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Stewardship Bulletin Reflections *Year C*

Office of Formation for Discipleship
*Parish Vitality & Stewardship**

*What follows are time and talent stewardship reflections for Year C intended for use in parish bulletins and other relevant publications. The summer months of July and August have been excluded as the majority of parishes do not have bulletins during this time. If you do not have the space for the full reflection, a brief summary of it has been included for your convenience of use. Years A and B can be found on our stewardship website at:

<https://www.archtoronto.org/stewardship>.

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1st Sunday of Advent

1st Reading: Jeremiah 33.14-16

2nd Reading: 1 Thessalonians 3.12 – 4.2

Gospel: Luke 21.25-28, 34-36 – *The Coming of the Son of Man*

A New Season of Stewardship

We have arrived at the beautiful and powerful season of Advent. It is a season to prepare in awe and wonder for the coming of Christ at Christmas, His coming as a tiny babe wrapped in swaddling clothes. It is also a period to prepare for the final coming of Christ as well as our own individual day of judgement at the end of our lives. We will all be called to give an account of how we used the gifts God gave us to better serve Him and the Church. Essentially, Advent is a season of stewardship.

The readings this Sunday quickly call our attention to the need to be aware of our judgement. The Gospel boldly warns, “Be on guard so that your hearts are not weighted down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of this life.” It is so easy for us to lose focus of our heavenly destination by excessive preoccupation with the pleasures and worries of this life. To avoid this pitfall Jesus says to “be alert at all times, praying that you may have the strength.”

During Advent, we stewards must ask ourselves some difficult reflective questions. Are we staying faithful to our prayer life? Are we using all of our energy to offer our time and talents to our parish community? Are we seeking reconciliation and forgiveness in the sacrament of Confession for the times we’ve failed? Are we living for the present moment or for our heavenly home? Let us get ready for the Lord’s coming and prepare with awe and wonder.

Summary

The readings this Sunday quickly call our attention to the final coming of Christ as well as our own individual day of judgement at the end of our lives. It is so easy for us to lose focus of our heavenly destination by excessive preoccupation with the pleasures and worries of this life. This Advent season, let us heed the advice of Jesus to “be alert at all times, praying that you may have the strength.”

2nd Sunday of Advent

1st Reading: Baruch 5.1-9

2nd Reading: Philippians 1.3-6, 8-11

Gospel: Luke 3.1-6 – *The Proclamation of John the Baptist*

A Season for Evangelization

In the Gospel this Second Sunday of Advent we hear about the proclamation of John the Baptist. John's vocation in life was to "prepare the way of the Lord, [and] make his paths straight." He played the vital role of closing out the line of prophets that all pointed to Jesus. As stewards, all of us are called in a similar way to imitate John the Baptist and point others to Christ.

Evangelization is an essential aspect of our stewardship. One of the greatest gifts we can ever receive is the knowledge and love of Christ in our lives. A gift as great as this cannot be held for ourselves but must be shared with as many people as possible. This Advent season, let us help share the true meaning of Christmas to our friends and family members, especially those who may have fallen away from their faith.

However, all evangelization must be done in truth and charity. St. Thomas Aquinas says, "To convert somebody go and take them by the hand and guide them." This is the crucial image we must keep in mind as we strive to spread the faith. Evangelization requires work. We must lovingly and patiently meet others where they are and slowly walk with them as they discover the mysteries and beauties of the Church. Perhaps one action we can try is to invite someone to Mass with us next week. Let us strive to use this season of Advent to grow in our spirit of evangelization.

Summary

In the Gospel today we hear of the proclamation of John the Baptist, and as stewards, all of us are called to imitate him and lead others to Christ. St. Thomas Aquinas says, "To convert somebody go and take them by the hand and guide them." We must lovingly and patiently meet others where they are and slowly walk with them as they discover the mysteries and beauties of the Church.

3rd Sunday of Advent

1st Reading: Zephaniah 3.14-18a

2nd Reading: Philippians 4.4-7

Gospel: Luke 3.10-18 – *The Proclamation of John the Baptist*

An Attitude of Gratitude

“Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice.” These are the beautiful words we hear from St. Paul on this Gaudete Sunday. This Third Sunday of Advent is a time for joy in the midst of the waiting and preparation for Christmas. It is a reminder for us that despite the crosses and difficulties of our lives, the joy of Jesus’ birth should always shine brightly.

One way in which we can cultivate a spirit of joy is through an intentional “attitude of gratitude.” Former U.S. president, Theodore Roosevelt, once said that “comparison is the thief of joy.” When we compare our lives, possessions, gifts and attributes with those of others, we inherently become ungrateful for the blessings God has placed in our lives. If we begin to thank God for all of the good things in our lives, we will quickly realize that there are far more things to be joyful about than upset over.

This Advent, as society is trying to make Christmas more and more materialistic, let us take some time to be grateful for all the things we already have. Perhaps one tangible way we can express our gratitude is to offer our time and talents to others this Christmas. For example, we could visit a nursing home or a soup kitchen or perhaps help with a toy drive for those who are less fortunate than us. As stewards, let us constantly strive to be grateful for our blessings and then seek to share them generously with others.

Summary

On this Gaudete Sunday we are reminded that despite the crosses and difficulties of our lives, the joy of Jesus’ birth should always shine brightly. If we begin to thank God for all of His blessings, we will quickly realize that there are far more things to be joyful about than upset over. Perhaps one way we can share this joy is by offering our time and talents to help others this season, whether it be at a nursing home, a soup kitchen or helping with a toy drive.

4th Sunday of Advent

1st Reading: Micah 5.2-5a

2nd Reading: Hebrews 10.5-10

Gospel: Luke 1.39-45 – *The Visitation*

Lessons from our Mother

Mother Mary becomes the focal point of the Gospel on this fourth Sunday of Advent. Our Lady, shortly after discovering that she will conceive the Son of God, goes in haste to assist her cousin Elizabeth. After Jesus, Mary is the perfect model and example of how to live a life of deep stewardship. Let us take some time to reflect on this episode and glean insights on how we can better imitate her.

Firstly, we can learn a great lesson from how Mary “went with haste” to help Elizabeth. As stewards, we should not sit idle by and be half-hearted in our attempts to serve our neighbour. Whenever we see a need in our parish community, let us strive to utilize our gifts to readily offer our help and support.

Secondly, we should try to imitate Mary in her role of bringing Jesus to others. It wasn’t so much Mary who brought help and comfort to Elizabeth, but rather, it was the presence of Jesus dwelling within her. As stewards, we need to constantly remind ourselves that it is not our own merits that bring about good and conversion in our parish. Rather, we must realize that everything is a result of the grace of God that is working through us. Let us conclude with the beautiful words of St. Teresa of Calcutta who says, “I’m a little pencil in the hand of a writing God, who is sending a love letter to the world.”

Summary

After Jesus, Mary is the perfect model and example of how to live a life of deep stewardship and we can learn a great deal by reflecting on her visitation. Firstly, we should imitate Mary’s “haste” in her visitation so that whenever we see a need in our parish community, we can readily use our gifts to help. Secondly, just as Mary brought the Child Jesus with her in her womb, we too need to constantly remind ourselves that it is not our own merits that bring about good, but Christ dwelling within us.

Feast of the Holy Family

1st Reading: 1 Samuel 1.20-22, 24-28

2nd Reading: 1 John 3.1-2, 21-24

Gospel: Luke 2.41-52 – *The Finding of Jesus in the Temple*

Building Families on Prayer

The Holy Family went through many of the same experiences that all parents and children experience today. They too would have had moments of great joy and difficult trials as well as many moments of simple ordinary life. Jesus, Mary and Joseph are the perfect example of how families should live in holiness and stewardship. Let us take some time today, on this Feast of the Holy Family, to seek ways to imitate them.

The Gospel from Luke recounts how “every year the parents of Jesus went to Jerusalem for the festival of the Passover.” Mary and Joseph took their faith very seriously and sought to pass on their beliefs to their child. They realized that while there are many important things that a child needs to grow, their relationship with God should be their first priority. They would have also taken Jesus to the synagogue and taught him how to pray and read the scriptures.

We can take their example to heart by striving to make our faith the highest priority in our families as well. We can strive to be great parental stewards just like Mary and Joseph. For starters, we should make attending Sunday Mass the most important aspect of our week. We can supplement this by regularly going as a family for times of Confession and trying to pray together at home. One beautiful practice we can try to adopt is praying the Rosary together. If an entire rosary together is too difficult due to everyone’s schedules, perhaps we can pray just one decade together. Let us commit to making our families beautiful and holy just like that blessed family from Nazareth.

Summary

The Gospel from Luke today recounts how “every year the parents of Jesus went to Jerusalem for the festival of the Passover.” Mary and Joseph took their faith very seriously and sought to pass on their beliefs to their child. We can take their example to heart by striving to make our faith the highest priority in our families as well by teaching the importance of the Mass and family prayer.

Epiphany of the Lord

1st Reading: Isaiah 60.1-6

2nd Reading: Ephesians 3.2-3a, 5-6

Gospel: Matthew 2.1-12 – *The Visit of the Wise Men*

Being a Visible Witness

As we continue along in this wondrous season of Christmas, we are invited to reflect on the Epiphany of the Lord this Sunday. The word epiphany means “to make manifest” or “to make known.” So on this feast day we are celebrating how God made himself known to all the nations, which is symbolized through the visit of the foreign Magi. As stewards, we are called to help the Church in her efforts to continue to make Christ known to the ends of the earth.

The way of stewardship is essentially a call to evangelization. The greatest gift we can share with others is not money or food, but the knowledge and love of Christ. Pope Francis says that “we cannot keep ourselves shut up in parishes, in our communities, when so many people are waiting for the Gospel!” We must go out of our comfort zone to bring others to Jesus.

One way we can evangelize others is by simply living as visible Catholic disciples in our world. In today’s secular culture, any act of religiosity is seen as a radical witness of our faith. For example, whenever we are eating in public, we can begin with the sign of the cross and our grace before meals. Moreover, St. John Paul II said that we should not be “ashamed to recite the Rosary alone, while you walk along the streets to school, to the university or to work, or as you commute by public transport.” Let us strive to be a sign of our faith to the world.

Summary

The feast of the Epiphany of the Lord celebrates how God made himself known to all the nations, which is symbolized through the visit of the foreign Magi. As stewards, we are called to help the Church in her efforts to make Christ known to the ends of the earth and we can do this by simply being a visible witness of our faith. Let us strive to make small actions that display our love for Christ such as saying grace before meals in public, praying the rosary on the bus or saying “God bless you” when someone sneezes or we say goodbye.

Baptism of the Lord

1st Reading: Isaiah 40.1-5, 9-11

2nd Reading: Titus 2.11-14; 3.4-7

Gospel: Luke 3.15-16, 21-22 – *The Baptism of Jesus*

Becoming Role Models

This Sunday we celebrate the feast of the Baptism of the Lord. The Catechism says that the sacrament of “baptism is the basis of the whole Christian life, the gateway to life in the Spirit and the door which gives access to the other sacraments. Through Baptism we are freed from sin and reborn as sons of God; we become members of Christ, are incorporated into the Church and made sharers in her mission.” Let us reflect on how Jesus’ baptism can teach us more about our own baptism.

