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Stewardship Bulletin Reflections *Year A*

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

*What follows are time and talent stewardship reflections for Year A 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 B and C can be found on our stewardship website at:

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

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1st Sunday of Advent

1st Reading: Isaiah 2.1-5

2nd Reading: Romans 13.11-14

Gospel: Matthew 24.37-44 - *The Necessity for Watchfulness*

Preparing Ourselves for Christ

This Sunday marks the beginning of the beautiful season of Advent, a time to deepen our relationship with Christ. In the Gospel, Jesus exhorts us to “keep awake therefore, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming.” This exhortation doesn’t imply that we are expected to never sleep, or sin, again, but that we must consistently strive to move from a life of running towards sin, to a life of running away from sin.

One tremendous way we can do this is to receive God’s merciful love in the sacrament of reconciliation. It is important to remember that the Lord eagerly and lovingly awaits to forgive us. The whole purpose of the Incarnation was for this reason, as St. John says in his first letter, “in this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins.” Jesus became man for our salvation. In going to confession, we are enabling the Lord to fulfill His salvific mission in our lives which brings Him boundless joy.

This cleansing of our sins will greatly help us live out our lives as stewards by infusing all of our actions with the grace that flows from the sacrament. In order to receive the graces well, let us foster a sense of contrition for our sins, a firm purpose of amendment for our lives and a commitment to penance. All parishes in the Archdiocese will be hosting an Advent Day of Confessions to make it easier for us to avail ourselves to this sacrament. Let us take this season of preparation to become better stewards by properly preparing our own souls for the coming of Christ in our lives.

Summary

Jesus exhorts us to “keep awake therefore, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming.” One tremendous way we can keep awake is to receive God’s merciful love in the sacrament of reconciliation especially this Advent. *Let us take this season of preparation to become better stewards by properly preparing our own souls for the coming of Christ in our lives.*

2nd Sunday of Advent

1st Reading: Isaiah 11.1-10

2nd Reading: Romans 15.4-9

Gospel: Matthew 3.1-12 – *The Proclamation of John the Baptist*

A Stewardship Examination

As Christmas carols take over radio stations and shopping malls are filled to capacity, it is easy to lose track of the true purpose of Advent. Essentially, Advent is a time to prepare for the Lord's coming on Christmas Day as well as his final coming at the end of time. It is also a moment to remind ourselves that our own individual judgement day is coming too, where we will stand before the throne of God and give an account of how we have used all the gifts and blessings we have received.

Cardinal Collins in his *Pastoral Letter on Stewardship** states that "A steward is a servant entrusted for a time with the goods of the Master ... and must eventually give an account to the Master for the way in which [the gifts] have been cared for and made fruitful." This Advent season reminds us to conduct a humble examination of how are we best using our God-given gifts for His glory and the good of the Church.

Are we staying faithful to our practice of prayer? Are we using our time to serve and journey with others? Are we taking an active role in the life of the parish community? Are we serving the less fortunate in our community, remembering Christ's words to serve the poor? Are we living for the present world or for the world to come? Let us take this Advent to re-examine how we are being stewards of the gifts in our lives and recommit to fully living the Gospel.

Summary

Advent is a time to prepare for the Lord's coming on Christmas Day as well as his final coming at the end of time. It is also a moment to remind ourselves that our own individual judgement day is coming too, where we will stand before the throne of God and give an account of all the gifts and blessings we have received. Let us take this Advent to re-examine how we are being stewards of the gifts in our lives and recommit to fully living the Gospel.

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

3rd Sunday of Advent

1st Reading: Isaiah 35.1-6a, 10

2nd Reading: James 5.7-10

Gospel: Matthew 11.2-11 - *Jesus Praises John the Baptist*

Rejoicing amidst the Darkness

“Rejoice in the Lord always; again I say, rejoice. Indeed, the Lord is near.” These are the words proclaimed in the entrance antiphon of Mass for Gaudete Sunday this week. It urges us to constantly rejoice in the Lord, and as good stewards of Christ, we should always strive to live lives inundated with the joy that flows from the Lord.

In order to do this, we must understand the difference between joy and happiness, for the Lord never promised us happiness. Instead He says, “I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete” (John 15:11). Happiness is a result of our good circumstances, because we feel good, or we had something positive happen to us, etc. Joy on the other hand goes much deeper. Henri Nouwen describes it as “the experience of knowing that you are unconditionally loved and that nothing -- sickness, failure, emotional distress, oppression, war, or even death -- can take that love away.”

So joy is the ability to remain happy due to our awareness of being beloved sons and daughters of God even amidst the trials of our life. Henri Nouwen further describes joy as a choice we must make every day. How often in our difficult lives do we take solace and rejoice in our identities of being beloved children of God? This Gaudete Sunday let us strive to be more intentionally joyful, and to pray to Christ for strength, for He says, “Ask and you will receive, so that your joy may be complete” (John 16:24).

Summary

Gaudete Sunday urges us to constantly rejoice in the Lord. Henri Nouwen describes joy as the ability to remain happy due to our awareness of being beloved children of God even amidst the trials of our life. So let us strive to be more intentionally joyful, and to pray to Christ for strength, for He says, “Ask and you will receive, so that your joy may be complete” (John 16:24).

4th Sunday of Advent

1st Reading: Isaiah 7.10-14

2nd Reading: Romans 1.1-7

Gospel: Matthew 1.18-24 - *The Birth of Jesus the Messiah*

Making Room for Jesus

As Christmas fast approaches and Advent is drawing to a close, let us remind ourselves of the importance of this liturgical season. Advent is a time of preparation for the coming of Christ at Christmas as well as His final coming at the end of time. However, the great saints of the church also speak of an intermediary coming, the coming of Christ to our present lives. Let us take a moment to ask ourselves, if the Lord showed up in our life today, would there be room for Him?

As stewards, we often face the temptation to let our works of charity become a life of volunteering instead of a spirituality of service. Our many works may begin to take precedence over our relationship with Christ which should always remain as the source of our stewardship. This Advent, as we are waiting for Christ, Christ is also waiting for us. Jesus says in the Book of Revelation, “Listen! I am standing at the door, knocking; if you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to you” (Revelation 3:20). He is waiting for us to open the door and let him in.

We can let him into our lives as stewards by realizing it is not ourselves ministering to our neighbour, but the love and presence of Christ within us. St. Teresa of Calcutta says it best when she proclaims that, “it is Christmas every time you let God love others through you. Yes, it is Christmas every time you smile at someone and offer them your hand.” St. Teresa of Calcutta fully embodies the spirit of stewardship that makes room for Christ to love others through her. Let us strive to let Jesus into our lives as we approach Christmas.

Summary

The great saints of the church speak of an intermediary coming of Christ, the coming of Christ to our present lives. Jesus says in the Book of Revelation, “Listen! I am standing at the door, knocking; if you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to you” (Revelation 3:20). We can let him into our lives as stewards by realizing it is not ourselves ministering to our neighbour, but the love and presence of Christ within us.

Feast of the Holy Family

1st Reading: Sirach 3.2-6, 12-14

2nd Reading: Colossians 3.12-21

Gospel: Matthew 2.13-15, 19-23 - *The Flight to Egypt*

A Family built on Stewardship

This Sunday's great solemnity invites us to contemplate the beauty of the Holy Family. Pope Paul VI says that the Holy Family should "serve as a model of what the family should be. May it show us the family's holy and enduring character and exemplify its basic function in society: a community of love and sharing."

What is a community of love and sharing but one rich with stewardship. We should strive to be true stewards towards the members in our family, bearing their faults with love and sharing our gifts with them. One thing we can all grow in is sharing the gift of our time with our family. Not just time together in the same room, but actual quality and intentional time with one another.

A tangible practice we can adopt is being faithful to the family dinner, a dinner without external distractions like the television or radio in the background. This involves being totally present to those in our family which can help begin to alleviate the rampant loneliness that ravages our culture. We can then move outwards and be stewards of our time with our second family, our parish community. Let us ask ourselves this week, how can we play our part in making our family more like the Holy Family in Nazareth?

Summary

On this solemnity we are reminded that we should strive to be true stewards towards the members in our family, bearing their faults with love and sharing our gifts with them. One thing we can all grow in is sharing the gift of our time with our family, not just time together in the same room, but actual quality and intentional time with one another. Let us ask ourselves this week, how can we play our part in making our family more like the Holy Family in Nazareth?

Mary, the Holy Mother of God (January 1) – No reflection for this week

1st Reading: Nb 6.22-27

2nd Reading: Ga 4.4-7

Gospel: Luke 2.16-21

No reflection for this week

Second Sunday After the Nativity – No reflection for this week

1st Reading: Si 24.1-4, 8-12

2nd Reading: Ep 1.3-6, 15-19

Gospel: John 1.1-18

No reflection for this week

Feast of the 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*

Making Christ Manifest to all the World

This Sunday we celebrate the feast of the Epiphany of the Lord. The word epiphany comes from the Greek epiphainen, a verb that means “to manifest” or “to make known.” This is what God did in the Incarnation. He made Himself known to humanity. One principle event is the visit of the foreign Magi, representing all the nations coming to know Christ.

Even 2000 years later, Christ still desires to make Himself known to the ends of the earth and we as stewards have the great privilege of helping in this important mission. The USCCB in their *Pastoral Letter on Stewardship** says that “God wishes human beings to be his collaborators in the work of creation, redemption, and sanctification; and such collaboration involves stewardship in its most profound sense.” The USCCB also says that the “practice of authentic Christian stewardship inevitably leads to evangelization.”

Therefore, to be true and authentic stewards means that we cannot keep the gift of the Gospel for ourselves, but we must go out into the world and proclaim it to others. How often do we realize our important role in evangelization? Let us strive to use our time and talents well by sharing the faith with those around us, with our family members, our co-workers and our neighbours. Perhaps one tangible act we can do this week is invite someone we know who has fallen away from their faith to join us for Mass next Sunday. In doing this, we will take seriously the dismissal at the end of Mass to “go and announce the Gospel of the Lord.”

Summary

On this feast day we celebrate the visit of the foreign Magi which represents all the nations coming to know Christ. Even 2000 years later, Christ still desires to make Himself known to the ends of the earth and we as stewards have the great privilege of helping in this important mission. We cannot keep the gift of the Gospel for ourselves, but we must use our God-given time and talents to go out into the world and proclaim it to others.

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

Feast of the Baptism of the Lord

1st Reading: Isaiah 42.1-4, 6-7

2nd Reading: Acts 10.34-38

Gospel: Matthew 3.13-17 - *The Baptism of Jesus*

Baptized into Stewardship

This Sunday we celebrate the feast of the Baptism of the Lord. From reflecting on Jesus' baptism, we can learn more about the mystery of our own baptism which the Catechism describes as "God's most beautiful and magnificent gift" (CCC, 1216). Firstly, we realize that being God, Jesus did not need to be baptized yet chose to do so as a model for us and to reveal Himself more fully.

Firstly, the Father reveals Jesus as His "beloved Son." So too, in our baptism we receive our renewed identities as beloved sons and daughters of God. St. Paul also describes baptism as clothing ourselves with Christ (Gal 3:27). It is during this most special sacrament that our entire lives are changed for we fully recognize who we are in the eyes of God.

