

Giving Discovering Responding Praising Forgiving
 Feeding Thanking Sheltering Deciding Evangelizing
 Praying Clothing Building Renewing Creating Nurturing
 Celebrating Comforting Building Renewing Creating Nurturing
 Caring Forming
 Loving Sharing Inviting Visiting Growing Serving

Office of Parish Stewardship, Diocese of Rockville Centre, NY

December, 2015

A Jubilee Year of Mercy!

Pope Francis has declared a Year of Mercy! There has been quite a bit of excitement and information regarding this wonderful Year of Jubilee!

In joining with the celebration, we will be providing to you each month a “Stewardship Connections” column for your bulletin. Each brief insert will highlight and make connections between The Year of Mercy and our lives as Christian Stewards. We hope you utilize this resource! (PS: We know this one is a bit late, so it’s just for you!)



Stewardship Connections

December, 2015



Stewardship
A Way of Life

Mercy ...What about Me?

By Laurie Whitfield

Our Holy Father has declared a year of Jubilee - The Year of Mercy! Pope Francis’ wish for us in this Jubilee is to consciously “take-a-step” forward on our journey of faith to experience spiritual conversion. As steward disciples, we are well aware that conversion is possible only by accepting God’s grace joined with our desire to follow more closely and deepen our relationship with Christ.

What a journey this year will be! Advent is our time of preparation. We are waiting, yes, but that waiting includes actively preparing to welcome Christ more deeply into our hearts and lives. This preparation includes preparing the way and making space for Christ to dwell. How do we make space? Good question! If we think about it in temporal terms, such as with our closets and drawers, some would say, “You can’t put anything else in unless you take something out first.” Does this hold true for our hearts and lives as well?



If it does, how wonderful would it be to empty ourselves of those things that may clutter us; those things that get in the way of deepening our relationship with Christ! Those first steps - toward passing through the Holy Door of Mercy - begin within our own hearts. Take a moment to think of those things that clutter your space: fear, doubt, negativity, sin, self-centeredness, pressure, guilt, stress, expectations and more. You may wish to write some of them down and be specific. Pray with this acknowledgment and then, when you are ready, throw that paper and some of that clutter away!

Let’s begin this Year of Mercy by being merciful with ourselves. We are God’s great works of art! Perhaps the first door to pass through is the one that rids us of this clutter and fills us with faith, positivity, prayer, joy, laughter, love, gratitude, community, service, ministry, stewardship! Maybe there will be several doors to pass through this year and this is the first! This door will bring you out from some of the self-darkness into the light. You are a wonderfully gifted child of God! Let your light shine for all to see! You will now be more ready to be merciful to others and practice better the corporal and spiritual works of mercy! The door is open... it is up to us to be ready to pass through! Happy Jubilee!

“I think that if God forgives us we must forgive ourselves. Otherwise, it is almost like setting up ourselves as a higher tribunal than Him.” — C.S. Lewis



Gifts Celebrations!

Each year various parishes engage in what we call a Gifts Celebration as part of a larger Stewardship Time and Talent Renewal. The primary focus of the celebration is to rejoice in how the shared gifts of the community serve one another, thereby building up the kingdom of God here on earth. These celebrations may take the shape of processional banners, ministry highlights, Litany of Ministries with blessings or a wonderful ministry fair. In the coming issues, we will be sharing with you the parishes who have recently honored their ministries with a large celebration!

St Barnabas - Bellmore!!

Submitted by Fr. Adrian McHugh - Pastor

Our Ministry Fair was warmly welcomed by all in St. Barnabas as it has been some time since we'd held one. Many new people signed up for service in our parish ministries and our long serving stewards were encouraged by the interest.

Something unique that we did this year to encourage people to visit the Fair was to hold a table raffle! We asked each ministry to purchase a raffle prize and display it on their table (prizes cost around \$20 each). The children from St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Regional School stood at the Church doors in their school uniforms and handed out FREE raffle tickets to people as they entered Mass. This generated interest and encouraged undecided parishioners to visit. As people toured the ministry tables they could place a ticket in each drawing.

One of the lasting outcomes of the Ministry Fair is that it gave an opportunity to committed stewards from the various ministries to network and spend some time with each other.

A week after our celebration, we invited Laurie Whitfield to lead an evening of reflection and renewal for the Ministry Leaders. Thank you Laurie for your help and encouragement!



Flashback!

Many times, Stewardship coordinators ask for previously run articles or assistance in certain areas that we have addressed in past issues of "Connections". To that end, we are introducing the Flashback!! This month's Flashback is about the Epiphany. This article first appeared in December, 2009. Enjoy!

An Epiphany about Epiphany



If we define, or at least check the thesaurus, the word journey is synonymous with "traveling around," "exploration," "discovery," "adventure," "voyaging." These are active words. On our active journey as stewards

of our faith, we try to remain conscious. Conscious of planned, Christ-centered and responsible decisions. This way of living requires us, at times, to pause-reflect-and then act.

As we continue the journey after Christmas and honoring Mary on January 1, we should pause momentarily and celebrate another journey. As scripture enlightens us, three travelers from the east with only a star as their guide set out to discover and worship the Messiah. They brought gifts as a sign of recognition and gratitude for what God had given them. We learn from these expressions of giving.

