

## **Sixth Sunday of Easter – Cycle C**

### **2<sup>nd</sup> Stewardship**

Acts 15:1-2, 22-29; Psalm 67; Revelation 21:10-14, 22-23; John 14:23-29

In last Sunday's gospel Jesus admonished us to love not on our own terms but as he loves – that is sacrificially. This week he commands us to keep not our word but his word. To enable us to keep his word, Jesus promises us a divine indwelling through which we are re-created as persons able to live and love as Jesus himself did. We are a new creation empowered to continue, in peace and fearlessness, the mission of Jesus in the world. The radiant vision of God's dwelling among us is realized when disciples –the people of God – take up the practical way of life Jesus commands in the gospel: to love, to keep his word, to believe – in other words to be CHURCH.

What under girds, supports, strengthens and sustains the “people of God” – the Church – is the creativity, the dedication, the commitment, the belonging of the very people who are Church. This is translated “stewardship” – the use of the resources of time, talent and treasure for the sake of the common good.

A couple of weeks ago we reflected on the stewardship of our time and talent collectively given to support the community of faith; it is also essential that from time to time we reflect on the necessity of offering our financial resources, as stewards of God's gifts to us, to build up the Church, to sustain the mission of Jesus in the world and simply to support the life and work of our parish.

This is not just about giving money because it takes money to operate our parish, it is really about our human need to give of ourselves for the sake of something bigger than ourselves. It is about assuring the growth and sustenance of the parish. Christian stewardship reminds us that even the gift of our financial resources are not our own, that we have a trusteeship over them but not an ownership.

If we are truly honest with ourselves we realize that simply put the life of a follower of Christ is caught up in the notion that everything that we are, everything that we are capable of doing and indeed everything that we have is gift from God, to be cultivated by us for the common good and therefore to be returned to God. This is what is meant by the concept of tithing. A quick story:

*“A missionary in Africa had taught his people to tithe. He had explained that ‘tithe’ meant ‘one-tenth,’ and that this should be their goal. He also emphasized the difference between giving what is left over, and giving off the top. Early one morning a man came to the door with a fine fish, explaining that this was his ‘tithe’. ‘You must have done well,’ said the missionary, ‘if you already caught 10 fish.’ ‘No,’ said the man. ‘This is the one I caught first. I’m going back to catch the other nine.’”* The man gave from the top, gave the first fruits of his labors.

Last weekend as we witnessed the First Communion of 14 young members of our community and a week before that as we celebrated the Rite of Sending with our youth who were Confirmed this past Thursday by Bishop Piche’ at the Cathedral I could not help but think that is where our material resources are going – to pass on the faith – to prepare the younger members of the parish to embrace the sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist and Confirmation. Every time we gather here to celebrate the Eucharist together, to reflect on God’s Word and be nourished by the Body and Blood of Jesus – to sing of our faith and reaffirm it in order to live another week in relationship to God and one another that is where our material resources are going. As we are able to help a stranger who calls in need of food or in need of aid with transportation challenges and we can offer a helping hand with a Cub food card or Gas card and a word of encouragement and support that is where our material resources are going. Recently on about six or seven different and individual occasions members of the parish have expressed to me how much they appreciate Generations of Faith, how much they have learned over these five years about their faith or been reminded of what they forgot from their youth or expressed their delight to be able to share in the insights of other adults and the enthusiasm and zeal of the youth all together that is where our material resources are going.

**If you step into the Hospitality room and take time to view and reflect on the wonderful time line that describes the life of this parish over five years' time that is where our material resources are going. All of this is but a snapshot of what makes us the parish we are but it is all dependent on the stewardship of our TIME, TALENT and TREASURE. This is indeed the reason for our weekly collection, for stewardship envelopes, for our annual pledge, for automatic withdrawal and the like. The giving of our material resources for the sake of the parish is as much a spiritual practice as is our prayer and worship.**

**Today the ushers are going to pass out to each parish household the annual giving letter from me and a new pledge card fore the fiscal year July 1, 2010 to June 30, 2011. You will see by the recently changed fiscal accounting in each week's parish bulletin that though we may be doing better then what was budgeted as expected income we are not keeping up with actual expenses. In order to meet our operating expenses and "break even" we really need to have a contribution of \$1625 per household per year. Currently we are taking in approximately \$1200 per household per year – leaving us with a shortfall. I really want to implore your generosity for the sake of the common good of the parish, so if you are able to do so please increase your offering per week, if you are not yet giving anything for one reason or another please give something. We can truly accomplish what we need to if we do this all together!**

**I ask you to reflect on what I have shared with you today, to take that to prayer and to then discern what you are able to pledge for the coming new fiscal year.**

**When I was growing up I always saw my parents getting the stewardship envelope ready on Saturday night to be given in the collection basket the next day at the 8:30 am Sunday Mass, one time I remembering asking what they were doing and my Dad said we are giving money to the Church to help support it. When I further asked WHY? The answer came: “Because it’s the right thing to do – support the Church.” I learned by their example that this is an important, essential part of belonging to the community of the “people of God.”**

**I encourage you, urge you to do the same and again I assure you that what I am asking you to do I myself also am willing to do from my income.**

**One author put it this way: *“The recognition of the extent to which we are blessed by God materially, mentally and spiritually should lead first to gratitude and then to generosity.”***

**I would ask the ushers to now pass out the envelopes with the letter and pledge card – please prayer about this, talk about as a household and you can seal your pledge card in the accompanying envelope marked “confidential” at your earliest convenience. We also have envelopes for the children as a new feature to our stewardship here at SKD. I would urge them to also give from their allowance and know they are part of the supporting of this parish. Beginning next week if the children wish to use their envelope I will come down at the Presentation of the Gifts and receive it from them personally.**

**Thank you and God Bless!**