Firstly, Jesus didn’t need to get baptized because he was already without sin. However, in doing so, He became a model for how we should be baptized for the forgiveness of our sins. Similarly, as stewards we are called to be authentic models of the faith to others. When people see us, do they see what it means to be a disciple? We should be examples of how to live a holy and virtuous life so that others may be inspired by our lives of stewardship.

Moreover, not only is it important to do good, but we must also consciously try to avoid anything that may scandal others. All of the baptized, especially stewards, represent Christ and the Church. If we perform actions that are negative or hurtful, people who observe us may be turned away from the faith. Of course, we are all human and are bound to make mistakes, but we should strive to avoid anything that may significantly hinder others from accepting the faith. Let us always turn to Jesus for help, our true model of holiness and stewardship,

Summary

As we celebrate the feast of the Baptism of the Lord, we should first realize that Jesus didn’t need to be baptized but rather did so in order to give us an example to imitate. Similarly, as stewards we are called to be authentic models of the faith so that others can be inspired by our witness. Moreover, it is extremely important that we avoid anything that may scandal others because this could drive them away from the Church. Let us strive to be true models of the faith.

2nd Sunday of Ordinary Time

1st Reading: Isaiah 62.1-5

2nd Reading: 1 Corinthians 12.4-11

Gospel: John 2.1-12 – *The Wedding at Cana*

Lessons from Cana

In the Gospel this Sunday we hear about Jesus' first miracle. Jesus was with His mother and disciples at a wedding in Cana when the wine had run out. Mary asked Jesus to help and He in turn changed six large jars of water into delicious fine wine. Let us take some time to reflect on this extraordinary event and see how it can influence us in our life of stewardship.

Firstly, we can learn a beautiful lesson about the role of Mary in our lives from this scene. It was our Blessed Mother who noticed that the wine was running out and she was quick to intervene. Mary has a true mother's heart and is very in tune with the needs of all her children. Whenever we are in a time of trial we should run to Mary and trust that she will console us as a mother consoles her young. Perhaps the next time we experience a moment of difficulty, let us take a moment to stop, consider the loving embrace of Our Lady and say a Hail Mary.

Additionally, from this episode we can learn a great deal about trust and obedience from the servants whom Jesus instructed. The Gospel says that the servants had "drawn the water" from the jars. The servants saw the cup filled with water, yet they still trusted that something remarkable would happen when they handed the cup to the chief steward. Sometimes from our perspective nothing remarkable is happening in our good works of stewardship. However, let us strive to trust that God can take our simple acts and bring about great miracles through them.

Summary

We can learn a great deal about stewardship from the account of the Wedding at Cana that we read in the Gospel today. Just as Mary was the first to notice and intervene at the wedding, we can be assured that whenever we run to her in a time of trial, she will readily come to our aid. Secondly, we should seek to imitate the servants who trustingly obeyed Jesus and strive to trust that God can bring about great miracles through our small acts of stewardship.

3rd Sunday of Ordinary Time

1st Reading: Nehemiah 8.2-4a, 5-6, 8-10++

2nd Reading: 1 Cor. 12.12-30

Gospel: Luke 1.1-4; 4.14-21 – *Jesus Reads in the Synagogue*

Embracing our Uniqueness

In today's second reading St. Paul teaches us a great lesson that can enrich our lives of stewardship. He says, "Just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ." We are made up of many different body parts that each have their own important and distinct role to play in order for the entire body to live. It is the same way in the Church.

The Church is made up of many individuals who are all uniquely and wonderfully made. If we tried to change ourselves to become like someone else, we would be robbing the Church of our own unique contributions. St. Therese uses a beautiful image of a garden to express the importance of embracing who God made us to be. She says, "The splendor of the rose and the whiteness of the lily do not rob the little violet of its scent nor the daisy of its simple charm. If every tiny flower wanted to be a rose, spring would lose its loveliness."

In our lives of stewardship, these different types of flowers represent how all of us have our own unique set of gifts from God. When we recognize that we each have our own strengths, we are less likely to compare ourselves to others and we begin to rid ourselves of envy and pride. We all have a role to play in our parish communities. Let us gratefully acknowledge the unique gifts God has given us and seek ways to offer them back to the Church.

Summary

In today's second reading, St. Paul tells us that just as the body is made up of many individual parts, so too the church is made up of many individual disciples, all of which have an important role to play. We each have a unique set of gifts and talents that God has bestowed only on us. Let us gratefully acknowledge these unique gifts us and seek ways to offer them back to the Church.

4th Sunday of Ordinary Time

1st Reading: Jeremiah 1.4-5, 17-19

2nd Reading: 1 Corinthians 12.31 – 13.13

Gospel: Luke 4.21-30 – *The Rejection of Jesus at Nazareth*

Sharing the Love of Christ

This Sunday we hear St. Paul's famous discourse on love from his first letter to the Corinthians. God is Love. Therefore, love is at the very core of who we are as a Christian people. In order to be faithful disciples of Christ and authentic stewards, we must fully embody what it means to love. Let us take some time to reflect on why love is so important and then on how we can let love infuse every act of our stewardship.

St. Paul says that even if we were to serve Christ and do many good works, if we didn't have love we would "be nothing." Love is what makes our stewardship have significance. Without love, our good works can be seen as a form of social volunteerism. However, when we truly love those whom we serve, we do a great service for them because we point them to the Love of Christ. Above all of our material needs, we all have a great need to be satisfied with a love that never fails which can only be found in Christ. That is why it is so important to serve others with love.

But how can we infuse our all acts with love? The simple principle remains that we cannot give what we do not have. In order to love others with God's love, we must first be filled with that same love through our practice of prayer. Let us take a few minutes each day to realize just how deeply Christ loves each and every one of us. We can then go out and set the world on fire with His love.

Summary

In today's second reading, St. Paul says that even if we were to serve Christ and do many good works, if we didn't have love we would "be nothing." When we truly love those whom we serve, we do a great service for them because we point them to the Love of Christ. Let us strive to love others through our stewardship by first being filled with God's love through our practice of prayer.

5th Sunday of Ordinary Time

1st Reading: Isaiah 6.1-2a, 3-8

2nd Reading: 1 Cor. 15.1-11

Gospel: Luke 5.1-11 – *Jesus Calls the First Disciples*

Using our Gifts for Discipleship

In the readings this Sunday we are invited to reflect on the call to discipleship that we all receive as Christians. Just as Jesus called His first disciples to closely follow Him, so too are we called to follow Him in an ever deeper way through our commitment to stewardship.

In the Gospel today we see Jesus getting into Peter's fishing boat so that He could preach to the vast crowds that had come to see Him. Jesus used Peter's possessions to help with His ministry. Peter, like a good disciple, obeyed and cooperated with Jesus' request and Jesus was able to further spread the Good News to those who had gathered around Him.

So too in our lives of stewardship, are we allowing Jesus to use the gifts we possess, namely our time and talents, so that others can come to know the Gospel? We can offer our time to Christ through our commitment to daily prayer. We can also use our time to journey with and support our fellow parishioners, especially those who are going through a time of difficulty. With respect to our talents, we can reflect on our particular gifts and offer them to the appropriate ministries in the parish. For example, if we have the gift of music, perhaps we can look into joining a choir or if we have a background in teaching, perhaps various catechetical ministries in the parish. There are many ways in which God can use us to serve Him. Let us echo the words of the prophet Isaiah in the first reading and boldly say to God, "Here am I; send me!"

Summary

In the Gospel today we see Jesus getting into Peter's fishing boat so that He could preach to the vast crowds that had come to see Him. So too in our lives of stewardship, are we allowing Jesus to use the gifts we possess, namely our time and talents, so that others can come to know the Gospel? Let us strive to offer ourselves to Christ and echo the words of the prophet Isaiah in the first reading and boldly say to God, "Here am I; send me!"

6th Sunday of Ordinary Time

1st Reading: Jeremiah 17.5-8

2nd Reading: 1 Cor. 15.12, 16-20

Gospel: Luke 6.17, 20-26 – *Blessings and Woes*

Blessed is the One Who Trusts

In the first reading this Sunday we learn all about the importance of trust. The Lord says to the prophet Jeremiah, “Blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord ... That person shall be like a tree planted by water, sending out its roots by the stream. It shall not fear when heat comes, and its leaves shall stay green.” Let us take some time to reflect on the role of trust in our lives as stewards.

Being a steward involves the total gift of our time and talents to our parish community for the good of the Church. However, despite all our good deeds, we may not always see the fruit of our labours. The parish vitality may still seem bleak or people may still seem to lack interior conversion. However, this is where the need for trust comes in.

We must trust that God will surely bless our stewardship and bring about great graces, even though we do not see them. Whenever we begin to lose hope because of the slow progress in our ministry, we can look to our own lives for reassurance. We ourselves probably didn't have a conversion experience the first time we heard the Gospel. All of those moments were instead slow and gradual movements the Lord used to bring us to where we are now. Let us trust that God is silently doing great things through the gift of ourselves and strive to work ever more ardently.

Summary

Being a steward involves the total gift of our time and talents to our parish community for the good of the Church. However, despite all our good deeds, we may at times be discouraged when the fruits of our labour are not visible. Let us trust that God is silently doing great things through the gift of ourselves and strive to work ever more ardently.

7th Sunday of Ordinary Time

1st Reading: 1 Samuel 26.2, 7-9, 12-13, 22-25++

2nd Reading: 1 Corinthians 15.45-49

Gospel: Luke 6.27-38 – *Love for Enemies*

Praying for Our Enemies

In the face of today's secular culture, various Christian values may seem far too radical or outdated. Many people, with well-meaning intentions, may think that "being good" is all that matters in this life. However, the Gospel responds with the challenge to be more than good, but rather, to be holy. One of Jesus' radical messages that can help us work towards holiness is the call to love our enemies.

In the time of Jesus, and even to this day, the notion of loving those who wrong us or hurt us seems like an impossible ideal. We often have a hard time loving those whom we should naturally love. How then are we expected to love our enemies? We must first realize that it is a long process to truly love them but it begins with small acts of prayer.

We often wish for bad things to happen to our enemies, or at the very least, we hope things don't go well for them. We can begin to heal the unforgiveness in our hearts by praying for God to bless them. Prayer is powerful. Let us begin to pray for the good of our enemies and slowly rid ourselves of feelings of anger or hatred. For example, perhaps we can pray one Hail Mary a day for God to bless the family and work life of those whom we find it difficult to love. We can always look to the example of Christ on the cross, who boldly prayed for those who crucified him. Let us strive to be stewards of God's love and mercy.

Summary

One of Jesus' radical messages that can help us work towards holiness is the call to love our enemies. We must first realize that it is a long process to truly love them but it begins with small acts of prayer. Let us begin to pray for the good of our enemies and slowly rid ourselves of feelings of anger or hatred.