Every time we share our gifts out of love and gratitude to God, God receives, uses and returns them to us as the living Jesus.

Epiphany - "to manifest," "to show," "to reveal." The Feast of the Epiphany celebrates God's revelation to us in Jesus. And like the Magi, we too mark this revelation by the sharing of gifts. God gives us Jesus, we journey to find and embrace Jesus and when we do we share gifts out of gratitude for all God has done. **As Christian stewards, the Epiphany never ends.**

Let's journey further.

Stewardship teaches us that we are to receive God's gifts gratefully, share them generously and return them with increase. God repeatedly gives us the ultimate example! Every time we share our gifts out of love and gratitude to God, God receives, shares and returns them to us as the living Jesus. Think about it. Bread and wine begin as gifts of wheat and grapes. Through the work of our hands (also gifted by God) they become bread and wine that we offer back to God as gift. We pray that these gifts are accepted. They are not only accepted, but then transformed and given back to us with uncountable increase. God, once again, gives us Jesus.

As Christian stewards, the Epiphany never ends.

When we participate in ministry, we use the gifts God has given us. We offer our time and talents as gift to God. Those gifts are accepted and returned to us as Jesus. This time through the use of our hands, heart and voice we bring the love of Jesus to whom we minister. In doing so, Christ is revealed to us as well in those who receive.

Because we journey as conscious stewards, the revelation of God and the Kingdom are constantly available to us. We must pause and take the time to reflect and use these moments to journey forward.

Speaking of journeying forward, our Christmas season will end shortly with the Baptism of Our Lord - the beginning of Jesus' public ministry. What a time for Christian stewards to pause-reflect-and then-act!



A Way of Life

Liturgical Resources

We hope you enjoy and utilize these Liturgical Resources for your Bulletin, Announcements and General Intercessions. Please know that they are also available on our website at www.stewardshipli.org → Special Leadership Section → This Week's Fax. Note: Bulletin Reflections are taken from **Stewardship By the Book**, author Sharon Hueckel)

January 3 - The Epiphany of the Lord

Bulletin Reflection: The three kings in today's Gospel traveled a great distance at considerable cost to offer their richest gifts to the Infant Jesus. How far will I go and what will I offer to do homage to this newborn King and Savior?



Living Stewardship: We are grateful this week for all stewards in our parish who develop their talents to the fullest in order to use them to benefit church and community by assisting the poor, feeding the hungry, consoling the sorrowful and teaching the young.

General Intercession for Mass: That as wise stewards of God's gifts, we seek to bring our gifts, both in offering as well as celebration, to our newborn Savior, we pray to the Lord...✠

January 10 - The Baptism of the Lord

Bulletin Reflection: Jesus, whom God called "my beloved Son," is also the "servant" of whom Isaiah speaks in the first reading. We who are baptized in Christ must follow His example and use our time and resources in the service of God and neighbor.



Living Stewardship: We are grateful this week for all stewards in our parish who answer their baptismal call to **believe with joy** by placing their gifts and resources, their very selves, at God's service not only in the Church but in the world.

General Intercession for Mass: That as obedient stewards, we listen with special appreciation to what the Lord says as we prepare our hearts to be His dwelling place, we pray to the Lord...✠

January 17 - 2nd Sunday in Ordinary Time

Bulletin Reflection: In today's second reading, St. Paul tells the Corinthians (and us) that all of our gifts are from God and they are given, not for us alone, but for the common good. The generosity of God knows no limits - the miracle at Cana reminds us that whenever we faithfully do as God asks, He can change our gifts of water into wine.



Living Stewardship: We are grateful this week for all stewards in our parish who are open to God's call and stand ready to make the best use of their gifts in service to their neighbor through practical works of mercy such as donating food to a food pantry or clothing to the St. Vincent de Paul Society.

General Intercession for Mass: That as generous stewards, we recognize that the Lord has been gracious to us, leading us to cheerfully share with all in need, we pray to the Lord...✠

January 24 - 3rd Sunday in Ordinary Time

Bulletin Reflection: The US Bishops' pastoral on stewardship reinforces today's reading from 1 Corinthians: "Because its individual members do collectively make up the Body of Christ, that body's health and well-being are the responsibility of the members - the personal responsibility of each of us. We all are stewards of the Church."



Living Stewardship: We are grateful this week for all stewards in our parish who invite a new family in town to supper, actively celebrating a corporal work of mercy as they provide welcome to a stranger.

General Intercession for Mass: That as responsible stewards, we embrace the call of the Gospel without fear or hesitation, we pray to the Lord...✠

January 31 - 4th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Bulletin Reflection: Jeremiah declares that the Lord knew him before he was born and dedicated and appointed him to his role as prophet even before he drew breath. We, too, are known and sent by the Lord. What deeds of love and service are mine to perform?



Living Stewardship: We are grateful this week for all stewards in our parish who practice a spiritual work of mercy by having Masses said for departed friends and loved ones, praying for the living and the dead.

General Intercession for Mass: That as disciple stewards, we respond to God's call to show mercy and love, especially to those most in need within our own parish community, we pray to the Lord...✠