Secondly, the descent of the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove reveals Jesus as the Anointed One, or the Christ. Following His baptism, Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to prepare for His mission. Similarly, during our baptism we are anointed with sacred chrism which "signifies the gift of the Holy Spirit" (CCC, 1241). Like Jesus, we too will be led by the Spirit into mission. The USCCB in their *Pastoral Letter on Stewardship** calls all the baptized to accept their baptismal responsibility "to place their gifts, their resources, their selves at God's service in and through the Church." Essentially, to live out our baptism is to live as an authentic steward. Let us ask ourselves, are we truly living out the call of stewardship we received during our baptism?

Summary

In our baptism we receive our renewed identities as beloved sons and daughters of God just as the Father called Jesus His "Beloved Son" at His baptism. Moreover, as the dove representing the Spirit descends on Jesus, so too during our baptism we are anointed with sacred chrism signifying the gift of the Spirit. Lastly, as Jesus' baptism marked the beginning of His mission, our baptism marks the start of our mission as stewards of Christ to place our gifts, resources, and very selves at God's service in and through the Church.

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

2nd Sunday of Ordinary Time

1st Reading: Isaiah 49.3, 5-6

2nd Reading: 1 Corinthians 1.1-3

Gospel: John 1.29-34 – *The Lamb of God*

Playing our Part in the Church

Even in today's short Gospel passage, we can learn a lot about authentic stewardship through the example of St. John the Baptist. John used his gifts of prophecy and preaching to help make Christ known. He readily used his gifts for the service of Christ and His mission. We should ask ourselves, how are we using our gifts to serve Christ?

Cardinal Collins in his *Pastoral Letter on Stewardship** says that our time, talent and treasure “are the gifts that each of us has freely received, and which we need to use responsibly in a spirit of gratitude. If we do that ... then we will experience the joyful serenity of deep stewardship.”

As we are still in the month of January, it is never too late to commit to a deeper life of stewardship this year. Let us strive to be intentional and tangible in our resolve to be stewards. For starters, it is important to gratefully acknowledge that all we have in our lives is from God. Let us begin to take time each day in prayer to thank Him for all of His blessings. Secondly, by prayerfully examining our talents, let us seek groups or ministries in the parish in which we can give our gifts back to God. We don't need to be intimidated if we feel we cannot do great things for our parish, for all of us has a role to play. Let us conclude today's reflection by pondering the following words of encouragement by St. Teresa of Calcutta. “If you can't feed a hundred people, then feed just one.”

Summary

St. John the Baptist used his gifts of prophecy and preaching to help make Christ known. Likewise, Cardinal Collins in his *Pastoral Letter on Stewardship* says that our time, talent and treasure “are the gifts that each of us has freely received, and which we need to use responsibly in a spirit of gratitude.” Let us strive to be intentional and tangible in our resolve to be stewards by offering our gifts back to God and our parish community.

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

3rd Sunday of Ordinary Time

1st Reading: Isaiah 9.1-4

2nd Reading: 1 Corinthians 1.10-13, 17-18

Gospel: Matthew 4.12-23 – *Jesus Begins His Ministry & Calls the First Disciples*

Heeding the Call of Christ

“Come, follow me.” This is the beautiful invitation Jesus extends to His first disciples in the Gospel today. How often do we hear those same words, “come, follow me,” in our own lives? The Lord is constantly calling us to follow Him. By reflecting on today’s Gospel we can learn how we too can heed the call.

Firstly, it is important to remember that Jesus says to Peter and Andrew, “I will make you fishers of people.” Jesus calls them to mission. So too, Jesus calls us to mission as well, the mission of being true stewards of Christ for His glory and the good of the Church. The Gospel records that when the disciples were called, they “immediately left their nets and followed him. They saw in Christ all fulfillment and so followed him immediately. We should strive to imitate this eagerness in following Christ, for the Lord doesn’t want us to delay the plans He has in store for us.

Lastly, whenever we feel unworthy of the call of following Christ as stewards, we can take great consolation in the fact that Jesus chose lowly, uneducated fisherman for His first apostles. It is famously said that God doesn’t call the qualified, but qualifies the called. If the Lord calls us to a certain mission, He will sustain us through that mission as well. So let us strive to heed the call of Christ and begin to follow Him, the one in whom all our fulfillment is found.

Summary

Just as He called His apostles, Jesus says to us, “come, follow me.” Jesus calls us to accept the mission of being true stewards of Christ for His glory and the good of the Church. Let us imitate the apostles and follow the call of Christ immediately, being resolved to commit to a stewardship way of life for our parishes.

4th Sunday of Ordinary Time

1st Reading: Zp 2.3; 3.12-13

2nd Reading: 1 Corinthians 1.26-31

Gospel: Matthew 5.1-12 – *The Sermon on the Mount (The Beatitudes)*

A good and faithful steward is one who lives a life immersed in the Beatitudes, hoping to one day receive the blessings promised in today's Gospel. And as stewards, God has given us many gifts for the building up of the Kingdom of God in our parish communities. The most important gift God has given us is our very lives – the time we have in this world, entrusted to each of us in our brief journey through life.

Another great gift that God has given us are our talents, fruitfully using them and encouraging others to do the same with theirs, for the common good. Joy in life comes from using our time and talent creatively and fruitfully, for the glory of God and in the service of our neighbour, and from celebrating the differing gifts of the people around us. It is through the stewardship way of life that our baptismal call to discipleship is fulfilled through the mission and ministry of the parish and gives us confidence and hope of our future.

This is the spirit of “deep stewardship”, the fruit of which are vibrant parishes, which are joyful to live in and attractive to others. As more people, living a life immersed in the Beatitudes, actively engage in the sharing of their time and talent in generous service, they will experience the full richness of the parish community and focus their energy outward to make Christ more visibly present in the world.

Summary

A good and faithful steward is one who lives a life immersed in the Beatitudes, hoping to one day receive the blessings promised in today's Gospel. Stewardship is a profound disposition of the heart and mind which transforms everything we do: it is an awareness that each of us has been entrusted with the gift of time and talent, and that all will benefit if we fruitfully develop and share these gifts in service to God and our neighbour. This is the spirit of “deep stewardship”, the fruit of which are vibrant parishes, which are joyful to live in and attractive to others.

Feast of the Presentation of the Lord

1st Reading: Malachi 3.1-4

2nd Reading: Heb 2.10-11, 13b-18++

Gospel: Luke 2.22-40 – *The Presentation of the Lord*

Labouring for the Steward's Great Reward

This Sunday we celebrate the feast of the Presentation of the Lord. We reflect on Joseph and Mary taking the child Jesus up to the temple and the prophet Simeon taking the child into his arms. Simeon was an elderly prophet in Jerusalem to whom it had been revealed that “he would not see death before he had seen the Christ” (Luke 2: 26). After labouring in the temple for his entire life, Simeon was rewarded with the gift of beholding Christ with his own eyes.

The reward of Simeon is the reward awaiting all of Christ's faithful stewards. The reward of beholding Him with utter joy and peace in Heaven. The USCCB write in their *Pastoral Letter on Stewardship**, “What is the reward to which good stewards can look forward? The answer is perfect fulfillment in God's Kingdom.” It is in God's Kingdom that we will enjoy the beatific vision for all eternity.

So when the commitment to our life of stewardship becomes difficult and we're tempted to despair, let us remember the reward of Simeon that awaits the faithful steward. This remembrance should help us increase our labours of love for God and the Church for we know that we are not doing it for any other purpose than unity with God for all eternity. This is the goal of our Christian lives.

Summary

After labouring in the temple for his entire life, Simeon was rewarded with the gift of beholding Christ with his own eyes. The reward of Simeon is the reward awaiting all of Christ's faithful stewards. So when the commitment to our life of stewardship becomes difficult and we're tempted to despair, let us remember the reward that awaits us of beholding Him with utter joy and peace in Heaven.

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

5th Sunday of Ordinary Time

1st Reading: Isaiah 58.6-10++

2nd Reading: 1 Corinthians 2.1-5

Gospel: Matthew 5.13-16 - *Salt and Light*

The Light of Stewardship

St. Teresa of Avila is famously quoted for saying, “from sour-faced saints, good Lord, deliver us.” She believes that Christians who are on fire for their faith shouldn’t be downcast but instead be joyful stewards of Christ. In today’s Gospel, Jesus says “let your light shine before human beings so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven” (Matt 5:16).

Jesus challenges us to let our light shine brightly. We must not be stewards with gloomy and sour faces, but ones that shine with the peace and joy of knowing we are beloved children of God. Pope Francis says that “we need smiling Christians, not because they take things lightly, but because they are filled with the joy of God, because they believe in love and live to serve.”

When people see us, they should be able to see the love and joy that emanates not from us, but from God dwelling within us. As stewards, we should fight the temptation to become complacent or robotic in our good works, doing them as if we’re on autopilot. Instead, we should strive to be intentionally joyful and light-hearted as we serve Christ and His Church. Let us ask ourselves today, does our demeanour as stewards showcase the reality of God’s transforming love to others? Does our light truly shine forth as a witness to the world?

Summary

We must not be stewards with gloomy and sour faces, but ones that shine with the peace and joy of knowing we are beloved children of God. Pope Francis says that “we need smiling Christians, not because they take things lightly, but because they are filled with the joy of God, because they believe in love and live to serve.” Let us ask ourselves today, does our demeanour as stewards showcase the reality of God’s transforming love to others and welcome them into the parish in a spirit of true hospitality?

6th Sunday of Ordinary Time

1st Reading: Sirach 15.15-20

2nd Reading: 1 Corinthians 2.6-10

Gospel: Matthew 5.17-37 – *Various Teachings of Jesus*

Going the Extra Mile

In today's Gospel we hear some of Jesus' bold proclamations to the people of Israel which are still applicable to us 2000 years later. Jesus says "You have heard what was said to those of ancient times ... but I say to you..." He challenges his followers to go above and beyond their limits of charity and to not settle for their old previous notions of what it meant to love.

This is an important lesson for us as stewards who strive to follow Christ and serve Him and the Church. We should not just offer our gifts to our parish community in a mediocre way, but strive to do so as generously as possible. Cardinal Collins in his *Pastoral Letter on Stewardship** says that "as good stewards, we 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." The key word in the Cardinal's exhortation is "increase."

How often do we go the extra mile in our sharing of our time and talent? How often do we surpass our comfortable notions of how much we want to love? Jesus is asking all of His stewards to give of themselves generously. Perhaps we can try to take a little more time this week for prayer and commit more wholeheartedly to the ministries we are involved in. Let us always strive to be better and remember the words of Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI who said, "You were not made for comfort. You were made for greatness."

Summary

In today's Gospel Jesus boldly says "You have heard what was said to those of ancient times ... but I say to you..." He challenges his followers to go above and beyond their limits of charity and to not settle for their old previous notions of what it meant to love. As stewards we should not just offer our gifts of our time and talents to our parish community in a mediocre way, but strive to do so as generously as possible.

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

7th Sunday of Ordinary Time

1st Reading: Leviticus 19.1-2, 17-18

2nd Reading: 1 Corinthians 3.16-23

Gospel: Matthew 5.38-48 – *Love your Enemies*

Growing in Stewardship and Holiness

Holiness and perfection. These are the ideals that the readings this Sunday call us to. In the first reading from Leviticus the Lord tells Moses, “be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy.” Similarly, in the Gospel Jesus exhorts us to “be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect. Is Jesus calling us to an impossible standard? Of course not, for Jesus would not call us to something and not strengthen us to achieve it.