8th Sunday of Ordinary Time

1st Reading: Sirach 27.4-7

2nd Reading: 1 Corinthians 15.54-58

Gospel: Luke 6.39-45 – *Judging Others*

Unlocking the Secret of Happiness

“Lord, it is good to give thanks to you.” These are the words from the refrain of this Sunday’s responsorial psalm. Thanksgiving is at the core of what it means to be a steward. We cannot offer our gifts to our parish communities if we don’t first acknowledge and give thanks to God for giving us these gifts in the first place. Cardinal Collins in his *Pastoral Letter on Stewardship** says that, “deep stewardship begins with gratitude and ends with accountability ... We recognize gratefully that everything in life is a gift of God.”

Not only does gratitude unlock a spirituality of stewardship, but it is also the first step in living a life of greater joy. The opposite of gratitude is indifference. Often times we are indifferent and unaware of all the great gifts in our lives. By adopting an intentional lens of gratitude we can begin to realize how blessed we truly are.

St. Gianna Molla beautifully tells us that “the secret of happiness is to live moment by moment and to thank God for what He is sending us every day in His goodness.” Wherever we are reading this reflection, let us take a moment to thank God for three things around us. We can express our gratitude for having a roof over our heads, food in our stomachs, or the joy of family and friends. Above all, we can always be thankful for the gift of God’s love in our lives. As stewards, let us begin to adopt a spirituality of thanksgiving and begin living more joyful lives.

Summary

St. Gianna Molla beautifully tells us that “the secret of happiness is to live moment by moment and to thank God for what He is sending us every day in His goodness.” Wherever we are reading this reflection, let us take a moment to thank God for a few things around us. We can express our gratitude for having a roof over our heads, food in our stomachs, the joy of family and friends, and above all, we can always be thankful for the gift of God’s love.

* Thomas Cardinal Collins, *Pastoral Letter on Stewardship*. Available at:
<https://www.archtoronto.org/stewardship/Pages/Pastoral-Letter-Cardinal-Thomas-Collins.aspx>

1st Sunday of Lent

1st Reading: Deuteronomy 26.4-10

2nd Reading: Romans 10.8-13

Gospel: Luke 4.1-13 – *The Temptation of Jesus*

Giving our First Fruits this Lent

As we enter into this Season of Lent, let us reflect on how we can best use this time to grow in our relationship with God and our commitment to stewardship. In the first reading from the book of Deuteronomy, Moses instructs the people saying that when they come to give their offerings to God, they should “bring the first of the fruit of the ground.” The Lord wants our very best, not what we have leftover.

This is very true in our lives as stewards. It’s definitely good to offer up our time and talents to our parish community. However, do we only give from what we have remaining after all of our other priorities are taken care of? To serve the Gospel should always be of prime importance.

One Lenten resolution we can adopt to help us offer our “first fruits” is the practice of scheduling our time of prayer in advance. Prayer should not be an afterthought that we try to squeeze in when we have time. Instead, we should block out a chunk of time each day that is free from all other competing distractions and is reserved only for our conversation with God. Let us strive to create a scheduled prayer life this Lent, perhaps starting with 10 minutes a day. If we do so, we will see great wonders take place in our relationship with God and others.

Summary

In the first reading from the book of Deuteronomy, Moses instructs the people saying that when they come to give their offerings to God, they should “bring the first of the fruit of the ground.” One Lenten resolution we can adopt to help us offer our “first fruits” is the practice of scheduling our time of prayer in advance. If we do so, we will see great wonders take place in our relationship with God and others.

2nd Sunday of Lent

1st Reading: Genesis 15.5-12, 17-18

2nd Reading: Philippians 3.17 – 4.1

Gospel: Luke 9.28b-36 – *The Transfiguration*

Ascending and Descending the Mountain

Every Second Sunday of Lent the Church invites us to reflect on the account of the Transfiguration of Christ. This passage describes how Jesus went up a mountain with Peter, James and John, and was transfigured before them, revealing His divine glory. The apostles, although wanting to stay upon the mountain, are brought back down into the real world. These two movements, of ascent and descent, are critical in the lives of stewards.

Firstly, we too are invited to ascend the heights of mountain-top spiritual experiences. To ascend the mountain is to take some time away from the noise of the world to experience the glory and majesty of Christ. Sometimes this involves large mountains such as attending retreats or conferences. However, we can also ascend the mountain every time we turn to prayer and build up our relationship with God. All these moments are essential in keeping our faith alive and active.

However, this is where the second aspect of descent becomes so important. Unless we are called to live as a brother or sister in a contemplative religious order, we are not called to always remain tucked away in retreats or prayer. Instead, we are called to be strengthened through our mountain-top experiences so that we will have the grace to go out into the world and spread the Gospel. This Lent, let us take some time to be nourished on the mountain so that we will be all the more ready to proclaim the Good News.

Summary

Just as the apostles were invited to ascend the mountain for the Lord's transfiguration, we too are called to ascend our own mountains. We can do this whenever we take some time away from the noise of the world so that we may experience the glory and majesty of Christ in prayer. We are then called to descend the mountain and use the grace of our mountain-top experiences to spread the Gospel in the world.

3rd Sunday of Lent

1st Reading: Exodus 3.1-8a, 13-15

2nd Reading: 1 Corinthians 10.1-6, 10-12

Gospel: Luke 13.1-9 – *The Need to Repent & The Barren Fig Tree*

Called by Name

On this Third Sunday of Lent, we are invited to reflect on one of the most famous call stories in the Bible, the call of Moses. Many of us are familiar with the events that took place as Moses comes across the burning bush in the wilderness. There is one aspect of this episode that is particularly interesting to us as stewards, and that is the first words that God speaks out of the bush. He says, “Moses, Moses!” He calls Moses by name.

There is a particularity to Moses’ mission. God knew that Moses was the right person for the job and shows this by using his own name as he calls him forward. As stewards, we too are all called by name to a special mission. We each have our own unique set of gifts that can be used for the glory of Christ and the Church. It is up to us to heed the call of stewardship because no one can do the particular mission God has ordained for us.

One great saint who truly understood the importance of everyone’s important and individual mission was St. Teresa of Calcutta. She said, “You can do what I cannot do. I can do what you cannot do. Together we can do great things.” Stewardship isn’t a competition but rather a collaboration. Let us reflect on how we can use our time and talents to help our parish community. God is calling each and every one of us, let us readily echo the words of Moses and respond “Here I am.”

Summary

Just as God called Moses by name at the burning bush, so too does God call each of us by name to our own particular mission of stewardship. St. Teresa of Calcutta said, “You can do what I cannot do. I can do what you cannot do. Together we can do great things.” Let us reflect on how we can use our time and talents to help our parish community and readily echo the words of Moses and respond “Here I am.”

4th Sunday of Lent

1st Reading: Joshua 5.9a, 10-12

2nd Reading: 2 Corinthians 5.17-21

Gospel: Luke 15.1-3, 11-32 – *The Parable of the Prodigal Son*

Approaching the Mercy of God

This Sunday we are invited to reflect on the beautiful parable of the prodigal son. This parable offers us an insight into the unfathomable depths of God’s mercy. We are also given an example of the prodigal son to imitate. He teaches us that whenever we fall, we too need to recognize our sin, get up and approach our merciful and loving Father.

However, we may at times find it difficult to accept just how generously God bestows His mercy on those who seek Him. We may have the notion that God is out to punish those who commit sin. However, there is one particularly beautiful line in the parable this Sunday that can help us ease those fears. It says that “while [the son] was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him.”

The beauty in this passage is that the father saw the son “while he was still far off.” This means that he must’ve spent time each day looking out at the horizon, eagerly and lovingly waiting for his son to return. Not only does he see him, he then runs and embraces his son even though he was dirty and smelled like pigs. As stewards, we shouldn’t fear approaching God for His mercy and forgiveness for He longs to grant it to us. Across the Archdiocese, every parish will host a Lenten Day of Reconciliation in which many priests will be available for the sacrament of Confession. Let us take advantage of this beautiful opportunity for healing and prepare ourselves for the Risen Lord at Easter.

Summary

This Sunday we are invited to reflect on the beautiful parable of the prodigal son which offers us an insight into the unfathomable depths of God’s mercy. We are shown that whenever we fall, we too need to recognize our sin, get up and approach our merciful and loving Father. God longs to forgive us, so let us strive to receive the sacrament of Reconciliation this Lent to prepare ourselves for the Risen Lord at Easter.

5th Sunday of Lent

1st Reading: Isaiah 43.16-21

2nd Reading: Philippians 3.8-14

Gospel: John 8.1-11 – *The Woman Caught in Adultery*

Pressing on Towards the Goal

As we quickly approach Holy Week let us take a moment to reflect on how we are using this time of Lent to renew our zeal for stewardship. In the second reading this Sunday we hear St. Paul say, “I press on toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus.” We can learn a lot from this image of constantly moving forward towards the prize of our heavenly reward.

Stewardship is a lifelong journey made up of many individual decisions. The decision to wake up and recognize each day as a blessing from God. The decision to offer the gifts of our time and talents for the good of the parish community. The decision to practice a moment of patience and understanding when we are frustrated or annoyed. The decision to forgive someone who has wronged us even though it is difficult. The decision to pray and receive the sacraments in order to strengthen our lives through God’s grace.

As we strive to make positive decisions, let us not be discouraged when we fall or face setbacks in our ministry. St. John Paul II says that “life with Christ is a wonderful adventure.” Any adventure is sure to have mountains and valleys, but what God truly desires is that we simply keep pressing forward. St. Teresa of Calcutta said that “God does not require that we be successful only that we be faithful.” Let us strive to be faithful stewards as we journey towards our heavenly goal.

Summary

Stewardship is a lifelong journey made up of many individual decisions. St. John Paul II says that “life with Christ is a wonderful adventure.” Any adventure is sure to have mountains and valleys, but what God truly desires is that we keep making positive decisions that deepen our commitment to love and serve Him

Palm (Passion) Sunday

Procession Gospel: Lk 19.28-40 – *Jesus' Triumphant Entry into Jerusalem*

1st Reading: Is. 50.4-7

2nd Reading: Phil. 2.6-11

Gospel: Lk 22.14 – 23.56 – *The Passion of the Lord*

The Cross of Christ

Today marks the beginning of Holy Week, the most important and solemn week of the Church's liturgical calendar. In the Gospel this Sunday we are invited to reflect on the passion and death of our Lord Jesus Christ. The cross is the most recognizable symbol of our Christian faith. We see crucifixes hanging in Churches, schools, homes and even worn around many people's necks. However, we can become so used to this constant presence of the crucifix that we become indifferent to what it signifies. Let us take a moment to grasp the beauty and truth found in the cross.

God became man and was willing to be crucified for the forgiveness of our sins. It is through the cross that Christ defeats Satan and triumphantly attains our salvation, allowing us to enter our heavenly home. The entire course of human history was dramatically altered because of the cross of Christ. As stewards, we should always view the salvation won through the cross as the greatest gift that God has bestowed on us.

As we approach the Holy Triduum, let us take some time each day this week to reflect on the passion of Christ. Many great saints strongly promoted this practice of calling to mind the sufferings of Christ. We can do this in many ways such as praying the Stations of the Cross or the sorrowful mysteries of the Rosary, reading the passion narratives in the Bible or simply gazing upon a crucifix. Let us never fail to appreciate the sublime beauty of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross.

