

LIVING A STEWARDSHIP WAY OF LIFE

IT'S ALL JUST A MATTER OF THE HEART.

“What return can I make to the Lord for all the Lord has given to me?”
-- Psalm 116:12

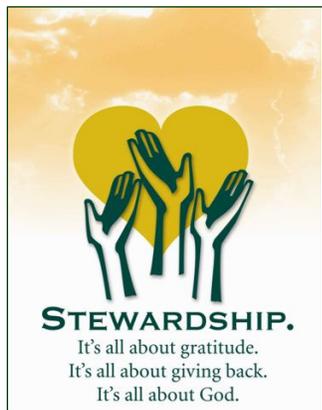
Bishop Robert Morneau says the question in Psalm 116, verse 12, haunts him every day. The auxiliary bishop in the Diocese of Green Bay, Wisconsin, says, “I have a dream that I die and the Lord says, ‘Morneau, you were an eight-cylinder car and you only used two cylinders.’”

Stewardship, according to the bishop, is about realizing how gifted one is and then properly using all the “cylinders” – all our **time, talent** and worldly **treasure** – in the right proportion. He says, “The core of stewardship is **gratitude** – a gratitude that overflows into giving as a way of thankfulness for all that God has given us.”

Stewardship is really about gratitude?

Let's face it ... for most Catholics, when they hear the word “stewardship,” they immediately think “it's all about the money.” For many of us, when the priest starts talking about the need for a “grateful heart,” the eyes glaze over, the ears shut down, and the brain thinks “how much money does that man think we have!?”

But Stewardship isn't a scheme to bring in more money or volunteers. It's not a “program” or a “campaign.” Stewardship is a Way of Life – where stewards start to look at **everything good** as a gift from God.



As our new Stewardship logo implies, Stewardship is about giving back. It's about offering up your grateful heart to your Heavenly Father. In fact, Stewardship is all about our intrinsic need to give back to God.

It took him a while, but long-time parishioner Ed Carey finally learned that.

Ed and his wife Crystal were there in Holy Trinity's infancy. He was around when Holy Trinity met in a school gym, when the baptismal font was an acrylic salad bowl, and when “meeting in the parish Social Center” meant getting together at Pat and Gene Murphy's.

Ed considered himself a faithful – and faith-filled – Catholic. He made it to Mass most Sundays, and he was often the first to volunteer for projects at the parish. Ed considered it an honor to give freely of his time and his talent. After all, he felt both were gifts from God anyway.

His treasure was a different story. That was all his.

Each week at Mass, Ed says he would open his wallet as the basket approached and drop in his dollar bill. (As Monsignor Kidder often jokes, Ed's dollar must have felt very much at home in that Catholic collection basket ... surrounded by so many other dollar bills.)

But one day, the Holy Spirit must have been at work in the Carey house. Ed added up how much of his treasure he had given back to God that year and realized it was far less than he spent on just a single evening out with Crystal. It dawned on Ed that the sum total of his gratitude for all God's goodness in his life amounted to the paltry amount of just one dollar a week.

Of course, God didn't need Ed's money, and God didn't really care if Ed put \$1, \$100, or \$1000 in the collection basket. But what Ed realized is: *it was Ed who had the need to give*. It was Ed who yearned to sacrificially give back because it was the only way he could show how grateful he was to God.

From that day on, Ed's attitude about his treasure matched his attitude about the time and talent God had also given. He realized that everything good comes, not from our own hard work or brilliance, but from our Heavenly Father who loves us enough to gift it to us in the first place.

What Ed will tell you now is that his attitude about money back then signaled that he hadn't truly given up his heart to the Lord. Maybe he had given up part of it, but it took the Holy Spirit to make Ed see that living as a steward meant radically changing the way he looked at life.

Ed will also tell you that it all begins with prayer ... at home, with your family ... eventually leading to the church, where we join together as a community of believers to receive Christ into our hearts during Eucharist.

Ed came to understand that, more than anything else, what God wants most is our heart.

Later this fall, Holy Trinity will undertake something unique in the Sacramento Diocese. We will invite each household in our parish community to make a commitment to a Stewardship Way of Life.

For the second year in a row, families with children in our school ministry have been offered the opportunity to live the life of a steward. Most of these families will tell you that, in the spring of 2005, the concept of Stewardship was as foreign to them as a French film with no subtitles. But now talk to any of the 160 families who have made a genuine, heart-felt commitment to give back to God and you'll hear a totally different story.

You'll hear of one family who lost a young son to cancer but found in their sorrow a faith community which completely enveloped them in prayer and love. You'll hear of another family who struggled to pay its tuition, only to have it taken care of by a man they'd never even met. You'll hear of a seven-year old who hoarded every dollar she'd ever gotten, yet felt convicted to part with \$22 as her "gift of gratitude" in the Christmas collection because, as she told her mom, "God is important and does so many good things."

And you'll hear, over and over again, of families who came to rely on God's providence and found their lives completely transformed. As they trusted more in God, these families experienced more deeply the love of the Blessed Trinity, finding with it the peace and contentment that can only come from truly offering up their hearts to Christ.

Over the next few weeks, you'll hear some of their stories at our weekend Masses. And you'll hear how, once they made a commitment to a Stewardship Way of Life, their loving Father took over ... giving them the grace, as Bishop Morneau said, to use properly all the "cylinders" – all our **time**, **talent** and worldly **treasure** – to give glory to God.

And then as we approach the Thanksgiving holiday – as our minds naturally focus on all the many blessings in our lives – we'll invite everyone to offer up their grateful hearts to the Lord. Everyone from the youngsters in our Faith Formation classes to the many senior citizens who fill our pews at daily Mass will be invited to make the "leap of faith" to a Stewardship Way of Life.

Our hope is that Holy Trinity will be known as that place on the hill where hands constantly reach up in praise and gratitude to our Heavenly Father ... and where every parishioner knows that Stewardship truly is all just a matter of the heart.