



Dear Parishioners of St. Albert,

September 15, 2019

This past summer I gave a homily in which I spoke about our parish being a Stewardship Parish and how we are working toward that end. Stewardship is the way of discipleship. Each disciple of Our Lord is a steward of the gifts He has been given. As I mentioned in my homily, this is why Fr. Richards and I are focusing on stewardship in this parish. We have seen stewardship renewals, heard homilies about stewardship, and even have a stewardship committee and their names on bulletin covers. In the upcoming year, we will increase the formation about various aspects of stewardship in our parish family. In this bulletin insert and in other publications that will follow, we hope to explain what it means to be a Stewardship Parish.

Fr. Joe Zabinski

What does it mean to be a Stewardship Parish?

In common language, "stewardship" simply means taking good care of one's belongings. Webster's definition of a steward is "a person who manages another's property or financial affairs; one who administers anything as the agent of another or others." But at the Church of St. Albert, when we talk about stewardship, this concept goes far deeper. The Christian definition is that God has provided all to us, we believe that God has created all things; everything we "own" is "on loan" from God. From this perspective the definition of stewardship means taking care of God's gifts. Another good definition of stewardship is the grateful response of a Christian disciple who recognizes and receives God's gifts and shares these gifts in love of God and neighbor.

Everything that God has given us — the time we have on earth, talents and skills, a beautiful smile, a good income, a positive attitude — is meant not only for us, but for others as well. Being a good steward of these gifts involves both developing our gifts and giving them away personally through our parish and other ways. For we all know that a gift left unopened is never exposed to its true potential, and as we learn from Jesus' life, self-giving is the road to true happiness. And so, at St. Albert, we seek to develop and share our gifts in response to His call.

Stewardship of Time through Prayer and Formation

The Catechism of the Catholic Church says, "Prayer and Christian life are inseparable." In fact, St. Paul tells us to "pray constantly." But as anyone who has ever tried to pray on a regular basis will tell you, prayer can be hard work. That is why we have to make a firm commitment to be persistent. Just as we learn to budget our money or schedule occasions for celebration or service, we also have to be very specific when we make time for prayer. At a minimum, this is coming to Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation and praying personally to God every day. Personal prayer can take different forms. Pray about it; ask God how much and what kind of form prayer should take for you. For some people, God asks them to set aside 30 minutes in the morning to attend Daily Mass. For others, He might ask them to pray a rosary on the way to work or during their walk or run. Still for others, He might ask them to pray with children before bedtime, and/or pray with their spouse before retiring for the evening.

Formation is a longing to have knowledge, making efforts to develop knowledge of our faith and is a part of our continuous and ongoing conversion. At St. Albert, we strive to provide opportunities to form our minds, hearts, and actions constantly toward God. From childhood through adulthood, our whole life will be a process of drawing closer to God. He never stops calling us forward to learn more and to examine ourselves more deeply.

The most important thing is to make a conscious effort to spend time with The One who loves each of us the most. Do you know how much He loves you? For all of us, time is our most precious commodity. It is very important that each of us prioritize our time in such a way that enables us to develop a relationship with Christ through the dialogue of prayer and quiet time; to learn about our faith and to get to know our Lord. This is the best thing that we can do with our time—prayer, so that needs to be the utmost priority. If we put God first, all the rest of our lives will fall into place peacefully.

Stewardship of Talent through Service and Hospitality

With hectic work schedules and family life, we all need time to relax and exercise — but we also need to be rejuvenated through service. Yes, refresh and rejuvenate through service and hospitality to others. Reaching out in love to others, while sometimes difficult, is nonetheless spiritually enriching. God has given us all various talents. Some people have the talent of leading groups well; others have the ability to sing and speak well in front of others; and while still others have the talent of doing tasks well like carpentry, painting, etc. We need to use the talents that God has given us to enrich our lives, the life of our families, our parish community, and our world. Service comes in various forms. Using the talent God has given us is what we strive to do at St. Albert through service. Right here at St. Albert, there are many ways you can serve others through parish ministries.

Hospitality involves welcoming and involving every person into the life of the parish. While it is a form of service, hospitality is more about how you approach one another. "When I was a stranger, you welcomed me." (Mt. 25:3) Jesus teaches that whenever we welcome one of the least of our brothers and sisters, we welcome Christ Himself. At St. Albert parish, we strive to see the face of Christ in one another.

Service and hospitality are a necessary part of the Christian life. At the end of Mass, the deacon or priest says, "Go in peace; glorifying the Lord by your life." The implication of these words is that Mass is only the beginning; being an active Catholic isn't fulfilled with our one-hour Sunday obligation. The commissioning rite at the end of Mass sends us forth to bring Christ to those we encounter – through generous acts of kindness, compassion, and service.

While it seems that some have more time than others, the reality is that all of us have the same amount of time: 24 hours each day/seven days each week. It is how we choose to spend our time that differs. How well are you prioritizing your time to create necessary space for prayer and service? Ask God how He wishes you to give of your talents and follow through on that.

Stewardship of Treasure through Financial Support

Treasure is certainly the most misunderstood aspect of stewardship. Like any family, the Church of St. Albert has many expenses. But stewardship is not about asking for financial support to meet expenses; it's really about so much more. We are asked to give to God from our first fruits, not because collections are down, or because the mortgage is due...but because we want to...out of faith...out of thanksgiving... Jesus says: "where your treasure is, there also will your heart be." (Mt 6:21) We are to reflect on our finances and see where our heart truly lies; making the necessary changes that we need to in order to put God first.

Stewardship calls us to do more for God. It is our challenge to make an offering that expresses God's place in our life. Most of us will find this a difficult part of stewardship, even though we know it to be true, it is hard to live. At St. Albert, members are asked to pray about how much God wants from us and to give according to that call. If this can be the Gospel tithe at 10%, then let it happen; if not; then make some other intentional gift.

Stewardship challenges us to build up ourselves, our family, our parish, and our wider community; so, in turn, this might build up the Kingdom of God. In the end, that is all that matters.