Summary

It is through the crucifixion that Christ defeats Satan and triumphantly attains our salvation, allowing us to enter our heavenly home. As we approach the Holy Triduum, let us take some time each day this week to reflect on the passion of Christ. We can do this in many ways such as praying the Stations of the Cross or the sorrowful mysteries of the Rosary, reading the passion narratives in the Bible or simply gazing upon a crucifix.

Easter Sunday

1st Reading: Acts 10.34a, 36-43++

2nd Reading: Colossians 3.1-4 or 2nd Reading: 1 Corinthians 5.6b-8

Gospel: John 20.1-18++ – *The Resurrection of Jesus*

The Paradox of the Cross

Alleluia, He is Risen! Today is the Sunday of Sundays, the Solemnity of Solemnities. Today is the day Christ broke through the chains of sin and death and triumphantly rose from the dead, winning for us our salvation. As Christians, we are an Easter people and we are called to live in the joy and peace of the Risen Christ. Let us take a moment to reflect on how Easter can profoundly impact our daily lives.

By human standards, the crucifixion was an utter humiliating defeat. It was the end of the story for the person of Jesus and His followers. Jesus would just be remembered as the influential and charismatic preacher that went too far by claiming to be God. All hope was seemingly lost. Yet, this is the paradox of the cross. The cross, the weapon of torture and death, becomes the very means of life and salvation. It was the necessary step in order for the resurrection. There simply is no Easter Sunday without a Good Friday.

This is the beautiful truth of our faith. The famous Portuguese proverb says that “God writes straight with crooked lines.” When all seems lost and broken, God can use these situations to bring about great blessings. As stewards, let us not be discouraged when we face crosses and trials in life or our ministry. If God was able to bring about the resurrection out of the crucifixion, just imagine the great deeds He will bring through our crosses. So let us rejoice on this Easter Sunday and thank God for the gift of His resurrection.

Summary

The beautiful truth of our faith is that God was able to bring about the greatest good of the resurrection through the seemingly utter defeat of the crucifixion. The famous Portuguese proverb says that “God writes straight with crooked lines.” As stewards, let us not be discouraged when we face crosses and trials but instead trust that God will transform these difficulties into many little Easter mornings.

2nd Sunday of Easter – Divine Mercy Sunday

1st Reading: Acts 5.12-16

2nd Reading: Revelation 1.9-11a, 12-13, 17-19

Gospel: John 20.19-31 – *Jesus Appears to the Disciples*

Learning from Doubting Thomas

On this Second Sunday of Easter we are faced with the Gospel passage that earns St. Thomas the Apostle the name of Doubting Thomas. Jesus appears to all of the disciples when Thomas wasn't present and Thomas refuses to believe in the risen Christ until he sees and touches Jesus himself. A week later Jesus appears to them again, this time with Thomas present, and Thomas believes exclaiming, "My Lord and my God!"

As disciples of Christ we too may experience many moments of doubt in our lives. Especially with the overtly secular culture we live in, it is becoming harder to accept the truths of our faith. So how are we to deal with these moments of doubt? Firstly, we should take consolation in the loving and gentle way Jesus dealt with Thomas' doubt. Jesus meets him where he is and lovingly tries to help him look past his doubt. So too with us, Jesus does not reprimand us for our moments of doubt but is constantly providing us opportunities for us to grow in faith.

However, it is important that we play our part. If we doubt the truth about certain mysteries of our faith, we should try to read what the Church teaches on this point. St. Anselm's motto was "faith seeking understanding." Sometimes we need to use our rational faculties to try to educate ourselves on the teachings of the Church and pray that God may illumine our mind. There are a variety of good books and websites that can help us find the answers we're looking for. Let us strive to rid ourselves of all doubt by slowly seeking understanding and praying for faith.

Summary

Similar to St. Thomas in the Gospel, we too may experience many moments of doubt. Jesus does not reprimand us for our doubt but constantly sends us providential opportunities to help us grow in our faith. However, let us strive to do our part by educating ourselves through good books and websites on topics of the faith and by praying for the gift of understanding.

3rd Sunday of Easter

1st Reading: Acts 5.28-32, 40b-41

2nd Reading: Revelation 5.11-14

Gospel: John 21.1-19 – *Jesus Appears on the Beach*

Learning to Truly Love Christ

In the Gospel this Sunday we're called to reflect on the rich and important exchange where Jesus asks Peter, "Do you love me?" Firstly, it is important to note the original translation of this passage. The first time Jesus asks Peter he uses the word "agape," which is an unconditional, self-sacrificial love. The same type of love that Jesus has for us. However, in Peter's response he uses the word "philia," which is the love between friends. Although philia is still beautiful, it isn't raised to the same heights of agape. This same exchange of agape and philia occurs the second time Jesus asks Peter.

However, when Jesus asks the third time, it is He who uses the word philia, asking Peter if he can love Him as a friend. This is why it says Peter felt hurt, because it seemed like Jesus lowered the standard for the type of love Peter was called to. However, the beautiful reality is that Jesus instead understands and meets Peter at the level of love he's currently comfortable with. Yet Jesus doesn't desire Peter to remain at that level. He goes on to foretell the kind of death he would one day suffer, signifying that He would one day be able to love Jesus agape.

Jesus does the same in the lives of all of His stewards. He desires all of us to love Him unconditionally, yet He meets us where we currently are and helps us to slowly advance in love. Let us always seek to love Christ and His Church and pray this simple prayer, "Jesus I love you, help me to love you more each day."

Summary

When Jesus first asks Peter if he loves Him, he uses the term "agape," signifying an unconditional love, to which Peter replies, "philia," the love of friends. However, by the third time it is Jesus who asks Peter if he will love him philia, which, rather than an insult, is the beautiful reality that Jesus meets Peter where he currently is. So too in our lives, Jesus accepts the current level of love we're comfortable with, but like Peter, He slowly desires and leads us to embrace a deeper way of loving Him and the Church.

4th Sunday of Easter – World Day of Prayer for Vocations

1st Reading: Acts 13.14, 43-52

2nd Reading: Revelation 7.9, 14b-17

Gospel: John 10.27-30 – *Jesus the Shepherd*

Attending to Our Primary Vocation

This Sunday is the World Day of Prayer for Vocations. As disciples, we all share one common vocation, the vocation of holiness. The Second Vatican Council says “that all the faithful of Christ of whatever rank or status, are called to the fullness of the Christian life and to the perfection of charity.” (Lumen Gentium 40).

We cannot become holy and virtuous by our own merits. Rather, any growth is the result of the grace of God. We can receive numerous graces whenever we turn to him in quiet times of prayer as well as through the sacraments. The greatest form of prayer we can partake in is the Holy Mass. Consequently, we should strive to make it the highlight of our week, ensuring there are no competing distractions for our time. We can also, to the best of our circumstances, try to attend Mass on weekdays as well.

It is only when we are attending to our primary vocation of holiness that we’ll be able to discern our secondary call to the vocation of priesthood, religious life, marriage or consecrated singlehood. Holiness will allow us to have the humility and docility to hear the voice of God gently guiding us. It will also strengthen us to overcome any fears and say yes to whichever vocation He calls us to. Let us strive to live out our vocation of holiness to the best of our ability.

Summary

The Second Vatican Council says “that all the faithful of Christ of whatever rank or status, are called to the fullness of the Christian life and to the perfection of charity.” It is only when we are attending to our primary vocation of holiness that we’ll be able to discern our secondary call to the vocation of priesthood, religious life, marriage or consecrated singlehood. Holiness will allow us to have the humility and docility to hear the voice of God gently guiding us and give us the strength to overcome all fears.

5th Sunday of Easter

1st Reading: Acts 14.21b-27

2nd Reading: Revelation 21.1-5a

Gospel: John 13.1, 31-33a, 34-35++ – *The New Commandment*

St. Therese's School of Love

In the Gospel this Sunday Jesus gives us the new commandment to love one another just as He loves us. Jesus goes on to say that “everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” As stewards we must always seek to love others and in doing so, point them to Christ. Let us take some time to reflect on the words of a great saint of love, St. Therese of Lisieux.

St. Therese, a doctor of the Church, famously promoted her “little way.” She didn’t believe she was strong enough to perform great acts of charity or mortification. Instead, she sought to offer up small acts of kindness as her gifts to Christ and the Church. She tells us to “miss no single opportunity of making some small sacrifice, here by a smiling look, there by a kindly word; always doing the smallest right and doing it all for love.” Love isn’t reserved solely for grand gestures but can also be displayed through small charitable acts.

Moreover, St. Therese says that “without love, deeds, even the most brilliant, count as nothing.” We must always infuse our stewardship with great love otherwise it may turn into simple volunteerism. Let us seek ways to offer up our time and talent to our parish communities, regardless of how small they may seem to be. St. Therese reassures us that “Our Lord does not so much look at the greatness of our actions, or even at their difficulty, as at the love with which we do them.” Let us strive to fully give of ourselves and remember St. Therese’s teaching that “When one loves, one does not calculate.”

Summary

Jesus says in the Gospel that “everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” As stewards we should always strive to love others, but we should remember that love isn’t reserved solely for grand gestures but can also be displayed through small charitable acts. St. Therese of Lisieux tell us to “miss no single opportunity of making some small sacrifice, here by a smiling look, there by a kindly word; always doing the smallest right and doing it all for love.”

6th Sunday of Easter

1st Reading: Acts 15.1-2, 22-29

2nd Reading: Revelation 21.10-14, 22-23

Gospel: John 14.23-29 – *The Promise of the Holy Spirit*

Peace Be with You

The life of the Christian disciple is one that should be filled with great peace. However, peace does not mean the absence of difficulties or trials. Rather, true peace is living in joy despite the turbulences we may experience. We're reminded in the Gospel that we can only receive this peace from Jesus. He tells us, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives."

How does the world give peace? The world tells us that if we have lots of money in the bank, the fancy car, the extravagant house and the perfect looks, then we will be at peace. It promotes peace as something that is achieved through exterior possessions or circumstances. However, what does the world offer us when difficulties arise? How does the world teach peace in the midst of tough financial situations or an unfavourable medical diagnoses? This is where the peace of Christ triumphs.

We can achieve a sense of interior peace despite the exterior sufferings when we fix our minds on things that are heavenly. We can always draw great strength from realizing our identity as beloved children of God. God loves us. This reality alone has the profound effect of easing the greatest of crosses. St. Teresa of Avila says "Let nothing perturb you, nothing frighten you. All things pass. God does not change. Patience achieves everything." God is always faithful towards us. The next time we're in a moment that threatens to rob us of our peace, let us take a deep breath, call to mind the smiling gaze of Christ towards us, and pray, "Jesus I love you."

Summary

Jesus tell us "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives." The world promotes peace as something that is achieved through exterior possessions or circumstances yet it offers no remedy for times of great trial. On the other hand, with Jesus, the next time we're in a moment that threatens to rob us of our peace, let us take a deep breath, call to mind the smiling gaze of Christ towards us, and pray, "Jesus I love you."