Many people may think that holiness is the prize for the elite reserved only for popes and bishops and saints. However, the Second Vatican Council decrees that all children of God have a universal call to holiness. The Council says that “all Christ's faithful, whatever be the conditions, duties and circumstances of their lives—and indeed through all these, will daily increase in holiness, if they receive all things with faith from the hand of their heavenly Father and if they cooperate with the divine will” (Lumen Gentium, 41).

Essentially, Lumen Gentium teaches us that we can reach holiness by gratefully acknowledging the gifts God has given us and cooperating with God in giving these gifts back for the service of the Church. This is the crux of what it means to be a steward. So we can strive for holiness through our path of stewardship. Let us take some time to reflect on how we can become better stewards in our parish community so that we may move closer, through God’s grace, towards holiness.

Summary

God says to all of us “be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy.” The Second Vatican Council teaches us that we can reach holiness by gratefully acknowledging the gifts God has given us and cooperating with God in giving these gifts back for the service of the Church. Therefore, let us take some time to reflect on how we can become better stewards in our parish community so that we may move closer, through God’s grace, towards holiness

1st Sunday of Lent

1st Reading: Genesis 2.7-9, 16-18, 25; 3.1-7++

2nd Reading: Romans 5.12-19

Gospel: Matthew 4.1-11 - *The Temptation of Jesus*

Fasting and Feasting

As we begin this great season of Lent it is important to take some time to reflect on how we plan to best spend this time to grow as stewards of Christ. We often associate Lent with fasting and penances, which are undoubtedly good. However, it is important that if we are going to give something up, we should strive to replace it with something good as well, for Aristotle famously said that “nature abhors a vacuum.”

This leads us to the practice of “fasting and feasting” in Lent. Through this practice we are able to cultivate strong stewardship through fasting from things that are unvirtuous and feasting on charitable and wholesome acts. Let us take some time to prayerfully reflect on how we can implement the following list this Lenten season.

Fast from judging others; Feast on the Christ dwelling in them. Fast from emphasis on differences; Feast on the unity of life. Fast from words that pollute; Feast on phrases that purify. Fast from discontent; Feast on gratitude. Fast from anger; Feast on patience. Fast from complaining; Feast on appreciation. Fast from negatives; Feast on affirmatives. Fast from self-concern; Feast on compassion for others. Fast from problems that overwhelm; Feast on prayer that strengthens. In essence, let us fast from anything that prevents us from being good stewards and feast on those practices that strengthens us.

Summary

As we begin this great season of Lent it is important to take some time to reflect on how we plan to best spend this time to grow as stewards of Christ. It is important that if we are going to give something up, we should strive to replace it with something good as well. Let us strive to fast from anything that prevents us from being good stewards and feast on those practices that strengthens us.

2nd Sunday of Lent

1st Reading: Genesis 12.1-4

2nd Reading: 2 Timothy 1.8b-10

Gospel: Matthew 17.1-9 – *The Transfiguration*

Becoming like God

In the Gospel this Sunday we are invited to reflect on the account of the Transfiguration. In this mystery, Jesus goes up the mountain with Peter, James and John, and is transfigured before them and briefly “discloses His divine glory” (CCC 555). Moreover, “the Transfiguration gives us a foretaste of Christ's glorious coming, when he will change our lowly body to be like his glorious body” (CCC 556).

The mystery of the Transfiguration alludes to the teaching of the Church called divinization, in which we believe that we humans will be made like God. Not only does Jesus raise us from sin, death and hell, but He even raises us up to divine life. He desires us to be made sharers in His own divine nature and participate in the life of the Trinity. St. Athanasius boldly proclaims that “He was made man that we might be made God.”

We can share in the Trinitarian life by cooperating in the work of God. The USCCB in their *Pastoral Letter on Stewardship** states that “God wishes human beings to be his collaborators in the work of creation, redemption, and sanctification; and such collaboration involves stewardship in its most profound sense.” To be a steward is to be deified and take part in the life of the Trinity. How often do we appreciate this rich reality of being a steward for Christ? Let us take some time to reflect on our raised identities in Christ and strive to be greater stewards in our parishes.

Summary

The mystery of the Transfiguration alludes to the teaching of the Church called divinization, in which we believe that we humans will be made like God. The USCCB in their *Pastoral Letter on Stewardship* states that “God wishes human beings to be his collaborators in the work of creation, redemption, and sanctification; and such collaboration involves stewardship in its most profound sense.” Let us take some time to reflect on the teaching of divinization and strive to be greater stewards in our parishes, for to be a good steward is to be like Christ.

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

3rd Sunday of Lent

1st Reading: Exodus 17.3-7

2nd Reading: Romans 5.1-2, 5-8

Gospel: John 4.5-42 – *Jesus and the Samaritan Woman*

Living in the Living Waters

In the Gospel today we reflect on the episode of Jesus' meeting with the Samaritan woman at the well. The passage recounts that Jesus was "tired" yet he still went out of His way to minister to the woman. Jesus tells her that "the water that I will give will become a spring of water gushing up to eternal life." Through this image of water Jesus is alluding to the gift of the Holy Spirit that the Lord wishes to lavish upon His children (CCC 728).

As stewards of Christ we are called to generously share our time and talents with our parish community. However, a mere sharing of our gifts without the guidance and strength of the Holy Spirit can easily lead us to becoming burnt out, discouraged or resentful. It is important to have all of our charitable acts infused with the Spirit. This way it is not our own merits but the Lord's grace bringing about conversion in our parishes.

How often do we invoke the Holy Spirit before we serve the Lord as stewards? It is in this invocation that we humbly recognize that it is the Lord, through us, accomplishing great deeds. Let us begin each day with the traditional prayer to the Holy Spirit. "Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and enkindle in them the fire of your love." Let us bring about a new outpouring of the Holy Spirit into the hearts of our parish community by constantly turning to Him to strengthen us.

Summary

As stewards of Christ we are called to generously share our time and talents with our parish community. However, a mere sharing of our gifts without the guidance and strength of the Holy Spirit can easily lead us to becoming burnt out, discouraged or resentful. Let us bring about a new outpouring of the Holy Spirit into the hearts of our parish community by constantly turning to Him to strengthen us.

4th Sunday of Lent

1st Reading: 1 Samuel 16.1b, 6-7, 10-13

2nd Reading: Ephesians 5.8-14

Gospel: John 9.1-41 – *Jesus Heals a Blind Man*

True Recovery of Sight

In today's Gospel we encounter Jesus healing a man who was born blind. In all of the Bible, this is the only healing of a man blind since birth, whereas other healings were of temporary blindness. The uniqueness of this great mystery offers us the ability to richly reflect on what it means to be good stewards of Christ.

Firstly, while the man was healed of his physical sight, the more remarkable miracle was his ability to grasp Jesus' true identity. When Jesus reveals to him that He is the Son of Man, the blind man boldly responds, "Lord, I believe." The blind man did not come to this realization on his own, but it was the Lord's working in his life that led him to this change of heart.

So too in all of us, it is the Lord and His grace that brings about our interior conversion. We must never fall into the temptation that our faith and charity is the result of our own strength or abilities. After the blind man's encounter, it says "he worshipped Him." As good stewards we should seek to imitate his example, falling down in thanksgiving and adoration for all of the grace and gifts the Lord has poured into our lives. Let us take a moment today to praise God most especially for the gifts of our Catholic faith and the Church.

Summary

In the Gospel Jesus performs a two-fold miracle of healing a man of his physical blindness and his spiritual blindness. So too in all of us, it is the Lord and His grace that brings about the miracle of our interior conversion. Let us imitate the cured blind man and fall at the feet of Jesus and thank Him for the gifts and graces He has poured into our lives.

5th Sunday of Lent

1st Reading: Ezekiel 37.12-14

2nd Reading: Romans 8.8-11

Gospel: John 11.1-45 – *The Raising of Lazarus*

Raising from Death to Life

In today's Gospel we encounter the great mystery of the raising of Lazarus from the dead. This apparent death of Lazarus was not in vain for Jesus says it occurred so "that the Son of God may be glorified through it." After raising Lazarus from the dead, Jesus instructs the crowd to "unbind him, and let him go"

This "unbinding" signifies that Jesus doesn't just raise him from the dead but also sets him free. So too, through God's great gift of forgiveness, He raises us from the death of sin and leads us to interior freedom. This Lent, let us seek God's forgiveness by availing ourselves to the sacrament of Reconciliation before Easter. The Catechism says that "the sacrament of Reconciliation with God brings about a true "spiritual resurrection," restoration of the dignity and blessings of the life of the children of God, of which the most precious is friendship with God" (CCC 1468).

Moreover, after Lazarus was freed it says that many people believed in Jesus. Likewise, after we receive God's forgiveness and live in freedom and friendship with God, we should be true stewards of God's gifts and evangelize those around us. Through the grace of the sacrament we will have the necessary strength to offer our time and talents to our parish community. So this Lent let us not remain in the death of sin but turn to Jesus and receive the life and freedom of forgiveness.

Summary

Just as Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, He raises us from the death of sin and leads us to interior freedom through His forgiveness. This Lent, let us seek God's forgiveness by availing ourselves to the sacrament of Reconciliation before Easter. Through the grace of the sacrament we will have the necessary strength and grace to offer our time and talents to our parish community

Palm (Passion) Sunday

Procession Gospel: Mt 21.1-11 – *Jesus' Triumphant Entry into Jerusalem*

1st Reading: Isaiah 50.4-7

2nd Reading: Philippians 2.6-11

Gospel: Matthew 26.14–27.66 – *The Passion of the Lord*

Through the Eyes of a Donkey

Today marks the beginning of Holy Week, the most sacred week in the entire liturgical calendar of the church. It opens with the celebration of Palm (Passion) Sunday where Jesus triumphantly enters Jerusalem riding a donkey amidst the waving palm branches. We can glean a great insight into true stewardship when we reflect on this event through the lens of the donkey which is a metaphor for our lives.

From the donkey's perspective, he sees a great crowd ready to welcome him into Jerusalem. He hears the singing of praises and sees them laying their coats and branches on his path. It would be easy for the donkey to feel prideful as he walks along. However, we as onlookers can clearly see that the crowds are not praising the donkey, but the one sitting upon the donkey, Jesus Christ.

As stewards offering ourselves to our parish community, we can be tempted to think that all of the compliments, praises and thanks we receive is properly owed to us. However, from this image of the donkey, we should strive to humbly recognize that all of our good works should lead others to Christ, not ourselves. The donkey served Christ just as we, through our time and talents, should serve Him and His body, the Church. This Palm Sunday let us ask ourselves, do we fully direct all of the praise, glory and honour of our actions to Jesus?

Summary

The donkey on which Christ rode into Jerusalem could've seen all the palms and praises being sung around him and been tempted to believe that he was the one they celebrated. However, we as onlookers can clearly see that the crowds are not praising the donkey, but the one sitting upon the donkey, Jesus Christ. This Palm Sunday let us learn from this image and ask ourselves, do we fully direct all of the praise, glory and honour of our actions to Jesus?

Easter Sunday

1st Reading: Acts 10.34a, 37-43

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

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

Christ is Risen

Christ is Risen! Truly, He is Risen! On this glorious Easter morning, the Sunday of Sundays, the Solemnity of Solemnities, we are filled with the joy of the risen Lord. On this great day, death and sin was defeated as the Lord triumphed over all evil, leading us to the joy and love of eternal life. As stewards of Christ we should always have the identity of an Easter people.

