I believe that God gives us choices about how we use our money and that the use of money has spiritual as well as material implications. It is important to create a safe place in our community for everyone to experience acceptance, forgiveness and

understanding over the sometimes tough issues of money. Stewardship is what we do with everything we do and have after we say, “I believe...”

If we are to grow in our spiritual journeys and to make the “conversion connection,” we will see that stewardship offers opportunities for grace-filled experiences that will allow us all to choose to reorient the way we use our money. As we realistically consider stewardship there will be opportunities that will break the conspiracy of silence about issues of money and faith. We will be freed to talk openly about money so that we will be able to think about the role of money in our lives in an entirely new way. That then will enable us to become healthier, more mission-focused Christians.

Here are some of the Words of Conversion, the words that describe our stewardship journey, the words that invites us all to join with the Lord Jesus in the journey:

Thanksgiving, Grace, Gratitude, Generosity, Abundance, Offering, Gifts, Giftedness, Life-changing, Spiritual health.

If you were to choose one of those words to describe a new way of seeing the world, the church and God in your life, which one would it be? Do God and you control your money and possessions or does your money and possessions control God and you?