

3 STEWARDSHIP *Living as a Steward*

We continue to share some ideas and questions from the United States Bishop's Pastoral Letter on Stewardship and the disciple for your prayerful consideration during Advent. This week we look at stewardship and the Church. The reflection considers the individual and community, our responsibility for evangelization, solidarity with the poor and the Eucharist.

Community and Stewardship

Through baptism we are called into a community that is often referred to as the People of God, the Body of Christ and the Church. St Paul said that we are one body and that we are to bear with one another and preserve the unity of the Spirit. That body is made up of a collectivity of individuals and each individual has personal responsibility for the well being of the body we call Church. All members are to exercise stewardship. You and I are to use our gifts and foster the gifts of others to serve the community of faith. Our participation takes many forms but there is one common obligation that comes from our baptism—all, clergy and laity alike, are to place our gifts—our selves—at God's service in and through the Church. We are called to be disciples of the Lord and generous stewards of the Church.

Evangelization and Stewardship

Through baptism, we are called to share in the work of proclaiming the Good News—in handing on and strengthening the faith. This often means using our own initiative but more often perhaps means supporting institutions and programs for these purposes.

In the family itself the work of evangelization goes on. There is a challenge to teach children the truths of faith, to pray with them and share Christian values with them. There is a call to parents to grow in their own faith and to be true models of service to one another and beyond.

Parishes are also challenged to be true faith communities. They need faith but also good business practice and parishioners who accept responsibility and contribute generously. The success or failure of a parish depends on a generous people—not only financially but also with their time and their talents. Only by the generosity of their people can parishes become 'the vital source of faith-filled Christian dynamism they are meant to be.' That same spirit should also extend to the diocese and the wider church.

Each and every member of the church is called to evangelize. As stewards of the mysteries of God's love we desire to share that with others.

Solidarity and Stewardship

The most basic and pervasive obstacle to solidarity with those in need, the bishops say is: 'sheer selfish lack of love, a lack which people must acknowledge and seek to correct when they find it in their own hearts and lives.' There is a call to us to ensure that our lives as disciple must be seen in relation to God's larger purposes.

Eucharistic Stewardship

At the heart of all is the Eucharist. It is there we re-affirm our faith; give thanks for blessings received and strengthen our commitment to one another as members of Jesus' people. And what do we bring? Our lives; our personal vocation and the stewardship we have exercised—our contribution to the work of ministry of restoring all things in Christ. In the Eucharist the heavenly banquet where human lives are perfectly fulfilled begins.

'The glory and the boast of Christian Stewards' the bishops conclude, 'lie in mirroring, however poorly, the stewardship of Jesus Christ...'

Questions to think about and discuss

How do you connect the Eucharist with your life and your practice of stewardship?

In the church (your parish) what are your stewardship responsibilities/

Giving of time, talent and treasure has often been used to describe stewardship. Is there more to it than that?

The world, it is said, is God's village. How will you develop your convictions about solidarity with the peoples of the world?