The USCCB in their *Pastoral Letter on Stewardship** says that stewardship “reflects the core of the Easter message of the earliest Christian community: ‘We have seen the Lord!’ (Jn 20:25). Stewardship always starts with the personal experience of the Risen Christ in our midst and in our hearts.” We must first encounter Christ before we can share Christ.

The early disciples witnessed the risen Lord on Easter morning and from there went on to spread the good news of His resurrection to the ends of the earth. They received the gift of Easter, the same gift we receive today. As good stewards we should not keep this gift for ourselves but seek to share it generously with our parish community. One concrete practice we can adopt is to share our Easter joy with our family, friends and fellow parishioners by spreading the news of Christ’s resurrection to those who do not yet fully believe. Let us share the joy of the Gospel as we strive to become better stewards.

Summary

The early disciples witnessed the risen Lord on Easter morning and from there went on to spread the good news of His resurrection to the ends of the earth. They received the gift of Easter, the same gift we receive today. As good stewards we should not keep this gift for ourselves but seek to share it generously with our parish community.

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

2nd Sunday of Easter – Divine Mercy Sunday

1st Reading: Acts 2.42-47

2nd Reading: 1 Peter 1.3-9

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

Receiving and Sharing Merciful Love

In 2000, when Pope John Paul II was canonizing St. Faustina, he declared that the Second Sunday of Easter will be called Divine Mercy Sunday for the entire Church. This Sunday, let us reflect on Jesus who longs to forgive us and to shower His love and mercy on us. We should never tire of running to Him for healing. St. Therese of Lisieux says “even though I had on my conscience all the sins that can be committed, I would go, my heart broken with sorrow, and throw myself into Jesus' arms, for I know how much He loves the prodigal child who returns to Him.”

As good stewards of Christ we should first accept the mercy of God in our lives and then share it with others through our acts. Some spiritual works of mercy we can begin to cultivate are to “instruct the ignorant” and “counsel the doubtful” by helping with parish catechesis ministries. We can also “forgive offenses” and “pray for the living and the dead” through personal prayer as well as by joining various prayer groups within the parish. Some corporal works of mercy we can adopt is to “feed the hungry” and “clothe the naked” by taking part in parish organizations such as the St. Vincent de Paul society. We can also “visit the sick” and “visit the imprisoned” by seeking ministries that care for the sick and elderly.

This Divine Mercy Sunday let us seek to be filled with God’s mercy. Let us then let His mercy overflow into our deeds within the parish so that we may become stewards of God’s merciful love.

Summary

As good stewards of Christ we should first accept the mercy of God in our lives and then share it with others through our acts. Some spiritual works of mercy we can begin to cultivate are to “instruct the ignorant” and “counsel the doubtful” by helping with parish catechesis ministries. Likewise, some corporal works of mercy we can adopt is to “feed the hungry” and “clothe the naked” by taking part in parish organizations such as the St. Vincent de Paul society.

3rd Sunday of Easter

1st Reading: Acts 2.14, 22b-28

2nd Reading: 1 Peter 1.17-21

Gospel: Luke 24.13-35 – *The Road to Emmaus*

Sharing our Burning Hearts

In today's Gospel we reflect on the Road to Emmaus. As the two disciples walk along, Jesus appears and breaks open the scriptures and breaks bread with them. This same structure is what we experience at Mass with the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist. Reflecting on their walk with Christ, the disciples were profoundly touched, exclaiming "were not our hearts burning within us?" So too, when we partake in Mass our hearts should burn within us from the glory and love of God. But what should we do with this burning?

The disciples rushed back to the others in Jerusalem "that same hour" and proclaimed that the Lord is risen. They learned more about their faith and went in haste to share the good news and support the other believers. Likewise, after growing in our faith and being strengthened at Mass we should support the believers in our parish community by giving of our time and talent. As stewards of Christ we should not delay in sharing our gifts from God with others but seek to help immediately.

This Easter season, let us decide to renew our commitment to our parish by joining various ministries to help the good news of the resurrection be proclaimed. The Church needs us to be sharers of God's gifts. St Peter in his first letter says "as each one has received a gift, use it to serve one another as good stewards of God's varied grace" (1 Peter 4:10). Let us end by asking ourselves, how well do we cultivate our gifts and aid the spread of the Gospel?

Summary

Just like the disciples from the Gospel, our hearts should burn within us from the presence and love of God that we experience in Mass. The disciples rushed back to the others in Jerusalem "that same hour" and proclaimed that the Lord is risen. Likewise, after being strengthened at Mass we should support the believers in our parish community by giving of our time and talent.

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

1st Reading: Acts 2.14a, 36b-41

2nd Reading: 1 Peter 2.20b-25

Gospel: John 10.1-10 – *Jesus the Good Shepherd*

Imitating the Good Shepherd

“The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures.” These are the beautiful opening verses of Psalm 23 which describes God as a shepherd taking care of His people. One attribute of shepherds that is especially poignant is how hard they labour for the good of their flock. Faithful shepherds will journey with their flock, seek out the lost sheep and defend them from any ravaging predators. Jesus does this as well, labouring for us so that we may reach our eternal home where we will rest in His love.

As Christians we are called to imitate Christ in all things including being a shepherd. We too should labour for others, putting their needs before our own. To be a shepherd is essentially to be a good steward. As stewards, we offer ourselves and our gifts for the good of others, especially our parish communities. Let us labour for Christ and His Church in thanksgiving for how he labours for us.

One practice we can adopt, especially on this world day of prayer for vocations, is to encourage and pray daily for an increase in vocations to priesthood and religious life. Cardinal Collins in his *Pastoral Letter on Stewardship** says that “stewardship parishes report an ... increase in religious and priestly vocations.” Let us play our part as stewards and begin to share our gifts for the good of the Church.

Summary

Faithful shepherds labour for their flock by journeying with them, seeking out the lost sheep and defending them from any ravaging predators. As Christians we are called to imitate Christ in all things including being a shepherd, which means we too should labour for others, putting their needs before our own. Let us labour for Christ and His Church in thanksgiving for how he labours for us.

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

5th Sunday of Easter

1st Reading: Acts 6.1-7

2nd Reading: 1 Peter 2.4-9

Gospel: John 14.1-12 - *Jesus the Way to the Father*

Exercising our Priestly Call

“Beloved: let yourselves be built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood.” These are the words of St. Peter that we find in the second reading today. St. Peter exhorts us to see ourselves as priests. The Catechism says “the faithful exercise their baptismal priesthood through their participation, each according to his own vocation, in Christ's mission as priest, prophet, and king” (CCC 1546).

What is the primary and essential act that priests perform? The answer is simply that priests offer sacrifices. The USCCB in their *Pastoral Letter on Stewardship** says that “In exercising this office, [disciples] most fully realize the meaning of [their] Christian stewardship.

To be an authentic steward is to offer our God-given gifts back to God for the good of the Church and our parishes. Essentially, it is to sacrifice our lives for Christ, just as He sacrificed Himself for our salvation. That is why He is the true, high priest that we strive to emulate. The USCCB goes on to say that “part of what is involved here for Catholics is a stewardship of time, which should include setting aside periods for family prayer, for the reading of Scripture, for visits to the Blessed Sacrament, and for attendance at Mass during the week whenever this is possible.” Let us conclude this reflection by asking ourselves, how well are we living up to the call of being part of the royal priesthood of Christ?

Summary

The Catechism says that “the faithful exercise their baptismal priesthood through their participation, each according to his own vocation, in Christ's mission as priest, prophet, and king.” The primary and essential act that priests perform is to offer sacrifices. Let us strive to be an authentic steward by sacrificing our time and gifts for Christ, especially in the little things, just as He sacrificed Himself for our salvation.

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

6th Sunday of Easter

1st Reading: Acts 8.5-8, 14-17

2nd Reading: 1 Peter 3.15-18

Gospel: John 14.15-21- *The Promise of the Holy Spirit*

Strengthening our Stewardship with the Holy Spirit

As we approach the end of the Easter season our readings begin to focus on the Holy Spirit that awaits us on Pentecost. In today's first reading we hear the account of some believers receiving the Holy Spirit after Peter and John laid their hands on them. The Catechism says that "the imposition of hands is rightly recognized by the Catholic tradition as the origin of the sacrament of Confirmation, which in a certain way perpetuates the grace of Pentecost in the Church" (CCC 1288).

So, as we have read the biblical roots of the sacrament of Confirmation, let us reflect on its significance in our own lives 2000 years later. The Second Vatican Council says that through "the sacrament of Confirmation, [the baptized] are more perfectly bound to the Church and are enriched with a special strength of the Holy Spirit. Hence they are, as true witnesses of Christ, more strictly obliged to spread and defend the faith by word and deed" (Lumen Gentium, 11).

Confirmation makes us obliged to spread the Gospel through "word and deed" because we receive the gifts of the Holy Spirit. We all have a special share of these gifts, which consist of fortitude, wisdom, knowledge, understanding, fear of the Lord, piety and counsel. If for example, we have a greater outpouring of the gift of knowledge, we can use this to help with catechesis ministries in the parish that seek to teach the faith to others. Essentially, Confirmation strengthens our call to be stewards of Christ. Let us use our gifts to spread the Gospel in our parish communities as a way of living out our call of Confirmation and let us do so by turning to the Holy Spirit to guide us.

Summary

In today's first reading we hear the biblical roots of Confirmation as some believers receive the Holy Spirit after Peter and John lay their hands on them. The Second Vatican Council says that Confirmation, and the receiving of the Holy Spirit, makes us obliged to spread the Gospel through "word and deed." Let us strive to do this in our parish communities as a way of living out our call of Confirmation and let us do so by turning to the Holy Spirit to guide us.

The Feast of the Ascension of the Lord

1st Reading: Acts 1.1-11

2nd Reading: Ephesians 1.17-23

Gospel: Matthew 28.16-20 – *The Commissioning of the Disciples*

Being the Hands and Feet of Christ

This Sunday we celebrate the great feast of the Ascension of the Lord which is ripe with spiritual importance and depth. Let us examine how the Lord's ascension affects us as stewards. Firstly, when the apostles watched the Lord ascend into heaven, two angels appeared and asked them "why do you stand looking up toward heaven?" The apostles were not meant to stay there constantly gazing heavenward. Instead, they, like us, are called to live firmly on this earth with our whole purpose set on reaching heaven and leading as many people with us as possible.

We see this at the end of St. Matthew's Gospel when Jesus gives the great commission to "make disciples of all nations." Jesus' ascension is a firm call to action. A call to be stewards and use our gifts to spread the Gospel within our parishes and the Church. We do this through the strength of Christ within us who says "remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

It is now up to us to cooperate with the Spirit and make disciples of the whole world. Let us end by pondering the beautiful saying of St. Teresa of Avila. "Christ has no body now but yours. No hands, no feet on earth but yours. Yours are the eyes through which He looks compassion on this world. Yours are the feet with which He walks to do good. Yours are the hands through which He blesses all the world. Yours are the hands, yours are the feet, yours are the eyes, you are His Body. Christ has no body now on earth but yours."

