

How the Parish Works: Part 7

Here is the last in the series of reflections on the workings of our dual-church Parish of Holy Disciples (Puyallup) and Our Lady of Good Counsel (Eatonville). Part 6 discussed the general principles of stewardship—how we offer to God our precious resources of time, talent, and treasure—and how stewardship is really about how we live out our discipleship. Part 7 addresses Biblical tithing.

Gratitude and Stewardship

Gratitude is our faith-response to God. Time and again, people in the Bible respond to encounters with God by giving thanks.

*What shall we return to the Lord for all that he has given to us?
Let us take the chalice of salvation, and call on the name of the Lord.*

Ps 116:12-13

We give thanks to the Lord for the good things in our lives because God is the natural focus of our gratitude (Lk 18:43, 19:37; Acts 3:8). Grateful hearts are the best love we can return to God.

A grateful response to God's goodness to us is often shown by sharing our joy—giving back to God to help further God's work *and* sharing our blessings with others. The young Jacob set the standard at 10%:

Of everything you give me, I will faithfully return a tenth part to you.

Gen 28:22

Jacob's 10% became the standard for Israelites and later for Christians. The joyful spirit of the early Christian community was marked by their sharing of the spiritual gifts received from God and their material resources lovingly given to support the community (Acts 2:44-47, 4:32-35)

St. Peter's preaching describes the early Christian attitude of gratitude:

*As each one has received a gift,
use it to serve one another as good stewards of God's varied grace.*

1 Pt. 4:10

Over time, our Protestant brothers and sisters have been particularly disciplined about following Jacob's 10% tithe of their income for their church. In fact, many have to sign pledges promising that amount to their church community or else they are challenged, and even dropped from the parish roll.

Today, Catholics have come to look at that traditional biblical tithe of 10% as **our combined gift of time, talent, and treasure**—whatever the proportions—that we offer back to God and the parish community.

God has given each of us time, talent, and treasure, not to sit on or squander on ourselves, but to use for His own purposes (Rom 8:28; 12:1-2, 4-8).

*For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works,
which God prepared in advance for us to do.*

Ephesians 2:10

Stewardship of God's handiwork in us is our Biblically-sourced faith response to God. God calls us to share our lives by giving *time* to our parish community, offering our *talent* to help nurture and build the community, and sharing our *treasure* to help support God's work here in our own community and across the face of the earth.

Our response to God is gratitude because love responds to Love. St. Paul reminds us that an attitude of gratitude is most pleasing to God:

God loves a cheerful giver.

2 Cor 9:7

Stewardship is inseparable from discipleship. In recent years the Church has placed renewed emphasis on the early Christian awareness of stewardship as a way of life.

Who is a Christian disciple? One who responds to Christ's call, follows Jesus, and shapes his or her life in imitation of Christ's. Who is a Christian steward? One who receives God's gifts gratefully, cherishes and tends them in a responsible and accountable manner, shares them in justice and love with others, and returns them with increase to the Lord.

Stewardship: A Disciple's Response

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May God bless you and fulfill His purpose in you,

Fr. Matthew O'Leary,

Pastor