

From the desk of Fr. Jim

Stewardship Sentences

Stewardship was invented by God. Our distaste for a preacher's encouragements to give is misplaced. He is only a messenger. God believes that giving is indispensable for our growth and Christian maturity, even for our happiness.

Because stewardship involves sacrificial love, the devil will do anything at all to keep you from it. He will give you a thousand excuses, and even tempt you into debt in order to keep you from giving responsibly. The guilt that creeps into our soul as a result of succumbing to the devil's suggestion is deeply discouraging.

Stewardship is not about bargaining with God in order to gain favors or protection. It is more about offering our thanks for gifts we have already received. It is the right thing to do, when we have received life, and everyday He sustains us and gives us solace, encouragement and hope. We owe him!

When we give to the Church we are being obedient to God. In effect, we are giving to Him. This is the means He has devised for us to gain here on earth benefits of our giving. As the mission of the Church is advanced, we see the fruit of our giving and want to give more. The Church is, however, very big. It includes our parish and parishes in Honduras and Iraq and everywhere. God's idea is that the Church, the family of God, will include everyone. The parish should be first in our giving, but there are a lot of close seconds.

Giving is built upon discipline. This does not mean love is absent. The daily patterns of a family's life include discipline and work, all of which is born in love and encouraged by it.

The tithe is actually a starting place. It is a measurement found in the Old Testament and includes giving 10% of one's income or of the produce of the land. The Old Testament also includes a host of other kinds of offerings which would raise the percentage of giving way beyond 10%. Since stewardship is about love, it really cannot be measured. The gift of Jesus from the cross is without limit. The martyrs gave everything to Jesus and His Church. Without the martyrs we would have no faith.

I do not know anyone who makes \$10 per week.

There are two motives for giving to the Church. We give because the Church needs us to give. Without that kind of giving, all the practical aspects of the Church's mission go unfulfilled. The effect of this is serious. We see in Honduras a strong core in the Church but, with very little ability to reach out the community to evangelize and care for the poor. God designed the mission of the Church to cost us something. Thus, we are firmly part of its work.

The other side of giving is out of deep, intense love. We give even without thinking or counting the cost. We are happy to help. Our giving brings us joy.

God loves a cheerful giver. Once again, attitude is everything here. Even if we are giving at a “country club” rate with the idea that I have paid my dues, given my fair share, we have the wrong attitude. Having the virtue of charity, which God is ready to give in answer to our prayer, is the goal of our stewardship.

What do the poor have to give? In a tiny village Church in rural Mexico, I sat in silence to pray. In a few minutes a peasant woman came in and slowly proceeded to the altar where she laid a bundle of field flowers before the tabernacle. She knelt and raised her hands in prayer and then lowered her head. She left as silently as she arrived. I added a far less valuable monetary offering to hers.

We should begin our stewardship journey as children. Even if it is only a learning experience rather than a true sacrifice, childhood giving can be the foundation for understanding both how to participate in the Church and the meaning of Jesus’ sacrifice for us.