The Ascension of the Lord

1st Reading: Acts 1.1-11

2nd Reading: Ephesians 1.17-23 or 2nd Reading: Hebrews 9.24-28; 10.19-23

Gospel: Luke 24.46-53 – *The Ascension of the Lord*

Prayer and Evangelization

“You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you and you will be my witnesses ... to the ends of the earth.” This is the great commission that continues to echo throughout the centuries. All of us, especially stewards, are called to be witnesses of the Gospel and evangelize the hearts of those nearest to us. However, before we can convert others, we need to have an interior conversion ourselves.

St. Vincent Ferrer says that, “If you truly want to help the soul of your neighbor, you should approach God first with all your heart. Ask him simply to fill you with charity, the greatest of all virtues; with it you can accomplish what you desire.” Before we can do any great deeds for Christ and the Church, we need to be sufficiently nourished by the love and grace of God. This can only come about through our dedication to prayer. We must pray for the strength to love and share the Gospel with others.

One practice we can adopt is the morning offering. This involves beginning each day, perhaps even while still lying in bed, with a prayer to God thanking Him for another morning and asking Him to help us offer our day for the good of the Gospel. We can supplement this by beginning any period of formal ministry with an opening prayer. We need to always remember that it is the Holy Spirit working through us that is bringing about great graces. Let us strive to infuse our stewardship with the power of prayer.

Summary

All of us, especially stewards, are called to be witnesses of the Gospel and evangelize the hearts of those nearest to us. However, before we can convert others, we need to have an interior conversion ourselves. One practice we can adopt is the morning offering which involves beginning each day, perhaps even while still lying in bed, with a prayer to God thanking Him for another morning and asking Him to help us offer our day for the good of the Gospel.

Pentecost Sunday

1st Reading: Acts 2.1-11

2nd Reading: 1 Cor. 12.3b-7, 12-13 or 2nd Reading: Romans 8.8-17

Gospel: John 20.19-23 or Gospel: John 14.15-16, 23b-26 – *Jesus speaks of the Holy Spirit*

Reflect

Today is Pentecost Sunday, the 50th day after Easter. Pentecost is often called the “birthday of the Church.” It commemorates the day the Holy Spirit descended upon the disciples and they first began proclaiming the Gospel. This was the mark of the successful completion of Jesus’ earthly mission.

We should never fail to marvel at the fact that 2000 years later the Church is still active and growing. No other human institution has lasted as long as the Catholic Church. The permanence of the Church points to one fact, that the Church is not merely a human enterprise, but a divine one. The Church will always persist for it is constantly being guided by the same Holy Spirit that descended on the first Pentecost.

As stewards, we play the important role of cooperating with the Holy Spirit to continue the work and mission of the Church. Cardinal Collins often says that the Church needs to “care for the gathered and reach out to the scattered.” Let us ask ourselves how we can use our time and talents to participate in this two fold mission of the Church. Perhaps we can use our talents in various ministries to beautify and liven the activity within our parish communities. Moreover, we can invest our time in journeying with those away from the Church in an effort to show Christ’s love to them. Let us strive to invoke the Holy Spirit in all of our stewardship efforts and continue to celebrate the greatness of the Catholic Church.

Summary

As stewards, we play the important role of cooperating with the Holy Spirit to continue the work and mission of the Church. Cardinal Collins often says that the Church needs to “care for the gathered and reach out to the scattered.” Let us ask ourselves how we can use our time and talents to participate in this two fold mission of the Church

Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity

1st Reading: Proverbs 8.22-31

2nd Reading: Romans 5.1-5

Gospel: John 16.12-15 – *The Work of the Spirit*

Fostering a New Heaven for God

This Sunday we celebrate the Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity. The Catechism says that “the mystery of the Most Holy Trinity is the central mystery of Christian faith and life. It is the mystery of God in himself.” (CCC 234). Let us take a moment to reflect on how the Trinity plays such a pivotal role in our spiritual lives.

God wishes to dwell within the souls of His creatures. This is the beautiful and radical truth of our faith. St. Elizabeth of the Trinity says in her famous prayer addressed to the Trinity the following beautiful request. “Grant my soul peace. Make it your heaven, your beloved dwelling and the place of your rest. May I never abandon you there, but may I be there, whole and entire.” We are called to make a home for the Trinity within us, but how can we practically do this? Our Lord Jesus gives us the answer in John 14 where He says: “Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them.” The answer is essentially love, which is the very foundation that stewardship rests on.

Let us fill our lives with love and charity so that our souls may be a more beautiful and blessed home for the Trinity to dwell. This knowledge of God residing in us should then be the means of strength to foster greater stewardship in our lives. Let us make our hearts a new heaven in which God may forever reign.

Summary

St. Elizabeth of the Trinity famously prayed to God saying, “Grant my soul peace. Make it your heaven, your beloved dwelling and the place of your rest. May I never abandon you there, but may I be there, whole and entire.” We are called to make a home for the Trinity within us, but how can we practically do this? Our Lord Jesus gives us the answer in John 14 where He says: “Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them.”

Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ

1st Reading: Genesis 14.18-20

2nd Reading: 1 Corinthians 11.23-26

Gospel: Luke 9.11b-17 – *Feeding the Five Thousand*

Truly Living the Holy Mass

This Sunday we celebrate the Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ. As stewards, the Holy Eucharist should be the very foundation that the rest of our lives are built upon. Yet how often do we fail to view the Holy Mass as the highlight of our week? Let us take a moment to reflect on how the Mass is so pivotal in our lives of stewardship.

While the high point of the entire Mass is the consecration, where the lowly bread and wine become the very body, blood, soul and divinity of Christ, there are still other important moments that lead up to this climax. One such often overlooked moment is the time of Offertory. The Offertory is where we offer our gifts, the bread and wine, but also our time and talents, and essentially, our very selves, in order to be miraculously transformed by God.

We may think that we cannot offer God anything spectacular, yet this is why the Offertory is such a powerful moment. The same way that God can transform simple bread into His very body, so too can he turn our small efforts of charity and stewardship into great graces for the Kingdom. We see this in the Gospel as the disciples offered Jesus just five loaves and two fish. However, it is through this offering that Jesus was able to miraculously feed thousands of people. The next time we attend Mass let us intentionally call to mind all of the time and talents we shared with others the previous week and those we anticipate sharing in the upcoming week. God will begin to transform these works into great miracles for the sake of the Gospel.

Summary

One important moment in Mass is the Offertory because this is where we offer our gifts, the bread and wine, but also our time and talents, and essentially, our very selves, in order to be miraculously transformed by God. We may think that we cannot offer God anything spectacular, yet this is why the Offertory is such a powerful moment. The same way that God can transform simple bread into His very body, so too can he turn our small efforts of charity and stewardship into great graces for the Kingdom.

13th Sunday of Ordinary Time

1st Reading: 1 Kings 19.16b, 19-21

2nd Reading: Galatians 5.1, 13-18

Gospel: Luke 9.51-62 – *Would-Be Followers of Jesus*

Persevering in our Mission

In the Gospel this Sunday we hear the following passage: “When the days drew near for him to be taken up, Jesus set his face to go to Jerusalem.” As Jesus’ passion on Calvary loomed nearer He did not shy away from His mission, but rather, He firmly fixed His gaze on accomplishing what He was sent out to do. This is the model that we should follow as stewards.

Our mission is to gratefully and generously offer our time and talents to our parish community as a means of serving Christ and the Church. While our stewardship will undoubtedly be filled with many moments of great peace and joy, we are also sure to experience moments of hardship. We may experience the temptation of giving up or making excuses as to why we shouldn’t continue to serve. We may also be afraid of the crosses that arise during our apostolates.

Jesus too was aware of the great cross and suffering that lay in the horizon of His mission. Despite all this, He remained steadfast. We should pray to God every day, asking Him for the strength to persevere in our call of stewardship. Even in difficult moments, let us readily turn to God. St. John Paul II encourages us saying, “Don’t be afraid of the radicalness of His demands... If He asks much of you it is because He knows you can give much.” The Lord has great plans to use us as missionary disciples, we just need to say yes to His invitation.

Summary

As Jesus’ passion on Calvary loomed nearer He did not shy away from His mission, but rather, He firmly fixed His gaze on accomplishing what He was sent out to do. Our mission is to gratefully and generously offer our time and talents to our parish community as a means of serving Christ and the Church. Let us strive pray to God every day, asking Him for the strength to persevere in our call of stewardship, especially in the difficult moments.

14th Sunday of Ordinary Time

1st Reading: Isaiah 66.10-14c

2nd Reading: Galatians 6.14-18

Gospel: Luke 10.1-12, 17-20 – *Jesus Sends out the Seventy Two*

The Harvest Is Plenty

In the Gospel reading, Jesus commissions the disciples who were following him and sent them out two by two to all the places which Jesus intended to go. They were sent to prepare the way, and to prepare the hearts of the people, that they will be able to receive Jesus and his message when he comes. However, there are two stark realities that Jesus conveys to the disciples about their journey.

First, the harvest is plenty, but the labourers are few. The world is ripe for the harvest, but unfortunately, the number of people willing to go out and work for the sake of the building up of the Kingdom of God is few. This reality was present in Jesus' time and continues to be a reality today. Jesus calls many yet only a few listen and answer the call. The second reality is that when we are sent, we are like lambs in the midst of wolves. Jesus knew that the preaching of the Gospel would come with its opposition and persecution. These same oppositions are what would ultimately lead Jesus to the cross and cause the deaths of many of his disciples.

Jesus knows that the work will be difficult and warns the disciples of this, yet he promises to be with us. As the Lord speaks through Isaiah in the first reading, he tells us that as a mother comforts her child, so the Lord will comfort those who are doing his will. As stewards, we are called to labour for God's kingdom, a work that can be difficult and a work that is lifelong. The harvest is plenty, and the labourers are few. Let us spend time to reflect on the ways that the Lord calls us, and to be open-hearted to accept Christ's invitation to share our time and talent. Let us also pray in a special way this week for those who are labouring, and that even more people may hear the Lord's call and work in his harvest.

Summary

The disciples were sent ahead of Jesus in the Gospel to prepare the way, for Jesus tells them that the harvest is plenty but the labourers are few. He warns the disciples as well that the work of evangelization will not be easy, and that they will be like sheep among wolves, facing many challenges and obstacles along the way. The Lord calls us as he did the disciples to go and work in the harvest, and to build up the kingdom of God through the sharing of our time and talent.

15th Sunday of Ordinary Time

1st Reading: Deuteronomy 30.10-14

2nd Reading: Colossians 1.15-20

Gospel: Luke 10.25-37 – *The Parable of the Good Samaritan*

The Good Samaritan

The law of God is not so far away that it difficult to find, or so dense that it takes a learned person to be able to understand and practice it. Rather as Moses tells the people in the first reading, the law of the Lord is already in our hearts, all it takes is carrying it out. Everything that we need to know about what it takes to do God's will and build up the kingdom of God here on earth is written by God in our hearts!

Yet knowing the law is only half the battle, what we do as a response to the law is what makes us disciples of Jesus. Jesus was aware of this when sharing the parable of the good Samaritan. In the parable, the priest and Levite who passed the beaten-up traveller were not evil people. Both these men were men of God, and they knew that in the case this traveller was dead, by touching him the Jewish purity laws would make them unclean and they didn't want to take that risk. What made the Samaritan the hero in the parable is the fact that he was willing to take a chance and put himself on the line for the sake of the other. The Samaritan was not choosy with who he helped and acted out of genuine love.

