

**January 21, 2018**  
**3rd Sunday in Ordinary Time**

**Set out and announce the message I will tell you.**  
*Teach us your paths, Lord, and guide us in your truth*

**Stewardship**

Last week, we looked at Church Stewardship - what it means, and what it doesn't mean. Stewardship isn't a church word for "managing church budgets and funding church projects". It can include these, but it is world-wide larger. Biblical Stewardship is about how we manage the investment God made in us. It's about how we manage our faith, about how we live out our faith, about how we are Stewards of the gift of our faith.

Stewardship is also not about "volunteering" to do something in the church. There is no such thing as "volunteering" in the church. Exercising our faith is not voluntary. It's like that in a family. Members of a family don't volunteer to live with and for the family, doing so is part of being family.

I remember in my own family. We all pitched in to help mother in the house, and we all pitched in to help dad in the fields. That's what makes family. It's the same in the church. For some, just coming to church is about all they are able to do, and that is beautiful. They are a total gift to this community. But attending church only with no consideration for the needs of others is reflected in being a peripheral member of this community. It's what we do with and for the St. Mary community that counts. We not only come to this table to be nourished - as family together, we go out from this church to live and care for each other - as family together,

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Stewardship is about the acceptance of the commission we have received from God to care for the earth and all of God's creation - the environment, the creatures of God, our care for each other. God entrusts us with the care, development, and enjoyment of everything. We are to manage what God has given us - our time, money, abilities, information, wisdom, relationships, and authority - in the way God intends. For instance:

- † Discovering connections among us which forge unity, not differences that fragment and divide is being the steward of our faith.
- † Being concerned about how well we love and how fully we love is being the steward of our faith.
- † Finding room for those who have been left out which greatly resembles what God has in mind is being the steward of our faith.
  
- † Standing inside the tension without getting bitter or angry, the way Mary stood at the foot of

the cross without getting bitter or angry, is being the steward of our faith.

- † Moving us from “what” we believe to the place “from which” we believe is being the steward of our faith.
- † Serving human needs rather than just supervising the imperfect behavior of others is being the steward of our faith.
- † Moving from “what” to love to “how” to love is being the steward of our faith.
- † Knowing that the love of God protects us from nothing as it sustains us in everything is being the steward of our faith.
- † Stewardship is a way of life, the way God intends for us all to live - together.

This is our common faith, this is our common baptismal covenant, our common Christian vocation. This is our Stewardship.

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Looking at our own parish community, how do you feel Christ is calling you to exercise the Stewardship of your faith for this community? Some of you already know what this means for you and have been following its call, such as yard care, Circle of Caring sewing circle, Celebrate Recovery and other addiction programs, visiting and corresponding with inmates in jails and prisons, church cleaning and maintenance, Senior Meals, spiritual programs and support, potluck and social events, and more.

No one is expected to meet more needs than they can handle, but we all can do one thing more beyond our usual schedules. As you know, it's not so much what we do for others, it's what happens to us when we do.

Please check out the needs listed there that you feel moved to serve, and get them back to us next week. Thank You!

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