Summary

Jesus' ascension is a firm call to action for at the end of St. Matthew's Gospel He gives us the great commission to "make disciples of all nations." This is a call to be stewards and use our gifts to spread the Gospel within our parishes and the Church. Let us strive to do this through the strength of Christ within us who says "remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

Pentecost Sunday

1st Reading: Acts 2.1-11

2nd Reading: 1 Corinthians 12.3b-7, 12-13

Gospel: John 20.19-23 - *Jesus Appears to the Disciples*

Being Strengthened by the Spirit

Today we celebrate Pentecost Sunday which is called by many as the birthday of the Church. Let us take some time to reflect on the Holy Spirit in our lives as stewards. Firstly, we should never fail to marvel at the fact that starting with 11 lowly men 2000 years ago, the Catholic Church still continues to this day and the name of Jesus is praised and adored all over the world. This is the power of the Holy Spirit. From a human standpoint, the church should have failed centuries ago if it were not sustained by the Spirit. This should inspire us as stewards to rely on the Holy Spirit to guide all of our actions.

Moreover, in today's second reading from Corinthians, St. Paul says that "there are varieties of gifts, but the same spirit ... [and] to each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good." Each of us as stewards have particular gifts and talents from the Spirit that are not to be hoarded but generously used for the "common good" of the Church. We should all take time to reflect on what particular way is God calling us to serve Him. None of us are exempt from this call for St. Paul explains that we are all to work for the good of the Church in our own ways.

Let us pray this week for a greater outpouring of the Holy Spirit into our lives. May the same Spirit that has birthed the Church and guided her through the millennium continue to raise up great stewards to continue to carry out the great commission of Christ in all the world.

Summary

In today's second reading from Corinthians, St. Paul says that "there are varieties of gifts, but the same spirit ... [and] to each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good." Each of us as stewards have particular gifts and talents from the Spirit that are not to be hoarded but generously used for the "common good" of the Church. We should all take time to reflect on what those gifts are and in what particular way is God calling us to serve Him and the Church.

Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity

1st Reading: Exodus 34.4b-6, 8-9

2nd Reading: 2 Corinthians 13.11-13

Gospel: John 3.16-18 – *For God so Loved the World*

Building a Community of Love

This Sunday we celebrate the mystery of the Most Holy Trinity which is the “central mystery of Christian faith and life” (CCC 234). While the Trinity is a mystery our mind will never fully grasp we can still glean much spiritual fruit through prayerful reflection.

Firstly, we must remember that God is Love (1 John 4:16). In order for God to be Love itself, it stands to reason that He is “one but not solitary” (CCC 254). This is because love requires a lover and a beloved. It is within the Trinity that an eternal exchange of Love exists. St. Augustine describes in his treaty “On the Trinity” that the Father and the Son eternally look at each other with pure Love, and this unadulterated love is the Holy Spirit, existing for all ages.

Hence, through reflecting on this mystery we come to understand the immense importance of community and the sharing of love. As stewards, we are called to imitate this divine life of the Trinity. We can do this by living with our brothers and sisters and fellow parishioners in a community of love. Love requires sacrifice and is expressed not just in words but in deeds (1 John 3:18). So let us offer up our time and talents for the good of our parish and the Church. If we strive to create this community of love, we can take great consolation in knowing that we are abiding in the Trinity, for St. John says “whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him” (1 John 4:16).

Summary

St. Augustine describes in his treaty “On the Trinity” that the Father and the Son eternally look at each other with pure Love, and this unadulterated love is the Holy Spirit, existing for all ages. Hence, through reflecting on this mystery we come to understand the immense importance of community and the sharing of love. As stewards, we are called to imitate this divine life of the Trinity by living with our brothers and sisters and fellow parishioners in a community of love.

Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ

1st Reading: Deuteronomy 8.2-3, 14-16

2nd Reading: 1 Corinthians 10.16-17

Gospel: John 6.51-59 – *The Bread from Heaven*

Sharing what we have Received

This Sunday we celebrate the great Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ, or Corpus Christi. This Sunday offers us the opportunity to reflect more deeply on the importance of the Eucharist in our lives as stewards. The Catechism says that “the Eucharist is the source and summit of the Christian life” (CCC 1324).

The Eucharist being the “source” means that through the reception of Jesus at Mass, we receive the grace to “do all things through Him who strengthens us” (Phil 4:13). As stewards, we should remember that all of our charitable works are made possible and fruitful because of God sustaining us in all things. The Eucharist being the “summit” teaches us that everything we do should point us back to the Mass which should remain the highlight of our entire week. The Mass is everything. It is in the Mass that Jesus’ perfect sacrifice at Calvary is made present before us and is our closest foretaste of Heaven.

This constant interplay of source and summit is what should guide us as stewards. This image is best captured in the common practice of Corpus Christi Eucharistic processions. We first receive Christ in the Eucharist and then we bring Him out into the world for all to see. That is the life of a steward. Let us strive to receive Christ as often as we can, even on weekdays if possible. Once we have received Him in Mass let us then strive to share Him with others.

Summary

The Mass is everything, for the Catechism says that “the Eucharist is the source and summit of the Christian life” (CCC 1324). This image is best captured in the common practice of Corpus Christi Eucharistic processions in which we first receive Christ in the Eucharist and then bring Him out into the world for all to see. Let us strive to receive Christ as often as we can, even on weekdays if possible, and then seek to share His love within us with others as an act of good stewardship.

11th Sunday of Ordinary Time

1st Reading: Exodus 19.1-6a

2nd Reading: Romans 5.6-11

Gospel: Matthew 9.36-10.8

The harvest is plenty, but the labourers are few

The Gospel begins by highlighting Jesus' reaction to the crowds who were "like sheep without a shepherd". Our Lord is moved with compassion for them and declares that the "harvest is plenty, but the labourers are few." Jesus invites us to lovingly share our time and talent to help build his kingdom within our parish communities, so that they may be joyful to live in and attractive to others. Stewardship is not overly complicated, but rather a humble offering of one's own time and talent in service to others, such as by joining a parish ministry we feel called to serve in, or even through the simple act of welcoming newcomers with a smile.

Through the Gospel reading, God brings our attention to the lost and all those in need of our time and talent to help guide them to the person of Jesus Christ. He promises to make us a "holy nation" if we keep His commandment to proclaim His goodness and become a living testimony to His sanctifying grace. By inviting us to partake in this mission, Jesus promises a bountiful harvest.

Our Church invites us to "care for the gathered and reach out to the scattered." An important step in accomplishing this, is to invite the Holy Spirit to more actively work in our lives. Then, by living a stewardship way of life, reach out and minister to people who are in need of our time and talent. One way we can do this, is by sharing our God-given gifts in one of the many parish ministries we may feel called to serve in.

Summary

In today's Gospel, Jesus invites us to partake in His mission of building up the kingdom of God while also lamenting the lack of labourers in His vineyard. In many ways, this reading captures the reality of parish life in our world today, highlighting that increased levels of parishioner engagement, in service of our Lord and out of love of neighbour, can help increase the spiritual well-being of our parish community. It is our duty as a "holy nation" to help bring people closer to the person of Jesus. Are we willing to help do this by becoming a more active labourer in God's vineyard by being more deeply engaged in our parish community?

12th Sunday of Ordinary Time

1st Reading: Jeremiah 20.10-13

2nd Reading: Romans 5.12-15

Gospel: Matthew 10.26-33 – *Whom to Fear*

Be not Afraid

“Do not be afraid!” These words from Jesus in today’s Gospel should be a source of reassurance for all of His stewards. These same words were echoed by St. John Paul II at his inaugural homily as Pope. He said, “Brothers and sisters, do not be afraid to welcome Christ and accept his power. Help the Pope and all those who wish to serve Christ and with Christ’s power to serve the human person and the whole of mankind. Do not be afraid. Open wide the doors for Christ.”

As stewards of Christ, it is easy to succumb to various fears. The fear of financial burdens, family crises, health complications as well as the spiritual fear of not being a “good” enough disciple. It is to these fears and more that Jesus, and St. John Paul II, says to be not afraid.

But how do we fight these temptations of fear? We fight them through prayer and trust in God. Whenever fears or worries take hold of our lives, whenever we doubt the fruits or importance of our stewardship, let us run to prayer. It is in those quiet moments before the Lord that He will slowly reveal His love for us which “casts out fear” (1 John 4:18). Let us take a moment today to intentionally pray to God, asking Him to fill us with greater trust in His goodness.

Summary

Jesus in today’s Gospel, as well as St. John Paul II throughout his pontificate, encourages us to “be not afraid!” In our lives as followers of Christ and stewards many fears and worries may begin to take hold of us. Let us strive to fight these fears through the power of prayer and daily grow in greater trust in God.

13th Sunday of Ordinary Time

1st Reading: 2 Kings 4.8-12a, 14-16

2nd Reading: Romans 6.3-4, 8-11

Gospel: Matthew 10.37-42 – *The Reward of a Disciple*

Offering our Gifts for Others

In today's first reading we hear of a wealthy woman who would stop and provide a meal to the prophet Elisha whenever she saw him walking by. She recognized him to be a holy man and decided to go even more out of her way by providing a furnished room from Elisha to stay. This woman used her gifts and possessions to serve others. This should serve as a model of stewardship for all of us.

Let us ask ourselves, how do we use our gifts to serve others? The woman in the reading is described to be wealthy, so she was able to give from her material wealth to support the prophet. However, while we may not have the same material wealth as this woman, we all possess the wealth of our time. As stewards we should reflect on how we can use our time to serve Christ and the church. Perhaps one way is by offering our time to help with various ministries that take place over the summer months at the parish.

The reading tells us that for her generosity, the woman was prophesized to soon bear her first child. We too as stewards can look forward to the reward of our labours. We will receive the gift of joy in this life as we work towards the ultimate reward of eternal union with God in heaven.

Summary

The woman in the first reading was able to give from her material wealth to support the prophet Elisha. However, while we may not have the same material wealth as this woman, we all possess the wealth of our time. As stewards we should reflect on how we can use our time to serve Christ and the church.

14th Sunday of Ordinary Time

1st Reading: Zechariah 9.9-10

2nd Reading: Romans 8.9, 11-13

Gospel: Matthew 11.25-30

The Importance of Humility

The readings today remind us of an important characteristic of Christ which all Christians should strive to nurture in their own life, which is humility. Jesus holds this virtue in high regard as we see him praying to the Father in thanksgiving for revealing himself not to those who are proud and learned, but to the weak and humble. Jesus himself is the perfect example of humility, as was foreshadowed in the first reading by the prophet Zechariah, for Christ was the Messiah who came not as a worldly king, but wrapped in swaddling clothes, not on a horse but on a donkey.

Humility bears great importance in the Christian life because a person without humility is prideful, and a person who is proud relies more on oneself than on God. Pride closes oneself to God, as a greater reliance on oneself or one's abilities turns a person to believe that they don't need God in their life. On the contrary, child-like simplicity understands that everything they have is a gift from the Lord. They are aware that they are simply stewards of God's gifts which has been bestowed on them and must rely on God who is greater and wiser than them for all that they need. Only the humble can see that they need the Lord, and in humility ask the Lord to help them carry those burdens.

When we carry our yolk of burdens out of love for Christ, our burdens become light. Only Jesus can lift the burdens we carry, but He can only do that if we humbly go to Him and ask for His help. As He lifts our burdens, He frees us so that we can through the work of stewardship, bring others who are also carrying heavy burdens to Christ. If we are carrying burdens and haven't brought them before the Lord, let us ask for the humility to do so. Let us also in a special way pray for someone we know who is carrying a heavy burden, that they have the courage to go to the Lord and have their burden made light.