As stewards, when we share the gifts of our time and talent with others, are we like the Samaritan by being generous with our gifts and showing no partiality, or like the priest and Levite in the parable, do we only act when it is out of our best interest? Is there a way in which we are being called by God to share our gifts but we hold back? If we find that we are not truly giving our best to the Lord, let us repent and make an effort to give to the Lord the best of what we can offer, whether it be through prayer, or volunteering our time with our parish.

Summary

Everything that we need to know about doing the will of God, building up his kingdom and following God's law is written by God on our hearts. The parable of the Good Samaritan reminds us how it is easy to know the right thing to do but harder to act on this knowledge and to act out of love. As God's stewards, let us strive to be like to Good Samaritan, who gave completely of himself for the well-being of the other and seeking nothing in return.

16th Sunday of Ordinary Time

1st Reading: Genesis 18.1-10A

2nd Reading: Colossians 1.24-28

Gospel: Luke 10.38-42 – *Jesus Visit Martha and Mary*

Work and Prayer

One of the important pillars of stewardship is hospitality. The person who is hospitable can welcome anyone into their home, serve them, and make them feel loved. By serving strangers and friends alike, they serve God who is present in every person. This gift of hospitality is so important in the work of stewardship, as people will readily come back to a parish that welcomes them with open arms.

When Jesus visited the town of Bethany and stayed at the home of Martha and Mary in the Gospel, we see an example of hospitality, where Martha was running around to ensure that Jesus was taken care of. Yet unlike the first reading when the angels who visited Abraham rewarded him for his hospitality, Jesus tells Martha that her sister Mary had chosen the better part by being at his feet and listening to him.

When we live a life centered around stewardship, we can be like Martha, making ourselves busy with various ministries. It is easy to get caught up in our work and lose sight of what is truly important, and that is our relationship with Jesus. Our work is important, but just as important is our prayer, and we need both to be a good disciple and steward. When our prayer precedes our work, our work then truly becomes an extension of our prayer, and everything we do becomes rooted in Christ. If prayer is not part of our work of stewardship, let us make a greater effort to start off everything we do in prayer, allowing it to transform the work we do and in turn make our work more fruitful.

Summary

The readings today remind us of the importance of hospitality, and how a person who is hospitable serves God through their hospitality. However, we can fall into the trap as Martha did in the Gospel to focus only on the work we do, neglecting the important work of spending time with the Lord in prayer. Let us make an effort to allow prayer to be a precursor to our work, allowing the prayer to transform the work we do and make it more fruitful.

17th Sunday of Ordinary Time

1st Reading: Genesis 18.20-32

2nd Reading: Colossians 2.12-14

Gospel: Luke 11.1-13 – *The Lord's Prayer and Perseverance in Prayer*

Prayer

The readings this week remind us of the importance of prayer. The first reading tells us about how Abraham prayed to God for the sake of Sodom and Gomorrah because God was going to destroy the city for their sins. Abraham bargained with God, asking him to spare the cities if God would find even just ten holy people there. Abraham was able to speak to God in such an intimate and sincere fashion because Abraham had a relationship with God. Abraham was aware of the awesome power that God had, but like friends speaking to each other, Abraham was able to ask the Lord for mercy on the people.

The Lord wants us to persevere in prayer as Abraham persevered when asking the Lord for mercy on the people. Jesus teaches us this lesson through the story he presents in the Gospel. When the first friend in the story approaches the second in the middle of the night for food, the second listens because of the relationship that they have and because of the persistence of the first. When Jesus teaches the disciples the “Our Father”, he’s showing us that God is not a distant God, but he is close to us for he is a Father and loves us like one. Like any good father, God in his love will give to his children all that they ask for if it is for their well-being and salvation.

Do we see God as our Father? Do we go to him with all our problems and needs? Are we persistent in prayer like Abraham was? When we see ourselves as beloved children of God and learn to rely on God for our every need, our lives become transformed. This is the core of stewardship, to love and give to others out of gratitude for the love and gifts God has given us. If we struggle with our identity as beloved children of God, let us take some time this week to reflect on this identity, and how as children of God, we are called to serve the Church in turn out of love for God and his people.

Summary

God is our Father, and like any good father, he wants us to come to him with every need we have. When we truly build a relationship with God and see ourselves as beloved children, we will have the courage to be persistent in prayer, and not give up when we pray to God for our needs and the needs of others. This is the core of stewardship, to love and give to others the same way that God our Father loves us and gives us many gifts and blessings.

18th Sunday of Ordinary Time

1st Reading: Ecclesiastes 1.2; 2.21-23

2nd Reading: Colossians 3.1-5, 9-11

Gospel: Luke 12.13-21 – *The Parable of the Rich Fool*

Vanity of Vanities

There is an emphasis on the readings today about the destructive power of the sin of greed, and what greed does to a person who is consumed by it. Greed is one of the seven deadly sins, and is a sin of excess desire of wealth, status, and/or money. From the first reading we hear from the book of Ecclesiastes, “Vanity of vanities! All things are vanity!” The writer goes on to explain that all things are vanity not because material things are evil, but because one day, a man who labours for the things he has will lose it all when his life is demanded of him.

Jesus explains this further in the Gospel when he shares the parable of the rich fool. The rich fool is foolish because he forgot the one certainty that we all have in our lives, which is death. Greed consumed the rich fool, and he began to worship things of the world when only God is due worship. He made himself to believe that the things of this world can satisfy, and forgot that only God is the one that satisfies. The things of the world perish, but the things of heaven remain forever, which is why “vanity of vanities, all things are vanity!”

What can we do to combat greed? We hear the answer in the second reading from St. Paul to the Colossians. To fight greed, we must always think of what is above and not of things on this Earth. We must never forget that our eternal home is heaven, and so the things we do on Earth should be with that end in sight. We must also not forget that as we look to heaven, to realize that the goods on the Earth are given to us by God, and to be thankful for them. Gratitude is another way to combat greed. An excellent way to do this is to spend a moment at the end of each day to give thanks to God for one blessing of the day. Through this we can overcome greed and live out more fully the spirituality of stewardship.

Summary

The readings today warn us of the destructive power that the sin of greed can have on a person’s life, for a person consumed by greed worships his possessions more than he does God. “Vanity of vanity, all things are vanity,” since when we die, we don’t take our possessions with us, but only what remains is the way we lived our life. Let us always remember that the gifts given to us, time, talent, and treasure, are given to us by God, and to show gratitude to God for them.

19th Sunday of Ordinary Time

1st Reading: Wisdom 18.6-9

2nd Reading: Hebrews 11.1-2, 8-19

Gospel: Luke 12.32-48 – *The Faithful or the Unfaithful Slave*

The Good and Faithful Steward

In the Gospel parable, Jesus speaks of a faithful and prudent steward, who is aware of the duties given to him by the master and does them faithfully. On the other hand, Jesus speaks of an unfaithful servant, who abuses the gifts that the master has left him. He keeps the property for himself and mistreats the people around him. When the master returns at a time that neither servant expects, he deals with each servant according to their actions. To the faithful steward, the master blesses him even more, but the servant who abused the gifts given to them was punished.

Jesus says to the disciples “You also must be prepared, for at an hour you do not expect, the Son of Man will come.” There will come a time when each person will be judged, and when we are we will be asked for an account of the ways that we used what was given to us. When Jesus comes again, he will look at our hearts and will examine where our treasure lies, as it says in the Gospel, “Where your treasure is, there also will your heart be.”

What are we doing with the gifts that the master has entrusted to us? Are we watchful and faithful stewards, or are we like the unfaithful servant who would rather use the gifts selfishly? The Lord has given us many gifts, and these gifts are not meant for our consumption. They are given to us to build up the community of God and uplift those around us. Let us spend some time this week examining our hearts, and seeing how we are using the gifts God has given us. If we feel God calling us to give of ourselves in a more profound way, let us take the opportunity to visit our parish priest and see the ways in which we can be a good and faithful steward.

Summary

The readings today speak to us about being prepared for the coming of Jesus, who will come at a time we do not expect. When Jesus comes, he will judge us based on the way that we used the gifts that were given to us, and look at our hearts to examine where our treasure is. Let us spend some time this week examining our hearts, seeing how we are using the gifts God has given us, and ensuring that we are not selfish with God’s gifts but rather faithful and prudent stewards.

20th Sunday of Ordinary Time

1st Reading: Jerimiah 38.4-6, 8-10

2nd Reading: Hebrews 12.1-4

Gospel: Luke 12.49-53 – *Jesus the Cause of Division*

The Christian Life

Although Jesus is the Lord of peace, Jesus never promised us that the life of a Christian disciple would be easy or peaceful. In fact in the Gospel, Jesus tells us that he comes not to bring peace, but division, to set the world on fire. The division that Jesus talks about is that which comes from the people who reject the teachings of Jesus, and the way that the Gospel will divide people who accept and reject it.

Jesus was aware that those who would follow him would face opposition from people around them. Not everyone is keen to hear the message of the Gospel, and so there will be pushback as a result. This was happening for the entire history of Israel, as we see in the first reading that even the prophets were rejected and persecuted. We see in the first reading how certain men hated Jerimiah for his teachings and sought to put him to death. If the people rejected and persecuted the prophets, Jesus Christ, and all his disciples, then we too must be ready for similar treatment.

Despite the challenges, however, we can take heart in knowing that God does not abandon those who are his disciples and are persecuted for his sake. St Paul says in the second reading to consider how much opposition Jesus endured, and to keep our eyes fixed on him when we ourselves go through the same opposition. As we live a life of stewardship, let us ensure that we make time to go to the Lord in prayer to seek his help in our own struggles. If we aren't spending time with Christ in prayer, let us make an earnest effort to spend a few minutes each day with the Lord, asking for his strength to face all opposition.

Summary

Jesus never promised us that the life of a Christian disciple would be easy, but instead, he tells us that it will be difficult for the teachings of Christ is divisive, and hard for many to accept and believe. If the people persecuted Jesus and the prophets before him, how much more will the world persecute those who believe in Christ? Although the Christian life is not meant to be easy, let us take courage knowing that Christ has faced it all first, and will strengthen us when we face opposition ourselves.

21st Sunday of Ordinary Time

1st Reading: Isaiah 66.18-21

2nd Reading: Hebrews 12.5-7, 11-13

Gospel: Luke 13.22-30 – *The Narrow Door*

The Narrow Path

“Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I tell you, will attempt to enter but will not be strong enough.” This teaching of Jesus is a hard one to wrestle with in a world that is consumed with comfort and luxury. People don’t want to hear about sacrifice, denial of self, and teachings that are uncomfortable to preach. Many would rather be able to live their life the way they see fit, while at the same time reaping the rewards that await in heaven.

This form of ‘Christianity’ where everyone is saved and no work is needed to be done in bringing the Gospel to the ends of the world is a fantasy, and contrary to the Gospel. As much as we may wish for this to be the case, the readings today remind us that following Jesus is about taking up our cross and following him. To be authentic disciples and stewards, we must heed the words of St. Paul to the Hebrews and be willing to subject ourselves to the discipline of the Lord. We must like Jesus be humble, and gladly take up our cross and follow him.

