

Giving Discovering Responding Praising Forgiving
 Feeding Thanking Sheltering Deciding Evangelizing
 Praying Clothing Building Renewing Creating Nurturing
 Celebrating Comforting Building Renewing Creating Nurturing
 Caring Forming
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Stewardship

CONNECTIONS

Office of Parish Stewardship, Diocese of Rockville Centre, NY

February, 2016

Make it... Make a Difference



Many of us can recall the old riddle about the man who would not leave his house during a flood. He was so convinced that God would save him that he turned down the rescue efforts of the police, firefighters, helicopter and boat. When the man was face to face with God, he asked, "why did you abandon me? I thought you would save me?" God responded, "I tried to save you. I sent you the police, the fire department, a helicopter and even a boat!"

Why did the man not take advantage of the rescue attempts? Perhaps because he was not conscious of God in the everyday. He was not prepared to recognize -to 'see' - the Incarnation ever present around us in our world.

From roughly November to January we participate in *renewal events* that raise our awareness and actively bring to consciousness our faith, our baptismal responsibility and our call as Christians to actively participate in Christ's mission.

We are grateful, we prepare ourselves for the coming of Christ and we celebrate ...But does this change us for the coming year? Have we used the time of Advent and Christmas well to raise our awareness of both Christ to come and Christ among us?

We returned to Ordinary Time renewed and refreshed to proclaim, "Christ is here!" We recognize, embrace and celebrate Christ here and now. That is our promise to God at Baptism and that is our life as Christian stewards.

And, Christ is here. It is easy to get caught up in the hustle and bustle of not only the holiday season, but of life in general. Many people joke that they are least likely to see something that is right in front of them! This is true for many of us. We "sleep-walk" through life or we find ourselves on "autopilot." We need reminders to bring our focus back to the mission.

The journey continues now through Lent. We are

challenged not only to remain awake, but challenged further to be increasingly more aware of Christ in our daily lives. We listen for His voice in the crowds; see His face in the stranger; recognize Him in our family and friends and at gatherings we attend and especially in the quiet of our hearts and minds when we lay down to rest. This journey of becoming more united with Christ intensifies through the Triduum and culminates in the joyous celebration of Easter Resurrection!

The seasons of our Church renew and remind us to keep our faith in the fore of our minds. Our faith is sustained through the spirituality and practice of stewardship. Stewardship challenges us to **remain** awake, ready and aware. Every moment of every day is gratefully lived, **conscious** of our faith and our responsibility as Christian stewards. We are not only called to see and hear Christ in the everyday, but also to **be** Christ in the everyday. Sound familiar?

We are His eyes, ears, voice, heart and His hands. We have prepared well and now we must sustain. Through it all, Christ is with us. We are never alone. Let your preparation and celebration **make a difference** in your life now and throughout the year!

"We are not only called to see and hear Christ in the everyday, but also to be Christ in the everyday."

Let us *pray* for the renewal of our Church, *fast* from fear and anxiety and *give* generously as an expression of our gratitude for all that God has given to us.



A Way of Life

A Jubilee Year of Mercy!

This month's Year of Mercy Connection comes from Anne Bantleon, *Pastoral Associate* at St. Pius X Parish in Plainview. Anne has many years of experience in Stewardship and we are so grateful to her for sharing her Jubilee thoughts with us! Thank you Anne!!



Stewardship Connections

February, 2016



Stewardship and Mercy as seen through the Lens of Lent

By Anne Bantleon

Believing with Joy! I LOVE this theme!

How do we possibly *believe joyfully* while observing Lent? More easily than you would think. Stewardship and Mercy are filled with JOY! *"I desire mercy and not sacrifice."* Mt 9:13

My youthful memories of Lent are of feeling deprived and somber. I remember a plain, drab altar; no flowers, purple covered statues, fish on Friday, no chocolate, no dessert, no Gloria, no Alleluia. We gouged ourselves on Sundays for all we gave up during the week. I wanted it over. (I must confess I didn't notice 'no Gloria, no Alleluia' until recently.) Lent was a time for sacrifice, to give up, to do with less. The end result was a negative. Easter was a relief from our suffering.

The change from a gloomy experience attitude to a joyful attitude, in fact, blessed experience, is actually taken from Scripture: "When you fast do not look gloomy like the hypocrites. ...when you fast anoint your head and wash your face." Mt 6:16

Lent is an opportunity, a do-over, a makeover, a mulligan, a second chance. Who doesn't smile at the glimmer of hope that a second chance brings. Thank God for His Mercy! It is God's MERCY, not our own merits, that make us stewards of his Kingdom. If we are aware of God's mercy, we can give mercy to others.

The Life of a Christian steward models the life of Jesus. We are called upon to live a life of Mercy. As merciful stewards God calls us to transform our world through the **Corporal and Spiritual Acts of Mercy**. Notice they are called *ACTS*. Mercy is love and compassion in action – it requires that we **DO something**. These acts remind us that faith finds expression in concrete everyday actions meant to help our neighbors. We help our neighbors in body by feeding, visiting, and comforting them. But we can't separate the corporal from the spiritual.

