

In the readings for today, we clearly hear a message that the goods of this world will pass away, and that we are called to store up treasure in heaven. In the First Reading, *Qoheleth* (teacher) tells us that “all things are vanity!” and that, to one who has labored, he will have to leave his property to one who has not labored over it. (This is vanity and a great misfortune.) The Psalm reminds us that our lives are short, and that in the long run, they pass like a watch in the night. Saint Paul reminds us in his Letter to the Colossians to “think of what is above, not what is on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.” In the Gospel, Jesus arbitrates between relatives who are quarreling over an inheritance, and he reminds the men that “one’s life does not consist of possessions.” He then proceeds to tell them the parable of the rich man who thinks that he is “set” because he has stored up many possessions, and he reminds him of the foolishness of putting our hope in worldly things. For “this night your life will be demanded of you; and the things you have prepared, to whom will they belong?” He exhorts us, then, as Christians, to store up treasure in heaven, to be rich in things that matter to God.

Remember that the readings during Ordinary Time are meant to be a systematic explanation of Christian living, with practical lessons for us, which shape our lives. The way we approach the material goods of this world as Christians has a moral character to it. Jesus teaches us how to have a proper relationship with these worldly goods, especially money. To be rich in what matters to God should be the most important thing for us. Hence, the Church has given us a discipline of **tithing** as a way of training our hearts to be detached from the worldly things and desirous of heavenly things. This training and discipline is what is called *stewardship*.

**Stewardship** is the necessary spiritual practice that every Christian must engage in with the financial means that they have. This means that one cannot simply stop at time and talent. **Treasure** is an important part of our stewardship. We are especially obliged to support the Church. As mentioned in previous pastor’s notes, this is one of the precepts for calling oneself a practicing Catholic. This is traditionally prescribed as **one tenth** of our earnings. This is a spirituality, because it requires us to **trust in God**. If we commit to Him, He will commit to us. If we withhold from Him, we are denying ourselves His riches. Stewardship through tithing is an act of trust and of detachment from the world.

At Sts. Peter and Paul, we are blessed, but we are also challenged. God has blessed us with a beautiful sanctuary, liturgy, and community – but this needs the involvement of everyone to be successful. As the pastor of this parish, I am duty-bound to let you know about our financial situation and needs. Our needs are great: facilities, programs, ministries. He has blessed us. But God is waiting on our contribution to further His mission.

- For the past two years, we have had a **growing number of parishioners (over 52 new families this year)**, but we have faced **declining contributions**. This means more people are seeking the services our parishes offers, but we don’t have as many funds to sustain our ministries or even make payroll in the near future. We are projecting a deficit budget for 2019-20.
- We are also facing additional major costs to replace our roof and air conditioning system, and we do not have the funds to pursue this necessary maintenance.
- For the past two years, due to varying circumstances, we have not been able to balance our budget.

We have seen a growth in people coming through our doors, but that growth has not translated into an increase of offertory. Looking into this further reveals that a few are sustaining the whole, while many have not contributed at all. These are the facts.:

- **Only 38% of our families contribute \$5 a week or more to our parish.**
- **Only 6% of our families (42 families) contribute over 63% of all the contributions.**
- **Nearly half of our families do not contribute** at all in a recordable way.
- **If all the families who do not currently contribute (about 300 families) gave just \$5 per week – the cost of a sandwich (\$260 annually) – we could erase our deficit and sustain our programs, ministries and facilities.**

I think this can be addressed by the practice of stewardship. All of us are called to do what we can to share God’s gifts, to love and help our neighbor, as God commands. And this is an imperative of the Christian life, not just something we are supposed to do from our surplus. **The goal of our stewardship here at the parish is 100% participation.** No amount is too small, as the example of the widow’s mite gives us (Mark 12:42). I close with this quote:

*“Christ has no body now but yours. No hands, no feet on earth but yours. Christ has no body now on earth but yours.” - St. Teresa of Avila*

Christ also has no money on earth but yours! Pray how the Lord might be speaking to you, and prayerfully be generous to His call!

*Rev. J. David Carter*