Summary

In the Gospel, Christ gives thanks to the Father for those who are humble for it was to them that the Father was revealing the Kingdom of God to. Humility is an important virtue to foster especially in the work of stewardship, for with humility we can see how much God is generous to us and how much we need Him. With humility, we can ask the Lord to help us carry our burdens, and He will make them light.

15th Sunday of Ordinary Time

1st Reading: Isaiah 55.10-11

2nd Reading: Romans 8.18-23

Gospel: Matthew 13.1-23

God All-Encompassing Word

The readings today remind us that the Word of God is impartial and seeks out all of humanity. In the first reading, God speaks through the prophet Isaiah, reminding the people that God's word is like rain that comes down from the heavens. As it falls, it waters all the earth making it fertile, but only those who take advantage of the fertility of the soil by planting seeds reaped benefits. Like the rain, the Word of God also goes forth to do what God wills and has full potency to give life to anyone who's heart is fertile and willing to receive it.

In the Gospel, when the sower in the parable sows the seed, he is indifferent about where the seed lands. This is not because the sower who represents God, is a careless sower, but rather shows that God wants all people to have a chance to receive His word, regardless of whether they will accept it. God loves all people equally, but only those whose hearts are fertile and are ready to receive God's word will have the word grow and bear fruit within them.

The readings today call us to reflect on the state of our own soul. Is our soul is fertile ground for the Word of God to come and take root and produce much fruit or have we hardened our hearts, making God's word difficult to grow. Does the word of God we hear at every Mass transform us and give us life, or like the parable, does the Word get choked out by the weeds or eaten up by birds? As stewards who are seeking to do God's will, it is important for us to get to know the Word. A great way to do this is by joining a bible study or forming one with family and friends if one is not available. Let us immerse ourselves in God's Word, for it is there that we will get to know Him.

Summary

The Word of God, like the rain, goes out to all humanity to do what God wills, but it only bears fruit in the hearts of those who prepare themselves to receive it. If we do not make our hearts fertile ground for the Word of God when we read it or hear it proclaimed at Mass, it will not transform us. As stewards who are seeking to do God's will, it is important for us to get to know the Word, for it is through the Word we get to know who God is.

16th Sunday of Ordinary Time

1st Reading: Wisdom 12.13, 16-19

2nd Reading: Romans 8.26-27

Gospel: Matthew 13.24-43 – *The Parable of the Weeds*

Good and Evil

In the Gospel, Jesus shares a parable about a sower who sows seed on a field. In the middle of the night, an enemy comes to the field and plants weeds at the same time to hinder the wheat. When the sower realizes what the enemy has done, instead of trying to remove all the weeds immediately, he allows both to grow together, only to separate them at the time of the harvest. This parable reveals a very important part about the reality of the world, which is the existence of both good and evil.

When God looks at the heart of men, he sees the good and evil that exists within. Although God could easily uproot those that have evil in their heart and are straying from the path of righteousness, God in his mercy and kindness gives every person a chance to repent. In the first reading, we hear that God does not unjustly condemn, but rather permits us to repent of our sins. We see this in a profound way with Jesus on the cross, where the good thief was able to enter the Kingdom of Heaven because of his repentant heart. Our God is a God of mercy and gives us till our last breath to repent and seek Him. As we read in the second reading, God gives us the Holy Spirit above all to aid us, for we ourselves are weak, but the Holy Spirit strengthens us and teaches us to pray, leading us to the path of righteousness.

God calls us to be stewards, to be the wheat in the parable and to be children of God and spreaders of good in the world. However, in our own brokenness it is easy to fall short of this. A tangible way that the Lord has given to us to fight the evil within and to show us His mercy is the Sacrament of Reconciliation. If it has been a while since we asked God for his mercy, let us return to him in the sacrament. The Lord waits anxiously for us, to seek His mercy and turn back to Him.

Summary

Just as in the parable both wheat and weeds grew together and were separated at the harvest, in the same way the world contains both good and evil, both often existing in some ways in the hearts of man. Although there are those that stray from the path of righteousness, God is merciful and gives them many opportunities to repent and make peace with the Lord. For us, the easiest way to receive the mercy of God is through the Sacrament of Reconciliation, in which the Lord seeks through the priest to shower us with His love and mercy.

17th Sunday of Ordinary Time

1st Reading: 1 Kings 3.5-12

2nd Reading: Romans 8.28-30

Gospel: Matthew 13.44-52 – *Parables regarding the Kingdom of God*

The Greatest Treasure

In the Gospel today, Jesus tells us a parable of two different people and their dealing with treasure. The first person stumbles upon a treasure by chance, whereas the second person is searching intently for a pearl of great price. Although the way that the two people come across the treasure is different, the response of both individuals is the same. Both people sell everything that they have for the treasure they found.

Is your faith the greatest treasure you have? Regardless of how we received our faith in God, one thing is certain – that faith is a gift from the Lord. What is our response to the gift of faith that God gives to us? Is our faith the pearl of great price that we are willing to give everything for, or is our true treasure elsewhere? If we believe that this gift of faith is the greatest treasure we have, we should have great zeal to share this gift with others. This is our calling as stewards, to receive this gift of faith with reverence and to share it. This is a difficult task, and it is easy to feel unworthy. As we hear from St. Paul in the second reading, God calls us and predestined us to be conformed to the image of his Son from the beginning. As God equipped Solomon with all the graces he needed for his duty as king of Israel, so He does with us, giving us all the graces and gifts necessary to do His will on this Earth.

Although we may not feel like a worthy disciple, God makes us worthy through his grace, justifying us, and calling us to serve him. What are we doing to share this gift of faith? Let us take some time this week and give gratitude to God for the gift of faith, and to those who helped nurture our faith.

Summary

In the Gospel today, a parable is told about people who upon finding treasure, sells everything that they have in order that they may possess this treasure. Is our faith in the Lord our greatest treasure, or is our heart elsewhere? If our faith is truly our greatest gift, let our response be one of gratitude to God for this gift, and eagerness as stewards to share this gift with others.

Transfiguration of the Lord

1st Reading: Daniel 7.9-10, 13-14

2nd Reading: 2 Peter 1.16-19

Gospel: Matthew 17.1-9

Kingship of the Son of Man

The book of Daniel speaks about the Kingship of the Son of Man who is brought before the Ancient of Days and is adorned with splendour and glory and His dominion is declared for all ages. This prophetic vision takes shape in the Synoptic Gospels when Jesus is transfigured on the high mountain with a loud voice from the heavens proclaiming His Sonship. Stewardship transfigures us from within and makes us more like Jesus. The more we give to the Lord, the more he adorns us with His riches.

St. Thomas Aquinas said, “At His Transfiguration, Christ showed His disciples, the splendour of His beauty, to which He will shape and colour those who are His: ‘He will reform our lowness configured to the body of His glory.’” This promise Jesus makes gives us great hope, especially in times of trial. Stewardship is one of the many ways in which God invites us to be a part of His Divine plan. But unlike the disciples in the Gospel today, we should never be afraid of hearing God’s voice but rather be subject to His majesty.

In the Gospel, Jesus reveals to His disciples the full share of His Divinity. As St. Anastasius put it, “Jesus goes before us to show us the way, both up the mountain and into heaven ... Let us retire from the world, stand aloof from the earth, rise above the body, detach ourselves from creatures and turn to the Creator, to whom Peter in ecstasy exclaimed: ‘Lord, it is good for us to be here.’” We must seek opportunities to grow in holiness and stewardship can help us to follow Jesus to the mountain whose light, in turn, radiates in us.

Summary

The book of Daniel speaks about the Kingship of the Son of Man with this prophetic vision taking shape in the Synoptic Gospels when Jesus is transfigured on the high mountain. Likewise, stewardship transfigures us from within and makes us more like Jesus. The more we give to the Lord, the more he adorns us with His riches. Are you ready to follow Jesus up the mountain to be transfigured? This is completely possible as God invites us to be a part of his Divine plan through the gifts, we bring to serve Him.

19th Sunday of Ordinary Time

1st Reading: 1 Kings 19.9A, 11-13A

2nd Reading: Romans 9.1-5

Gospel: Matthew 14.22-33 – *Jesus Walks on the Water*

Do Not be Afraid

There exists a beautiful artistic rendition of the Gospel today by Joseph Brickey depicting Jesus walking on the water in the middle of the storm. The boat in the painting is quite dark, being rocked due to the violent wind and storm that it is caught up in. Yet amid the turbulent storm, Jesus walks calmly along. The sun is directly behind him, giving the sense that Jesus is the source of the light and peace in the painting.

God is the source of peace. The prophet Elijah experienced this in the first reading when he entered the cave and the Lord passed by him. The winds blew, the earth quaked, and the fires raged, yet God was not in any of them. It was only when Elijah heard a still, small quiet voice that he recognized God and hid his face. When Jesus reached the disciples who were stuck in the storm, he reassures them, as he reassures us today – “Do not be afraid!” Christ comes to our heart as he did with Elijah, as a quiet voice bringing peace.

There are many moments in our lives that we find ourselves like the disciples, lost at sea in the middle of a storm with darkness all around us. Yet no matter how hopeless things may seem Jesus is right there all along as he was with the disciples. Even in the most impossible of circumstances, Jesus is there to bring his light, his love, and his peace, and to calm the storms of our heart. Let us bring to the Lord our burdens and spend time in prayer experiencing the peace which Jesus brings.

Summary

Jesus Christ is the source of peace and tells us in today’s gospel to “not be afraid.” What are the personal storms that we find ourselves in, and are we able, in the midst of those storms, to see Jesus walking toward us and reassuring us with His presence? Let us bring to the Lord our burdens and spend time in prayer so that, like the disciples, we may experience the peace which Jesus brings.

20th Sunday of Ordinary Time - reflection coming soon

1st Reading: Isaiah 56.6-7

2nd Reading: Romans 11.13-15, 29-32

Gospel: Matthew 15.21-28 – *The Faith of a Canaanite Woman*

God's Love Is for Everybody

Throughout the readings on this 20th Sunday in Ordinary time, we are reminded of the fact that God's love and mercy is for all of humanity, and it is not reserved just for a certain group of people. When God looks at humanity, He offers to each person an invitation to experience His love and mercy. When the Lord speaks to the prophet Isaiah in the first reading, the Lord tells Isaiah that even foreigners who join themselves to the Lord will be brought to God's holy mountain, or in other words to God's presence.

This message seems to be different than what we encounter in today's Gospel, however when we look closer we see that the gospel further illustrates God's desire to bring mercy to all. Although Jesus seemed to be initially hesitant to do what the Canaanite woman asks, the woman demonstrates that she had faith in Jesus as the Son of God, who would be able to do what she asked even if Jesus did come to the Israelites first. When God invites all people to experience His love and mercy, there is one prerequisite, and that is faith in Jesus Christ. When Jesus seemed to turn away the woman who came to Him for her daughter's healing, Jesus tests her faith, and it was the woman's faith that healed her daughter.

As we strive to live a life of stewardship, do we feel the same burden God feels, of wanting everyone to experience the love and mercy of God? When we go to Mass or speak to people in our lives, are we instruments of God's love reaching out to others, or do we hinder God's love to touch the lives of everyone we meet. Just as God wishes for everyone to be embraced by His love, God gives us the responsibility to bring people to him. As you reflect on this, God may place the name of people in your heart who may need the love and mercy of God. Let us reach out to these people, and invite them in some way, either to a bible study, or back to Mass if they haven't been in a long time. Let us be stewards of God's love.