Merciful stewards help spiritually by instructing, counseling, forgiving, praying and admonishing. 'Admonishing sinners' is challenging. However, this merciful act could be seen as the greatest act of mercy. Merciful stewards are the conduit of God's love. "Jesus Christ is the face of God's mercy." Pope Francis (*Misericordiae Vultus*). The Life of a Christian steward models the life of Jesus. It is challenging and even difficult. Moreover, when we admonish sinners, we invite and allow God to work through us. A good admonisher is always careful to choose the right moment, right words and do it in a manner that affirms the dignity of the person they are admonishing. Good stewards often do this less with their words and more by living a Christian lifestyle that others are attracted to. A life that is lived in the concern for the salvation of others is good stewardship and a life lived in mercy.

When we give comfort, ease fears, or help carry someone else's burden, joy fills our own hearts. That joy, that loving feeling is the Joy of Jesus being released from your heart.

St. Augustine wrote, in commenting on Jesus' words: "Where your pleasure is, there is your treasure; where your treasure is, there is your heart; where your heart is, there is your happiness." Walk joyfully through the doors of Mercy and give witness to a LOVING God!

Intense joy comes to those who take the risk to live as Christian stewards. Women and men who seek to live as stewards learn that all things work for good for those who love God. Rom 8:28

Penitents may not be joyful when they enter a confessional, but possess boundless joy when they leave. Such is the working of grace.

Believe and Enjoy Lent! It is a HOLY TIME-OUT!



Gifts Celebrations!

Those parishes who honored their ministries with a large celebration this past year.

This month we highlight St. Joseph Parish in Babylon. As part of a larger Renewal of Time and Talent, St. Joseph Parish chose to rejoice how the shared gifts of the community serve one another and build up the kingdom of God here on earth with a Gifts Celebration!



We Welcome. We Worship. We Witness.

REFLECTIONS ON A MINISTRY FAIR

Submitted by Jane Zollo, Stewardship Director



The power of the personal invitation... there's nothing like it, right? When someone looks you in the eye and says, "Come, join me", "I think you'd be perfect for this", or maybe just 'Welcome!'.

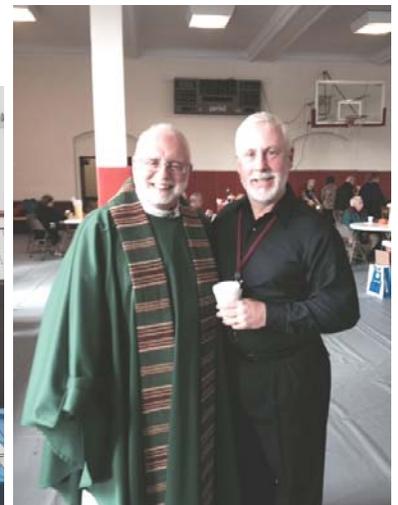
The personal invite: that's what we build the Ministry Fair on, here at St. Joseph Parish in Babylon. It begins with the language used in advertising weeks in advance, it then appears in the invitation we extend to the ministry leaders to get the best and most enthusiastic people to man the tables. Finally, it's included in the tent installed on the front lawn. That feeling of hospitality surrounded in a welcoming atmosphere is the fabric around which our Ministry Fair is woven.

We believe ministry and service is not about recruitment just once a year or a way to meet a Church's need rather than the individual's need to serve. Instead, it's a conversion of heart, a conversion that starts with seeds gently sown: greeting a potential new volunteer with a smile and a handshake, talking with someone who has real, practical knowledge about the ministry and having an authentic presence.

"...an opportunity to become the human face of Christ."

At our last Ministry Fair in the Fall of 2015, over 100 people expressed an interest in one or more ministries. The weeks after were spent in follow-up by dedicated ministry leaders, with an average of 25-30 people willing to 'test the waters' through different areas of service. We know though, that it all starts with a personal invitation and an opportunity to become part of something greater than ourselves, an opportunity to become the human face of Christ.

In our technology-injected world, we understand that it's easy to lose sight of what's real and what's simple, and yes, what's really simple – that personal connection. So our one suggestion to any Parish interested in hosting a Ministry Fair for the first time or for the first time in many years: harness and keep the focus on the personal invitation in **all** of your efforts. Spend your energy and valuable time getting that part right. It really does matter!



A Way of Life

Flashback!

Yes, it's winter and YES it sometimes snows on the weekend!! A few weeks ago here on Long Island, we received a fair amount of snow from Friday into Saturday. We all know what this does to our weekend Mass attendance and subsequently, the collection. Several parish staff including pastors were posting on FaceBook what the Mass attendance was or was NOT, as it were. Our thought here... what a great Flashback article for us all - the benefits of Automated Giving! This article is a compilation of two articles from March, 2010 and November, 2004, but this office has been writing, speaking, teaching and singing the praises of automated giving since 1999! Enjoy!

"This year I would like you to Take-A-Step of 59%!"

WHAT?!