Let us not walk the path that is broad and smooth, with many comforts and luxuries along the way, for this is the path that leads to destruction. Rather, let us strive to be like the saints and walk the narrow path, which is hard and difficult but leads to life everlasting with the Lord. As stewards, we are called to give of ourselves and to be willing to travel this narrow path. One way to do this is through sacrifice and fasting. Let us take up the practice this week of offering some comfort up to the Lord, to help ourselves better orient to walking the narrow path of life.

Summary

In a world consumed with comfort, no one wants to hear the Gospel message of the narrow path, a path full of sacrifice, self-denial, and carrying one’s cross. However, this is the life that God calls his disciples to live, to travel the hard and narrow path following our Lord who waits for us at the end. As we take up practices of self-denial and sacrifice, we become more like Jesus and are better suited to travel the narrow path, rather than the broad and easy path of destruction.

22nd Sunday of Ordinary Time

1st Reading: Sirach 3.17-18, 21, 29-30

2nd Reading: Hebrews 12.18-19, 22-24A

Gospel: Luke 14.1, 7-14 – *Humility and Hospitality*

Importance of Humility

One of the greatest virtues that all stewards should strive for is humility, and the readings today remind us of this. The first reading from Sirach admonishes the children of God to “conduct your affairs with humility, and you will be loved more than a giver of gifts. Humble yourselves the more, the greater you are, and you will find favour with God.”

A person who is humble doesn't think highly of himself and instead gives all glory to God for the good that they do. Humility is a virtue that God admires greatly in those who serve him, for it is a virtue that Christ embodied when he took the form of man and came to Earth. Jesus in the Gospel speaks of the importance of humility by sharing a parable of a meal and people choosing where to sit. Those who sought the last and lowest place were exalted and asked to move up, whereas those who sought the highest position and were proud were humiliated when they were asked to move down.

In the work of stewardship, humility is crucial as it helps battle pride. It is easy when sharing our time and talent to fall into the trap of thinking that we are very important for the parish, becoming proud and egotistical. The proud person will seek to boost their ego and the motivations for doing what they do results from their own desire to be sought after. Instead, if we are humble, God can better use us for building up the kingdom of God. Those that remain humble won't be hurt by criticisms, and remain joyful in all the work they do, regardless of its importance. A great way to learn to be humble is to pray to our Blessed Mother, who was a perfect example of humility. She never sought any praise herself and always emptied herself for the sake of others. Let us pray in a special way to our Blessed Mother for this virtue, and to be able to imitate her and her son in humility.

Summary

The readings today remind us of the importance of humility, and how God loves those who are humble of heart. Jesus in the Gospel tells us that the humble person is one who seats himself at the lowest seat for he doesn't think highly of himself, and in doing so he is exalted. As stewards, we are called to live out the virtue of humility in our lives as we share the gifts of our time and talent – keeping our hearts free from pride and instead focused on our Lord.

23rd Sunday of Ordinary Time

1st Reading: Wisdom 9.13-18

2nd Reading: Philemon 9b-10, 12-17

Gospel: Luke 14.25-33 – *The Cost of Discipleship*

Giving the Gift of Ourselves

At first glance, Jesus' words in the Gospel this Sunday seem like a cruel and impossible ideal for any Christian to live. Surely he doesn't mean for us to hate our fathers and mothers and even life itself, right? However, these words all point to the most central mystery of today's gospel, that "whoever of you does not give up all their possessions cannot be my disciple." Now the Lord doesn't mean to suggest that all of us should have no possessions, but rather to live with a lens that gratefully views all our possessions as gifts from God, that are meant to be used for His glory and the good of the Church. This lens is at the very core of what it means to live as a steward.

Cardinal Collins, in his *Pastoral Letter on Stewardship** states that good stewards are "meant to use God's gift fruitfully and creatively, so that with true gratitude for what we have received we may return God's gifts to Him with increase." These gifts do not involve simply financial goods, but the gifts of our time and talents as well.

As the new school year is beginning and many ministries in the parish are gearing up for a new year, we should ask ourselves, how can we lend our time and gifts to serve others? By taking today's Gospel message to heart, we can learn to be even more generous with the gift of our lives, as we boldly and joyfully proclaim our identity as Jesus' disciples.

Summary

Jesus says "whoever of you does not give up all their possessions cannot be my disciple." The Lord doesn't mean to suggest that all of us should have no possessions but rather to live with a lens that gratefully views everything as gifts from God that are meant to be used for His glory and the good of the Church. As the new school year is beginning and many ministries in the parish are starting up, we should ask ourselves, how can we lend our time and gifts to serve others?

* Thomas Cardinal Collins, Pastoral Letter on Stewardship. Available at:
<https://www.archtoronto.org/stewardship/Pages/Pastoral-Letter-Cardinal-Thomas-Collins.aspx>

24th Sunday of Ordinary Time

1st Reading: Exodus 32.7-11, 13-14

2nd Reading: 1 Timothy 1.12-17

Gospel: Luke 15.1-32 – *The Parables of the Lost Sheep, the Lost Coin & Prodigal Son*

Sharing the Gift of Mercy

The readings and Gospel this Sunday are richly steeped with the central Christian mystery that St. Paul proclaims in his first letter to Timothy, that “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” This message is the saving grace for all Christians, the lifeline we all hold onto as we journey throughout our time on earth with our eyes fixed heavenward. The forgiveness of our sins is the greatest, most transformative, gift that Christ bestows on our lives.

This gift of forgiveness, although freely given by Christ, needs to be cultivated with ongoing contrition, repentance, and penance. Moreover, this gift should not be held solely for oneself, but graciously shared in a two-fold manner to others. Firstly, as the words of the Our Father so frequently remind us, we must forgive the trespasses of others. In doing so, we are sharing the gift of God’s forgiveness with our neighbour.

Secondly, we should be an example to others of the salvific power of God’s forgiveness in our own lives, so that they may be inspired by our witness and be encouraged to turn to God’s mercy as well. Perhaps one concrete practice we could do adopt is inviting others to join us in receiving the sacrament of Confession. Therefore, as true grateful disciples of Christ let us continually seek His gift of forgiveness and ask ourselves how are we sharing the good news of this great gift with those whom we encounter?

Summary

In the second reading St. Paul proclaims that “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” The forgiveness of our sins is the greatest, most transformative, gift that Christ bestows on our lives. So as true grateful disciples of Christ, let us continually seek His gift of forgiveness and ask ourselves how are we sharing the good news of this great gift with those whom we encounter?

25th Sunday of Ordinary Time

1st Reading: Amos 8.4-7

2nd Reading: 1 Timothy 2.1-7++

Gospel: Luke 16.1-13 - *The Parable of the Dishonest Manager*

Serving the Greater Master

From a young age, society presents us the “perfect” roadmap for a life of happiness. This vision usually includes having the fancy job, a large house, extravagant clothes and a large sum of money in the bank. It is engrained in our upbringing that the amassing of wealth should be the most important facet of our life, which is why the Lord’s words in today’s Gospel, that “you cannot serve God and wealth,” can be so difficult to swallow.

It is interesting that Jesus doesn’t say we cannot have wealth, but instead, that we should not serve wealth. What does it mean to serve wealth? It is to preferentially prioritize our efforts for career advancement over our efforts to deepen our relationship with God. Essentially, those who serve wealth utilize all of their time and talents to attain more and more possessions. Stewards on the other hand utilize their time and talents to serve Christ and His Church.

In order to foster a healthy attitude towards our wealth, it is important to view it, and our very lives themselves, as a gift from God. It is only then that we can begin to move from gratitude to generosity, graciously sharing our gifts with others for the glory of God and the church. When the temptation to hold onto our wealth looms over us, let us remember Christ’s words, and ask ourselves how are we sharing our gifts with the parish community?

Summary

The Lord’s exhortation that “you cannot serve God and wealth” can be difficult to swallow. In order to foster a healthy attitude towards our wealth, it is important to view it, and our very lives themselves, as a gift from God. When we view our wealth as a gift we can then begin to move from gratitude to generosity, graciously sharing our gifts with others for the glory of God and the church.

Feast of St. Michael the Archangel

1st Reading: Revelation 12.7-12a

2nd Reading: Daniel 7.9-10, 13-14

Gospel: John 1.47-51 – *Jesus calls Nathaniel*

Joining the Celestial Battle

All of us love a good story that involves a fierce battle between two opposing sides where goodness ultimately triumphs over evil. We get exactly this story in the first reading from the Book of Revelation, in which the war between St. Michael and the angels and the devil and his army is depicted. Often in our lives as disciples, we too seek to take up arms and fight the good fight to overcome the evilness that pervades our society.

This desire is inherently good, but how can we live this out practically. A good, albeit unexpected, way in which we can join the heavenly armies is by taking up the consistent, daily practice of prayer. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states that prayer “always presupposes effort ... prayer is a battle. Against whom? Against ourselves and against the wiles of the tempter who does all he can to turn man away from prayer, away from union with God” (CCC 2725).

The Church herself describes prayer inherently as a battle. We can thus channel our desire for a celestial combat into our taking up the arms of prayer. How often do we fight to make time for prayer each day? How often do we recognize how efficacious prayer is for the good of our soul and the Church as a whole? Perhaps one practice we can adopt as stewards is to offer God the first and last thoughts of our day. Let us strive to commit to praying daily, safeguarding this practice from all competing distractions for our time and in doing so, enrich our parish community with the foundation of prayer.

Summary

As we contemplate the celestial battle between the angels and demons we should ask ourselves, how can we join the fight? A good, albeit unexpected, way in which we can join the heavenly armies is by taking up the consistent, daily practice of prayer, which the catechism describes as a battle. Let us strive to commit to praying daily and in doing so, enrich our parish community with the foundation of prayer.

27^h Sunday of Ordinary Time

1st Reading: Habakkuk 1.2-3; 2.2-4

2nd Reading: 2 Timothy 1.6-8, 13-14

Gospel: Luke 17.5-10 – *Faith like a Mustard Seed*

The Gift of Faith

How often do we pray to God for greater faith? The apostles in today's Gospel echo the words of Christians throughout the centuries, "increase our faith!" Jesus was teaching messages that challenged their own preconceived notions and they recognized that they needed faith to be able to accept these truths. So too, it is often difficult in our own secular society to believe all of the increasingly counter-cultural teachings of the Church. In a culture that demands the stamp of scientific approval on all matters, it requires greater faith to believe certain sublime truths of the Church that cannot be proven in such a manner.

This is why we too need to earnestly implore the Lord for more faith. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* claims that "faith is a gift of God, a supernatural virtue infused by Him." (CCC 153). This understanding is important in realizing that while we can perform acts that help cultivate our faith, it ultimately remains a pure gift of grace from God. This lens allows us to remain humble in times when our faith is strong for we realize that we are constantly being sustained by grace. This should spur us onto greater gratitude to God.