Summary

God's love and mercy is for more than just Christians. It is extended to all of humanity for God loves all His creation. However, to truly be able to experience this love, we need to have faith in His Son, Jesus Christ, and through this faith we will be healed just as the Canaanite woman was healed in the Gospel. As stewards, we are called to be the hands of Christ, extending God's love and mercy to all.

21st Sunday of Ordinary Time

1st Reading: Isaiah 22.19-23

2nd Reading: Romans 11.33-36

Gospel: Matthew 16.13-20 – *Peter Declares that Jesus is the Messiah*

Who Do You Say That I Am?

Who is Jesus Christ? In today's Gospel, Jesus poses this significant question to His disciples. Having traveled with our Lord, witnessing His ministry to people for quite some time, observing His miracles, and listening to His teachings, the disciples were in a unique position to answer. Jesus asks, "Who do people say that I am?" They offer various opinions, reflecting the Israelites' comparisons of Jesus to different individuals. Then, Jesus poses the crucial query, "Who do you say that I am?"

This question ultimately holds paramount significance. It disregards the opinions and beliefs of others regarding the person of Christ. When confronted with this inquiry, we may consider the teachings of renowned saints and their insights on the identity of Jesus or rely on the lessons imparted to us. Nevertheless, in the end, Jesus directly asks us today about our personal perception of Him. It is our individual relationship with Jesus and how we define His significance in our lives that shapes our discipleship.

Jesus is indeed the Messiah, the Son of God, our savior, redeemer, and friend, just as He was to Peter. As such, Jesus reveals our purpose to us. Our task is to actively contribute to the growth of the church. This responsibility is bestowed upon us as stewards. Jesus instructs Peter that he will serve as the foundation upon which He will build His church, a community whose members may possess weaknesses but find strength through their relationship with Christ. Let us take a moment this week to contemplate the significance of Jesus in our lives. What are we doing to help nurture the Body of Christ? What gifts are we offering for the sake of building up the Church?

Summary

When contemplating Jesus Christ, who is He to you personally? Reflecting upon our answer to this question and our individual relationship with Jesus holds great significance as we embrace the responsibility of stewardship. Let us take a moment this week to contemplate the significance of Jesus in our lives. What are we doing to nurture the Body of Christ? What gifts are we offering for the sake of building up the Church?

22nd Sunday of Ordinary Time

1st Reading: Jeremiah 20.7-9

2nd Reading: Romans 12.1-2

Gospel: Matthew 16.21-27 – *Jesus Predicts His Death*

The Path of Discipleship

Who truly is the Christian disciple and what does it take to become one? Jesus addresses this question in today's Gospel by stating, “Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.”

To truly embrace discipleship in the Lord, we must begin by denying ourselves. This act of self-denial involves placing complete trust in Jesus, recognizing that He has a purpose and plan for our lives. Moreover, it requires acknowledging our weaknesses and humbly acknowledging that all the blessings we receive come from the Lord. Then, we take up our cross, which entails accepting the various sufferings we encounter and uniting them with the sufferings of Jesus on the cross. In doing so, we grow in awareness that He bears our sufferings with us. Lastly, we commit to following Him wherever He may lead us. This may involve stepping outside of our comfort zones, but being a disciple means having faith that Jesus will be with us every step of the way.

This is the path to which all stewards are called – a life characterized by sacrifice, service, and love. Stewards willingly offer their gifts and talents, even at the cost of their valuable time, recognizing that these abilities are bestowed by Jesus Himself. Their deep affection for Him and His Church compels them to share these gifts with others. It is only by denying ourselves, shouldering our individual crosses, and faithfully following Jesus that we can extend the same selflessness to others and actively contribute to the growth of God's kingdom.

Summary

To fulfill our role as disciples and stewards, Jesus invites us to engage in three fundamental actions: self-denial, carrying our cross, and following Him. As we do this, we gain a deeper understanding of who Jesus is and become more attuned to His voice, discerning the myriad of different ways He calls us to share our time and talent. Embracing a life of sacrifice and love, which is inherent to stewardship, empowers us to actively contribute to the advancement of God's kingdom through our actions.

23rd Sunday of Ordinary Time

1st Reading: Ezekiel 33.7-9

2nd Reading: Romans 13.8-10

Gospel: Matthew 18.15-20 - *Reproving Another Who Sins*

Reflection

In today's second reading from Romans, St. Paul speaks about the importance of love. He boldly proclaims that we should "owe no one anything, except to love one another; for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law." Let us take some time today to reflect on how we can live out this exhortation as stewards of Christ.

Before we can proceed, we must understand what love is and what it is not. Firstly, love is not a feeling but rather a choice that we must make each and every day. The classical definition of love is willing the good of the other. So in order to love, we must not look towards our own needs but to the needs of others. It is essentially a lens of stewardship that seeks to use our own gifts to serve our neighbour.

However, in order to express our love we must move past merely willing the good to actually doing the good for others. St. Gregory the Great says that "the proof of love is in the works. Where love exists, it works great things. But when it ceases to act, it ceases to exist." So in order to love, we must concretely choose to perform loving acts that will the good of the other. Let us reflect on how we can practice this within our parish community.

Summary

St. Paul boldly proclaims that we must "owe no one anything, except to love one another." To truly love is to act as an authentic steward and will the good of the other. However, we must move from merely willing the good to actually doing the good for St. Gregory the Great says that the "proof of love is in the works."

24th Sunday of Ordinary Time

1st Reading: Sirach 27.30 – 28.7

2nd Reading: Romans 14.7-9

Gospel: Matthew 18.21-35 - *The Parable of the Unforgiving Servant*

Forgiving and Being Forgiven

The central mystery woven throughout the readings this Sunday is the need to forgive others. In today's Gospel we hear the parable of the wicked servant who although he was greatly forgiven of his large debt could not forgive the small debt of his fellow servant. This parable can be summarized by the words found in the Our Father, "forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us."

The Catechism teaches us that unless we forgive those in our lives, we cannot fully experience God's forgiveness. It says that "in refusing to forgive our brothers and sisters, our hearts are closed and their hardness makes them impervious to the Father's merciful love; but in confessing our sins, our hearts are opened to his grace" (CCC 2840)

So as stewards we should strive to forgive those who have hurt us, but how do we do this? The essential answer is prayer. The Catechism plainly states that "it is not in our power not to feel or to forget an offense; but the heart that offers itself to the Holy Spirit turns injury into compassion and purifies the memory in transforming the hurt into intercession" (CCC 2843). So we don't need to conjure up warm or fuzzy feelings, but we must intentionally choose to pray for our debtor and for the grace to forgive them. This is a difficult process and is sure to not happen overnight. Let us take some time daily, starting today, to pray for those who've hurt us.

Summary

The Catechism is very explicit in teaching that unless we forgive others we cannot fully experience God's forgiveness. It instructs us that forgiveness doesn't necessitate good feelings or forgetting past offenses, but instead that it requires intentionally praying for those who have hurt us. As stewards let us begin to pray for the ability to forgive and so live out the words, "forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us."

25th Sunday of Ordinary Time

1st Reading: Isaiah 55.6-9

2nd Reading: Philippians 1.20-24, 27

Gospel: Matthew 20.1-16 - *The Laborers in the Vineyard*

Rejoicing in our Neighbour's Gifts

In the first reading from the book of the Prophet Isaiah we are reminded that God doesn't think the same way we do. "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts." Not only are God's ways different than ours, they are higher and better. We see this in the Gospel where the landowner in the parable gives an equal wage to the labourers regardless of how long they worked for.

The labourers who worked the longest felt that they did not receive what was just. As stewards, we too can sometimes fall into the temptation of feeling that the gifts God has given us is not to the level we would have liked. Similarly, we may sometimes feel that other people should not have the gifts that they have received. In doing this, we are subtly wanting God to think in the same way we do.

Instead, we should strive to be stewards that are grateful for the gifts we have received. Moreover, we should even be grateful and praise God for the gifts of others. As we are all one Body of Christ, when one member has particular gifts, we all as a Church should celebrate and boast of that gift. St. Paul says in his letter to the Corinthians that within the Body of Christ, "if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it." Let us take some time today to thank God for His many gifts in our lives and the lives of our fellow parishioners.

Summary

As stewards, we can sometimes fall into the same temptation of those in the Gospel of feeling that the gifts God has given us and our neighbour are not to our liking. However, we should strive to be grateful for the gifts we have received and even be grateful and praise God for the gifts of others. Let us strive to grow in gratitude to God for His many gifts in our lives and the lives of our fellow parishioners.

26th Sunday of Ordinary Time

1st Reading: Ezekiel 18.25-28

2nd Reading: Philippians 2.1-11

Gospel: Matthew 21.28-32 – *The Parable of the Two Sons*

Seeking to Serve Rather than be Served

In today's second reading St. Paul offers us a radical way of living as Christians. He says that we should humbly, "regard others as better than yourselves. Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others." While this is a challenging way of life, it is at the very heart of being a steward.

To fully live with other people's interests above our own we require a dramatic interior conversion. Our society propagates the importance of the unholy trinity of "me, myself and I". In order to begin this conversion we need to turn to prayer and seek to imitate Jesus, the true steward. Jesus always sought to be a servant of others instead of demanding to be served. This was shown very poignantly when he washed the feet of the apostles. In this image, we see what it means to be a steward. To humble ourselves before others and seek their good before our own.

Imagine a parish community where everyone strives to serve their brothers and sisters. This service can be manifested in a variety of ways, whether it be simply going out of our way to say hello to a new family in the parish or supporting a family undergoing a major change or crises in their life. Let us constantly renew our commitment to being stewards and seek to serve rather than be served.

Summary

St. Paul challenges us to be true stewards as he says that we should "look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others." In order to begin this conversion we need to turn to prayer as well as seek to imitate Jesus, who always sought to serve rather than be served. Let us strive to serve those in our parishes whether it be simply going out of our way to say hello to a new family or supporting a family undergoing a major change in their life, or any other way.

27th Sunday of Ordinary Time

1st Reading: Isaiah 5.1-7

2nd Reading: Philippians 4.6-9

Gospel: Matthew 21.33-43 - *The Parable of the Wicked Tenants*

Praying at all times

“In everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.” These are the words from St. Paul’s letter to the Philippians that we hear in today’s second reading. Elsewhere in his letter to the Thessalonians he says “Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.” St. Paul is urging us to pray in all circumstances and at all times.

But is it really feasible for us to pray at all times? While we may not be able to spend every moment praying in the chapel, we can still pray ceaselessly by offering up all of our acts as a prayer to God. St. Josemaria Escriva says that “You can be sure that it is through the circumstances of ordinary life, ordained or permitted by the infinite wisdom of divine Providence, that we come close to God ... To this I now add that your work too must become a personal prayer, that it must become a real conversation with Our Father in heaven”

As stewards, we can pray and be in union with God through our professional work as well as our charitable works for the parish community. If we offer up these moments of work to God as a means to commune with Him, we will begin to live out St. Paul’s exhortation to pray ceaselessly. Let us strive to never forget the dignity and value of our work as stewards of Christ.

Summary

In today’s second reading St. Paul urges us to pray ceaselessly in all circumstances. While we may not be able to spend every moment in the chapel, we can still pray ceaselessly by offering up all of our acts as a prayer to God. Let us strive to intentionally realize the dignity of our professional work, and our work as stewards, as a means to be in communion with God.