Can you imagine asking parishioners to take this kind of a step in their financial giving? Well, with the help of automated giving, that's just what 95 St. Thomas the Apostle families did in their first year of enrollment! Many of you have seen the statistics that Church-going families attend Mass an average of 38-40 weeks of the year. This is not to say that these families do not attend Mass, they just may not be attending in their home parish.



Meeting today's people in today's world, we as a church, need to be more conscious of the world around us and the people who live in it. We have stressed this concept in many areas including mailings, flyers and "advertisements," the use of e-mail, visual media and websites, and now Automated Giving for the weekly Offertory!

It is a reality in today's world that not everyone attends Mass each week. This is true for a variety of reasons. Automated Giving ensures that the parish receives the intended gift on a regular basis as planned by the parishioner.

Offering the option of Automated Giving for the weekly collection helps parishes continue to foster responsible financial stewardship among parishioners. One of the principles of good financial stewardship involves planning the gifts that are to be shared. Participating in Automated Giving is one good way that parishioners can enact their financial stewardship plan each year.

Some have expressed a concern about losing the symbolism of the ritual action of the Offertory for those who choose Automated Giving. Provisions for this should be made so people can still participate. For example: if you choose to continue envelope usage, a checkbox or other marking can be added to indicate Automated Giving right on the envelope. Offertory cards, whether paper or plastic with a stewardship message can be created. These provisions may even be provided if your parish is using a third party firm.

Automated Giving is not as scary as you may think! There are several companies** that can assist you and you can also speak with your bank. In each case, procedures and fees differ. It is important that you find an appropriate fit with your own parish circumstances.

Some Benefits to Parishioners:

- An easier and more responsible way to live out their financial stewardship commitment by keeping it a priority.
- No need to search for envelopes or the checkbook on Sunday morning!
- No need to "make-up" for vacation or other 'out of town' Sundays.
- Offertory cards are provided for continued active participation in the Liturgy.
- Facilitates effective tax planning and recordkeeping.
- Peace of mind.

Some Benefits to the Parishes:

- Assisting parishioners with their financial stewardship commitment.
- A more reliable revenue stream.
- Processing weekly collections and recordkeeping will become less time consuming.
- Minimizes cash in the parish and allows for immediate availability of funds.
- Statistically, automated-givers not only give a larger gift amount, but that gift is considerably higher due to the 52 week consistency.
- A savings on collection envelope expense.
- *Significant* increases from only a few families enrolled.

Automated Giving for the parish Offertory is not for everyone, but then again, neither were checks at one time! (Believe it or not, when paper checks first came out, there was tremendous resistance from most people!) We are simply suggesting that this be an *option* presented to your parishioners.

Remember, in order to reach the people in today's world, we need to use the means of today's world. Becoming a parish that offers Automated Giving is *one way* to do just that!

**** Please note, at this time the approved vendors for automated giving in our diocese are Faith Direct and LPI. Please contact our Office for more info.**



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)

March 6 - 4th Sunday of Lent

Bulletin Reflection: The stewardship message in the parable of the Prodigal Son is that it is never too late to become a good steward. Blessed is the elder brother who had been a good steward all along, but blessed, too is the prodigal who had to lose all he had in order to understand the value of what he'd been given.



Living Stewardship: We are grateful this week for all stewards in our parish who, each evening during this Lent, have examined their consciences in the light of how loving...and forgiving... they were throughout the day.

General Intercession for Mass: That as Christian stewards, our daily intentions, attitudes and behaviors reflect our love of God and love of our neighbor, we pray to the Lord...✠

March 13 - 5th Sunday of Lent

Bulletin Reflection: In today's second reading, St. Paul says, "For his sake I have forfeited everything; I have accounted all else rubbish so that Christ may be my wealth." Does my stewardship suggest that I could say the same?



Living Stewardship: We are grateful this week for all stewards in our parish who use these forty days of Lent to journey to a deeper understanding of God's mercy.

General Intercession for Mass: That as invited stewards, we embrace our invitation to spiritual conversion, putting stewardship into action, we pray to the Lord...✠

March 20 - Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord

Bulletin Reflection: In the Gospel story of the first Palm Sunday we hear the owners of the ass had only to be told, "The Master has need of it," to give the animal gladly. Do I give as readily to the Lord's work?



Living Stewardship: We are grateful this week for all stewards in our parish who reflect on the corporal and spiritual works of mercy, leading them to a deeper understanding of God's mercy and a new sense of meaning and purpose in their lives.

General Intercession for Mass: That as generous stewards, we seek to empty ourselves of all self-importance, so that we can better serve others, we pray to the Lord...✠

March 27 - Easter Sunday of the Resurrection of the Lord

Bulletin Reflection: In the second reading today, St. Paul reminds the Colossians that they have been raised with Christ, exhorting them to "be intent on the things above rather than on things of earth." We too, have been raised with Christ. Let us rejoice and be glad!

Living Stewardship: We are grateful this week for all stewards in our parish who, like St. Paul, give witness for the "good news" of salvation, especially through extending mercy to others.



General Intercession for Mass: That as joy-filled stewards, we rejoice in the faith-filled conviction that Jesus rose from the dead, alleluia, we pray to the Lord...✠

