

October 7, 2018

## **Stewardship**

In the early 2000s an article in a prominent newspaper gave an assessment of the Catholic Church. As today, the Church was rocked by scandal and on the outside the future looked bleak. But, the article also surveyed the Church from inside the life of Catholic parishes; it found vibrant communities, active parishioners and a hopeful future.

I believe that article's take on the Church is as accurate now as it was almost 20 years ago. When I look at the life of our parish I see a faith-filled, dynamic and compassionate community. In this light it may be a good time to assess where we are: our worship is prayerful, we have excellent music, our school is second to none, we're committed to social justice and we evangelize in myriad ways. At last count we found more than 25 active organizations in our parish.

We can always do better and we should be ready to seize opportunities but I think we are remarkable at employing our time and talent. There is, however, a third element to the stewardship triad: treasure. In this area our parish needs to catch up with our good work. The operating budget for our parish comes almost exclusively from the first collection at Sunday mass. Like all other money matters this must grow just to keep up with inflation. Although we live frugally, our income consistently falls short of our budget. Any household head knows this can't continue indefinitely. Further, it leaves no room to take advantage of opportunities coming our way.

On the surface our collection compares favorably with other parishes but if one looks a little deeper they will see a few major contributors underwrite a substantial part of our income. The rest of us probably haven't given the size of our contribution much thought lately. I, for example, have been giving \$100 per month for the last three years. Cumulatively inflation has risen about 10% in the same period. I need to increase my contribution \$10 per month just to keep up. Accordingly, I plan to raise my gift to the parish to at least make up the difference.

Not everybody should increase their contribution. Some of us with growing families or fixed incomes may be living on the edge. After prayer and review of your budget you may conclude you can't give more. If you reach that decision I respect and applaud it. On the other hand, many of us may not even notice an increase in our donations. Some of you, through good fortune, may even be able to contribute more. Whatever the case, your gift to the parish should be part of your prayer. When the priest says, "Pray brothers and sisters that this, our sacrifice, may be acceptable to God the Father Almighty." he is raising up all our sacrifice, good works, time, talent and, yes, treasure.

Between now and the end of the Church year we'll be talking about stewardship: Next week I'll discuss how we engage our time and our talent as well as review our giving. In the following weeks your fellow parishioners will discuss sacrificial giving. We'll conclude with a commitment Sunday and follow-up in November. Consider how you value your parish and our commitment to the gospel and then prayerfully commit to support our work.

Fr. Nick