

For the past 5 weeks, our second reading has been from the Letter of S. James. St. James has called us to action, to stewardship. We have been invited to put our baptism, our faith, into action—to demonstrate our faith through our actions. And I have been talking about stewardship.

Stewardship is a way of life that is deeply rooted in the person of Jesus Christ, who came to teach us how to live. In Jesus, we come to understand more clearly that **God has given each of us something to do that no one else on earth can do.** No one else can be the parent, the student, the friend, the member of this parish and this world, the way that you are called to be.

This weekend, we celebrate Catechetical Sunday. In that light, I would like to invite us to look at stewardship in a broad sense. Let's consider parenthood as a beautiful example of stewardship.

Husband and wife enter into marriage promising to “accept children lovingly from God.” The word ‘accept’ has a rich connotation; for a child does not belong to his or her parents; a child is entrusted to them by God.

Each child is unique. Each has individual gifts and talents, struggles and challenges. Every time a human life is conceived a miracle occurs—an immortal soul is created by God.

Christian parents invest their lives into the upbringing of their children. It is hard work; priorities and schedules are rearranged. Sacrifices are made so that one day the child may spread his or her wings, leave the nest and make a difference in our Church and in our world. Christian parents do this not expecting anything in return. But in doing this, they give honor to God and they give thanks for the blessings of children.

Because of this, Christian marriage is special. Christian marriage is not merely a contract; it is a sacrament, a covenant through which the couple shares actively and intimately in the mission of God. This is why the family is called the domestic church, for it is in the family that

- † The Word of God is proclaimed and live out;
- † The virtues of charity and responsibility are fostered and encouraged, and
- † God's love is made real.

That is why parents are affirmed as the first and best teachers of the way of faith. Christian parenthood is a beautiful example of stewardship.

God gives the gift of children according to God's plan, and for God's reason and purpose. Married couples, you will never be fully aware of that purpose. But trust and pray that the Lord will bring to fulfillment the good work He and you have begun.

So, stewardship is vast and broad. Last week, I introduced our stewardship renewal sheets. They are different from our past efforts. This year, we are trying to encourage and cultivate an "attitude of gratitude." We are inviting you to reflect upon your giftedness: what do you love to do, what are your interests and strengths, what would you do for God and others? These questions can help you recognize your giftedness. Once you recognize your gifts, how will you use them?

Again, I invite you to look at the sheets in the pew. We thank those who returned their sheet last week. To everyone else, look it over, consider the questions asked. What are your gifts and talents? Are you ready to make a commitment to use them? If so, return the pledge in the offertory baskets. Do you need more time to consider your gifts and your response? Take it home and return it when you are ready. There will always be copies on the welcome table. We will take a few moments now....