By recognizing our great need for the pure gift of faith, we should strive to return to the core act of our discipleship, namely, prayer. Let us set aside time each day to pray to the Father the words found in the Gospel of Mark, "I believe, help my unbelief." Let us then move outwards and pray for others to be strengthened in their faith, especially those whom we know are struggling,

Summary

It is often difficult in our own secular society to believe all of the increasingly counter-cultural teachings of the Church. This is why we too need to earnestly implore the Lord for more faith. Let us set aside time each day to pray to the Father the same words found in the Gospel today, "increase our faith!"

28th Sunday of Ordinary Time – Thanksgiving Weekend

1st Reading: 2 Kings 5.14-17

2nd Reading: 2 Timothy 2.8-13

Gospel: Luke 17.11-19 – *Jesus Cleanses Ten Lepers*

Cultivating Generous Gratitude

All of us since our childhood were raised to say thank you when someone has done something good for us. While this is undoubtedly a positive act, it can lead us to developing the mentality that thanksgiving is a mere matter of politeness. The deeper sense of gratitude exemplified by the one leper who returned to thank Jesus in the Gospel surpasses mere kind manners. The Gospel recalls that he “prostrated himself at Jesus’ feet and thanked Him.”

The act of returning to Jesus and prostrating himself cost something to the leper, it required his effort, time and humility. We can learn from his example and learn to go out of our way in order to express our profound gratitude to God and our neighbour.

With respect to God, we can set aside time in prayer to intentionally thank the Lord for the abundant gifts He graciously lavishes on us. When thanking our neighbour, perhaps we can include a physical thank you card, a small token of appreciation or express our thanks by spending time with them. Let us ask ourselves this Thanksgiving weekend, how are we moving past mere politeness to sincere acts of gratitude towards God and neighbour. In this way, we can practice generosity even while expressing our gratitude.

Summary

The one leper who returned and prostrated himself before Jesus shows us the true model of gratitude towards God and neighbour because it required his effort, time and humility. When thanking God, we can set aside time in prayer to intentionally thank Him for the abundant gifts He lavishes upon us. When thanking our neighbour, perhaps we can include a physical thank you card, a small token of appreciation or express our thanks by spending time with them.

29th Sunday of Ordinary Time

1st Reading: Exodus 17.8-13

2nd Reading: 2 Timothy 3.14 – 4.2

Gospel: Luke 18.1-8 - *The Parable of the Widow and the Unjust Judge*

No reflection for this week (update as of Oct. 13, 2022). Apologies for the inconvenience.

30th Sunday of Ordinary Time – World Mission Sunday

1st Reading: Sirach 35.15-17, 20-22

2nd Reading: 2 Timothy 4.6-8, 16-18

Gospel: Luke 18.9-14 - *The Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector*

Serving the Hidden Form of Poverty

In 1926, Pope Pius XI declared that the second last Sunday in October would be World Mission Sunday, a day in which the entire Church renews its missionary commitment and prays for the missions. When we think of the missions in the church, we often think about those striving to spread the Gospel in remote areas ravaged by poverty. However, in our secular society there is rampant poverty all around us, for according to St. Teresa of Calcutta, “the most terrible poverty is loneliness, and the feeling of being unloved.”

How often do we aspire to do great things for the church while neglecting the loneliness experienced by those in our parish communities and homes? This is a question we should prayerfully take to heart and then seek ways to act as loving stewards towards our neighbour. One tremendous, albeit often undervalued, act we can offer someone in need is a genuine smile. St. Teresa of Calcutta exhorts us saying, “let us always meet each other with smile, for the smile is the beginning of love.”

From this initial act of love we can begin to offer the gift of our time to others, journeying with them in their trials and suffering. The gift of our time can take the form of visiting the sick in hospitals, the elderly in nursing homes or the imprisoned. Moreover, it can also be practiced by going out of our way to speak to parishioners who could use support, whether because of the arrival of a new child, a new job, a death in the family or any other reason. Let us begin to realize that missionary activity is fostered close to home and begins with a smile that can lead us to generously share our time with the parish community as true stewards of Christ.

Summary

When we think of the missions in the church, we often think about those striving to spread the Gospel in remote areas ravaged by poverty. However, in our secular society there is rampant poverty all around us, for according to St. Teresa of Calcutta, “the most terrible poverty is loneliness, and the feeling of being unloved.” Let us begin to realize that missionary activity is fostered close to home and begins with a smile that can lead us to generously share our time with the parish community as true stewards of Christ.

31st Sunday of Ordinary Time

1st Reading: Wisdom 11.22 – 12.2

2nd Reading: 2 Thessalonians 1.11 – 2.2

Gospel: Luke 19.1-10 - *Jesus and Zacchaeus*

Giving our First Fruits

The image of Zacchaeus, a man short in stature climbing a tree to see Jesus, is probably one that is very familiar to us. However, despite this familiarity, there is a deep message that can often be overlooked. When Zacchaeus has a conversion experience, he vows not only to correct the wrong he has done, but to give back “four times as much.” Zacchaeus teaches us that we shouldn’t give the bare minimum but seek greater generosity in our gifts, especially of our time and talents.

The USCCB’s *Pastoral Letter on Stewardship** proclaims that “stewards must consider prayerfully the gifts they have received from God, and they should make a decision (in advance, from the “first fruits” instead of what is left over after other obligations have been met) about what will be given.” We should periodically ask ourselves, are we really giving God the best of our time and talents or do other obligations take priority?

For example, with respect to time, we should strive to establish and protect scheduled moments of daily prayer. Likewise, with our talents, we should try to offer our gifts first for the good of the church before our own personal interests. For example, do we rarely volunteer or only assist at the parish volunteer days when we happen to have leftover time, or do we proactively schedule our week so as to ensure that it is a priority? Let us prayerfully review how we use our time and talents and seek ways to better serve the Kingdom of God within our parishes.

Summary

When Zacchaeus has a conversion experience, he vows not only to correct the wrong he has done, but to give back “four times as much.” Zacchaeus teaches us that we shouldn’t give the bare minimum but seek greater generosity in our gifts, especially of our time and talents. Let us prayerfully review how we use our time and talents and seek ways to better serve the Kingdom of God within our parishes.

* United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Stewardship: A Disciple’s Response*, 2002.

32nd Sunday of Ordinary Time

1st Reading: 2 Maccabees 7.1-2, 7, 9-14++

2nd Reading: 2 Thessalonians 2.16 – 3.5

Gospel: Luke 20.27-38 - *The Question about the Resurrection*

Living as Hopeful Stewards

What does it mean to hope in the Lord? The seven brothers and their mother depicted in the first reading from 2 Maccabees can help us understand what true hope looks like. As all of them are being tortured, one of the brothers boldly declares, “you dismiss us from this present life, but the King of the universe will raise us up to an everlasting renewal of life.” In the midst of apparent sheer defeat, they remain steadfast in their hope.

Living lives of stewards also means living lives of hope. As we begin to embrace the lens of stewardship and start striving to revitalize our parish communities through the gifts of our time and talents, we could unconsciously expect vast changes to occur over night. This could lead to discouragement as the desired results aren’t coming about according to the timeline we had envisioned.

However, we should fight these temptations of discouragement and listen to the exhortation of St. Padre Pio who says, “Pray, hope and don’t worry. Worry is useless. God is merciful and will hear your prayer.” We must also remember the words of Cardinal Collins in his *Pastoral Letter on Stewardship** that states that “stewardship is realistic ... What is important in life takes time.” Let us continue to embrace the spirituality of stewardship with full hope that the Lord will greatly bless us and our parish community.

Summary

This Sunday we reflect on the strong hope displayed by the seven brothers in 2 Maccabees amidst their persecution. Living lives of stewards also means living lives of hope and fighting the temptation to be discouraged when we don’t see the desired results of our good works right away. Let us continue to serve God as we heed the advice of St. Padre Pio who says, “Pray, hope and don’t worry. Worry is useless. God is merciful and will hear your prayer.”

* Thomas Cardinal Collins, Pastoral Letter on Stewardship. Available at:
<https://www.archtoronto.org/stewardship/Pages/Pastoral-Letter-Cardinal-Thomas-Collins.aspx>

33rd Sunday of Ordinary Time – World Day of the Poor

1st Reading: Malachi 4.1-2

2nd Reading: 2 Thessalonians 3.7-12

Gospel: Luke 21.5-19 - *The Destruction of the Temple and Signs of the End Times*

Contemplating Life and Death

Benjamin Franklin has been quoted to say that there are only two things certain in life: death and taxes. While much can be said about the latter, let us focus on the former, namely, death. Cardinal Collins in his *Pastoral Letter on Stewardship** asserts that “the thought of death is spiritually fruitful, as it forces each of us to consider our priorities.”

As we approach the end of the liturgical year, the Mass readings point toward Christ’s Second Coming and the end of our earthly life. Through the contemplation of our limited time on earth, we can ask ourselves if we are appropriately using our gifts to serve Christ in the poor and our neighbour. One great gift we can share is that of our time. Cardinal Collins says that, “we can use our time in this life to be selfish, or to be generous to others. The blessed used their time here to care for those in need.”

Two practical ways we can effectively and generously use our time is in prayer and active presence with our neighbour. It is primarily important to spend time in prayer, in order to begin to know, love and worship God and come to understand His love and mercy for us. Consequently, with the fire of God’s love fostered through our time in prayer, our time spent with others will be more fruitful, as it will now be God’s love within us reaching out to others. So as we journey with our eyes fixed heavenward, let us generously give our time to God and our parish community.

Summary

As the Mass readings point toward Christ’s Second Coming and the end of our earthly life, we should ask ourselves if we are appropriately using our gifts to serve Christ in the poor and our neighbour. One great gift we can share is that of our time. Cardinal Collins says that, “we can use our time in this life to be selfish, or to be generous to others. The blessed used their time here to care for those in need.”

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Feast of Christ the King

1st Reading: 2 Samuel 5.1-3

2nd Reading: Colossians 1.12-20

Gospel: Luke 23.35-43 – *Jesus and the Repentant Thief*

Building up the Kingdom

“Thy Kingdom come, thy Will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven.” These familiar words from the Our Father can provide us with rich reflection on this great feast of Christ the King, for where there is a king, there is a kingdom as well.

As we pray the Our Father, we are asking that the Kingdom of God may continuously be built up here on earth. In addition to our practice of praying, we as good stewards can help build up the Kingdom through our deeds. The USCCB in their *Pastoral Letter on Stewardship*^{*} proclaims that through “worthy deeds in this life, people also make a limited but real human contribution to building up the kingdom.”

This should fill those striving to live a life of stewardship with great excitement and zeal, for by faithfully sharing our time and talents with the parish community, we are actively contributing to the building of the Kingdom. Each time we share our time in visiting people in need, in using our musical talents in the choir or our leadership skills on a parish committee, we are spreading the Kingdom. How often do we really view our actions as service to the Kingdom and not just volunteerism? Let us ask ourselves how we can better share our gifts to build up our parish communities and the Kingdom of God.

Summary

We often pray asking that the Kingdom of God may be built up here on earth when we say “thy Kingdom come, thy Will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven.” In addition to our practice of praying, we as good stewards can help build up the Kingdom through our deeds. Let us ask ourselves how we can better share our gifts to build up our parish communities and the Kingdom of God.

^{*} United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Stewardship: A Disciple’s Response*, 2002.