

32nd Sunday in Ordinary Time • B

Christ the King • November 7-8, 2009

Stewardship of Treasure

Today in our readings, we meet two widows. The first widow lived some 700 years before the birth of our Lord. Elijah is told to go to a town enduring a brutal famine. There he meets a widow. Strangely, he invites himself into her home. Time are so tough, that she is prepared to mix her last handful of meal and a drizzle of oil into a small cake to be shared between herself and her son before they die. But Elijah commands her to feed him first. She lets go, lets God and sees what happens. And discovers an unending supply of meal and oil to feed herself, her son and the prophet.

Fast forward 700 years to the time of our Lord. It is the last days of Jesus' life. We find him sitting near the place in the Jerusalem Temple where people made their offering. As Jesus sat there, a widow tossed a dull, nearly worthless mite as her offering. Then, with no fanfare, she gave a second one. As quietly as she came, she left, noticed by no one except our Lord.

"Truly I tell you," said Jesus, "this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the treasury. For all of them have contributed out of their abundance; but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on." Hers was the gift of gifts; she gave everything she had.

This fall, I have been focusing on stewardship. Stewardship is not simply about the portion of our time, talent and treasure that we share with the Church. **Stewardship is about all of our gifts and how we are called to share in every aspect of our lives.**

Stewardship is a way of life deeply rooted in the person and teaching of Jesus. Stewardship is about being **grateful** for all God's blessings, being **responsible** and **prudent** in the use of those gifts and **sharing** those gifts generously out of a sense of love and justice.

Today, I am going to speak about stewardship of Treasure. Although this is a topic I don't like to talk about, I am talking about stewardship of treasure for several reasons:

First, because Jesus talks about it. Jesus calls all of us to a **spirit of generosity** with all of our gifts. Think of the widow in today's Gospel. She happily gave all that she had; she let go to let God. She trusted in God completely. Happiness comes from sharing, from being generous. Often we **give to a need**, but we all have a **need to give**. The radical message of today's readings is that we must place our confidence in God, rather than in our material possessions. The two widows gave from their substance, not their abundance. They humbly put their trust in God. They let go to let God. By their action, they shout that God's presence in their lives is infinitely more important than anything they owned.

Second, I speak of stewardship of treasure because so many people struggle with the stewardship of their personal finances. It is not good for a family or for a person to struggle financially. It is one thing when bills pile up because of catastrophic medical or legal bills, or because of an unexpected lay-off. It is another when the problem is mushrooming credit card debt caused by out of control spending habits. It is so easy to let our things own us.

Third I speak of stewardship of treasure because of parish and our diocese need good stewards of treasure. This parish has been built, maintained and expanded by the generosity of good stewards of treasure: people of faith who gave not because they had to, but because of a spirit of wanting to give back to God a portion of what God has given to them. I thank you for your offertory gifts.

It is you who support the work of this parish, our ministries and the diocese. You may have noticed last week in the bulletin that our income was down \$22,000 from budget, this week it's a bit better. You may wonder what that means; it means we will have to find ways to cut expenses or increase income. There is not magic pot of money out there, the Diocese can't come to our rescue. We may have to cut programs or cut staff. I know that times are tough for everyone. I am sharing this because you need to know our status. Our Finance Council and pastoral team are working hard on solutions, but we need everyone's help.

I invite you to consider a prayerful, proportionate and meaningful gift.

Prayerful - because all things are from the Lord. **Proportionate** because we don't want to give the same amount every year, things

change. I invite you to join me in give at the 10% level. 5% to the parish. 1% to Annual Catholic Appeal. And 4% to charities of your choice.

Meaningful – Only you know what a meaningful gift is for you. For me, it's a gift that means something — a gift that I feel when I give it. Meaningful gifts make a difference, both in the one who gives and for those who receive.

Please prayerful consider how you are being called to respond to the needs of our church – here at Christ the King and out in the wider church.

Sharing and stewardship are about thanksgiving, not guilt. We are invited to share because God has been so wonderfully generous to us. As we participate in Eucharist this day, as we draw near to Jesus who gave us everything, may we be inspired in our stewardship to let go, let God, and see what happens.

Adapted from Daniel Mahan's *More than Silver or Gold: Homilies of a Stewardship Priest*.
(pp. 32-36 & 175-176)