

From the desk of Fr. Jim

Last Word on Stewardship

Since the financial support of our parish is enormously important, some final thoughts for our campaign are in order. Perhaps first is to be reminded that no decision about this is indeed a decision. It's like standing in a dark room with a match and a candle. Not lighting the candle is a decision, a decision to remain in darkness. So, we need to decide, and that decision becomes an expression of who we are as a person. That's the case with all our decisions. We pile them up over time and they are who we are.

So, our decisions are at least somewhat directed by the idea of the tithe, giving ten percent of our income. The principle of percentage giving is, of course, based on math. It is curious that we can quantify the importance that something has for us. There are actually a host of schemes for doing this. It is not unlike the decisions that we have to make for our family. We might like a bass boat or to take a cruise, but we make decisions based on the value that it has for our family. Every waking moment is spent in planning and living out the care we have for our children. When they are little their needs are many, but they never grow out of needing us. And we create a financial environment in which we can, at a moment's notice, spring into action to help them...and that willingness to help them never ends.

Certainly, to be ready and able to live for our family, we have to calculate what everything costs. For example, we have to figure out the impact of a new mortgage on our total financial picture. We might be so shrewd and calculating that we figure all the discretionary aspects of our budget and realize that there is much that we can do with that money. Add up movies, cable, vacations, an unneeded new car, at least 75% of our clothing budget, and probably a dozen other things, and the total is probably surprising.

Ultimately, however, there is a point at which calculating costs and amounts does not work very well, either as a guide or as an explanation for what we do. There is a point when we step out of our fear and our selfishness, and we just give. We give because something deep within us says that it is right. It is almost so powerful that it feels like this is the very reason that we have been put on this earth, to give. We see that our giving makes a difference, both for those who receive our gift, and for us. Our giving can transform us. If a sense of loss or insecurity has overcome us, we can find a way to give of our own substance and the sorrow will quickly leave us. Giving is at the center of what it means to be human.

As we come to the last weeks of our stewardship drive, our prayer should be that God will show us the strength to follow in His way, to make a decision that will please Him. May He truly encourage us with the truth that our capacity for giving is only limited by our appreciation for the love that God has shown us from the cross.