28th Sunday of Ordinary Time

1st Reading: Isaiah 25.6-10a

2nd Reading: Philippians 4.12-14, 19-20

Gospel: Matthew 22.1-14 – *The Parable of the Wedding Banquet*

Count Your Blessings

A steward is one who receives God’s gifts gratefully, develops those gifts responsibly, shares those gifts lovingly in justice with others, and makes a return with interest to the Lord. As stewards we are called to be grateful disciples of Christ. Gratitude is at the very core of what it means to be a steward.

Cardinal Collins in his *Pastoral Letter on Stewardship** says that “the deepening of the ‘attitude of gratitude’ will enhance our commitment to prayer and Eucharistic adoration, to the flourishing of lay engagement in the mission of evangelization, to an increase in the response to the call to the priesthood and religious life, to a courageous and effective dedication to social justice, and so on.” Essentially, it all begins with growing in gratitude.

One practice that is often recommended to children is to “count your blessings.” There is great spiritual fruit to be discovered through this practice, even as adults. Often times we place greater weight on the few negative things in our lives rather than focusing on the hundreds of blessings. Let us intentionally set aside a few minutes this weekend to concretely identify all of the blessings the Lord has bestowed on us this past year. We can then begin to move from gratitude to generosity by offering up these blessings to our parish community.

Summary

Gratitude is at the very core of what it means to be a steward. Cardinal Collins says that “the deepening of the ‘attitude of gratitude’ will enhance our commitment to prayer and Eucharistic adoration, to the flourishing of lay engagement in the mission of evangelization, to an increase in the response to the call to the priesthood and religious life, to a courageous and effective dedication to social justice, and so on.” Let us take some time to concretely identify all of the blessings the Lord has bestowed on us this past year.

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

29th Sunday of Ordinary Time – World Mission Sunday

1st Reading: Isaiah 45.1, 4-6

2nd Reading: 1 Thessalonians 1.1-5ab

Gospel: Matthew 22.15-21 – *The Question about Paying Taxes*

Being a Missionary

This weekend the entire church celebrates World Mission Sunday in which we renew our missionary commitment to the Gospel. Pope Francis said that “the mission of the Christian in the world is a mission for all, a mission of service, which excludes no-one; it requires great generosity and in particular the gaze and heart turned heavenward to invoke the Lord’s help.” The Holy Father exhorts all of us to see ourselves as missionaries.

In today’s first reading, the Lord says to us “I call you by your name.” This invitation to be a missionary is deeply personal. All of us are called by the Lord to serve him with our whole lives and help spread the Gospel to those around us. One way we can live out this missionary call is by being faithful to our call of stewardship.

In today’s Gospel, Jesus says to give “God the things that are God’s.” Is not our entire life God’s? He is the one who created us and blessed us with countless gifts which are all owed back to him. Cardinal Collins says in his *Pastoral Letter on Stewardship** that “A steward is a servant entrusted for a time with the goods of the Master. The steward uses but does not own these goods, and must eventually give an account to the Master.” Let us seek to give of ourselves to our parish community in order to live out our missionary call of stewardship.

Summary

Pope Francis said that “the mission of the Christian in the world is a mission for all, a mission of service, which excludes no-one.” One way we can live out this missionary call is by being faithful to our call of stewardship. Let us strive to be grateful for the gifts we have received and offer them back to the God for Jesus says in today’s Gospel to give “God the things that are God’s.”

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

30th Sunday of Ordinary Time

1st Reading: Exodus 22.21-27

2nd Reading: 1 Thessalonians 1.5c-10

Gospel: Matthew 22.34-40 – *The Greatest Commandment*

Love until it Hurts

One of the most commonly used words in today's culture is "love." It has become so familiar in our regular language that people use the same word to describe their sentiments towards pizza, their pets and their children. Clearly a different level of love exists between those three things but this common usage of the word can slowly lead us to lose the meaning of love in its truest sense.

In the Gospel today, Jesus boils down all of the commandments into loving God with all our being and loving our neighbour as ourselves. In order to fully love God and our neighbour, we need to remind ourselves what the true definition and expression of love is. Love is ultimately a sacrifice. It is willing the good of the other, which involves us foregoing our own interests for theirs.

St. Teresa of Calcutta beautifully says that for "love to be real, it must cost—it must hurt—it must empty us of self." As stewards, we should always keep this understanding of love in our minds because stewardship is essentially a life of love. With this true understanding, we will not be surprised when we face difficulties or suffering in our ministry. Likewise, it helps us ask ourselves if we're being too comfortable in our generosity and challenges us to give even more of ourselves. Let us seek to constantly serve God and our neighbour in our parish community out of a deep love for them.

Summary

In the Gospel today, Jesus boils down all of the commandments into loving God with all our being and loving our neighbour as ourselves. St. Teresa of Calcutta beautifully says that for "love to be real, it must cost—it must hurt—it must empty us of self." Let us seek to constantly love God and our neighbour in our parish community by sacrificing our own desires for their good.

31st Sunday of Ordinary Time - reflection coming soon

1st Reading: Malachi 1.14-2.2, 8-10

2nd Reading: 1 Thessalonians 2.7-9, 13

Gospel: Matthew 23.1-12

reflection coming soon

All Saints Day

1st Reading: Revelation 7.2-4, 9-14

2nd Reading: 1 John 3.1-3

Gospel: Matthew 5.1-12a

Following Those Who Have Gone Before Us

Our time here on earth can be viewed through the image of a marathon. The great prize for running the race well is eternity in heaven where we will be eternally united with God. On this Solemnity of All Saints Day we contemplate those holy men and women who have run the race before us and reached their heavenly destination.

St. Bernard says that “calling the saints to mind inspires, or rather arouses in us, above all else, a longing to enjoy their company, so desirable in itself . . . In short, we long to be united in happiness with all the saints.” It is spiritually fruitful to contemplate the saints because it helps us keep the end goal of our marathon constantly at the forefront of our minds.

Moreover, the saints provide us an example of how to run the race as well. The saints always utilized the gifts that God gave them to serve Christ and His Church. They each did this in their own unique way dependant on their particular gifts and vocation. We too as stewards should follow their example and use our particular gifts to help us run the race well. St. Bernard also says that “we must above all seek the prayers of the saints. Thus, what is beyond our own powers to obtain will be granted through their intercession.” Therefore let us seek the intercession of the saints and look to follow their example in order to deepen our resolve of being good stewards of Christ.

Summary

On this Solemnity of All Saints Day we contemplate those holy men and women who have gone before us and reached their heavenly destination. The saints always utilized the gifts that God gave them to serve Christ and His Church in their own unique way dependant on their particular gifts. As stewards we should seek their intercession and follow their example by using our own unique gifts to serve the Church.

32nd Sunday of Ordinary Time

1st Reading: Wisdom 6.12-16

2nd Reading: 1 Thessalonians 4.13-18

Gospel: Matthew 25.1-13 – *The Parable of the Ten Bridesmaids*

Living with a Holy Fear

In today's Gospel we hear the parable of the ten bridesmaids in which only the five wise ones who had prepared for the wedding banquet were allowed to enter into the celebration. Jesus ends this parable with the exhortation to "keep awake therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour." It is true that none of us know the time of our own death or Christ's Final Judgement.

While this reality can lead many to fear and trembling, the Catechism instead calls us to cultivate a "holy fear" and a "blessed hope" (CCC 1041). We can cultivate those attitudes by intentionally calling to mind the finiteness of our lives and remembering that we are all ultimately made for Heaven. This reality is beautifully summarized in the words of St. Rose of Viterbo. "Live so as not to fear death. For those who live well in the world, death is not frightening but sweet and precious."

Let us also remember that during our judgment before God we will be standing before the same Lord that we have befriended through prayer and the sacraments. Let us not appear before the throne of God not having first known Him in this life. As stewards, we should live with our feet planted on earth but our eyes fixed heavenward. The Lord has ordained it in such a way that we are still called to serve and love Him in this life but let us never forget our true home. Let us prepare ourselves well.

Summary

While the thought of death and judgement can lead many to fear and trembling the Catechism instead calls us to cultivate a "holy fear" and a "blessed hope" (CCC 1041). St. Rose of Viterbo says that we should "live so as not to fear death. For those who live well in the world, death is not frightening but sweet and precious." As stewards let us strive to prepare for death by remembering that we will stand before the same Lord at judgement that we meet every day in prayer and at Mass.

33rd Sunday of Ordinary Time

1st Reading: Proverbs 31.10-13, 16-18, 20, 26, 28-31++

2nd Reading: 1 Thessalonians 5.1-6

Gospel: Matthew 25.14-30 – *The Parable of the Talents*

Entering into our Master's Joy

“Well done, good and trustworthy slave; enter into the joy of your master.” These are the beautiful words that all of us long to hear after a life of following Christ. The parable of the talents is often seen as the classical parable on stewardship. Let us take some time reflecting on it more deeply today.

Cardinal Collins comments on this parable in his *Pastoral Letter on Stewardship** saying, “As good stewards, we 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.” The key word in that sentence is increase. Although the third slave did not waste or squander the talents or gifts he had received, the Master did not utter that beautiful phrase to him. The third slave did not work so as to create an increase of his goods. Stewardship always remains as an active way of life.

If we want to hear those beautiful words at our judgement we must live in such a way that fully embraces the spirituality of stewardship. How well are we using our gifts for the glory of God and the Church? Let us not be passive in our service but seek ways to be used as an instrument of God. Let us start with prayer and move into acts of charity. We can serve in our parish community whether it be joining various ministries or helping people in need. This weekend let us renew our commitment to serving Christ.

Summary

“Well done, good and trustworthy slave; enter into the joy of your master” are the beautiful words that all of us long to hear after a life of following Christ. If we want to hear that spoken to us at our judgement we must live in such a way that fully embraces the spirituality of stewardship. Let us ask ourselves, how well are we using our gifts for the glory of God and the Church?

* Thomas Cardinal Collins, Pastoral Letter on Stewardship. Available at:
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34th Sunday of Ordinary Time – Christ the King

1st Reading: Ezekiel 34.11-12, 15-17

2nd Reading: 1 Corinthians 15.20-26, 28

Gospel: Matthew 25.31-46 - *The Judgment of the Nations*

Serving Christ through Others

On this feast day of Christ the King we hear the account of the judgement of the nations where Christ will separate the sheep and the goats. Jesus clearly outlines what criteria He is looking for in order to determine which side we fall into. This criteria boils down into love and stewardship.

Jesus says “just as you did it to one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did it to me.” He beautifully teaches us that when we serve the hungry, the stranger, the naked, the sick or the poor, we are not solely serving humans. Rather, we are serving Jesus Himself. This is the extraordinary call of all stewards. We are called to share our time and gifts with those around us and in doing so, display charity towards God Himself.

Cardinal Collins in his *Pastoral Letter on Stewardship** 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. That is true stewardship, and we are called to do likewise.” Let us take some time today to ask ourselves, how well are we living up to this call of serving the “least of these brothers and sisters” in our own parish community. There are many ways in which we can all contribute, how are we playing our part for Christ?

Summary

Jesus says in the Gospel today that “just as you did it to one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did it to me.” He beautifully teaches us that when we serve the hungry, the stranger, the naked, the sick or the poor, we are not solely serving humans but Christ Himself. Let us take some time today to ask ourselves, how well are we living up to this call of serving the “least of these brothers and sisters” in our own parish community.

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