



The Gift Of Time

Last summer we began to focus on the theme of stewardship. This was important especially because of our financial difficulties. People often associate money with the term stewardship but as we will see, there is more to stewardship than just finances. Before I go into those areas I want to mention your response to our increased giving campaign this past fall. You demonstrated your commitment to the parish and have continued to be very faithful to your pledge. A brochure is about to be mailed which shows some impressive statistics. In real terms, if everyone is able to keep their commitments through the year, we will have an increase of \$50,000 or more. Thank you very much for being so generous and gracious! May God reward us with many blessings.

Besides finances, the theme of stewardship also encompasses two other areas: time and talent. At the Advent retreat, we focused on how to recognize and use our talents. St. Paul says that “each has a particular gift from God” (1 Cor. 7:7) and we know that Jesus calls us to use those talents and multiply them (Mt. 25:28-29). This is significant because the use of our talents represents the gift of self; it is in the gift of self that we become more authentically who we are meant to be in God’s eyes—as we give of ourselves, we imitate Christ who gave himself for our salvation.

Finally, we come to the gift of time, perhaps the most underrated of the three categories of stewardship. Obviously, it takes time in order to make money and to use our talents, but do we “tithe” our time appropriately? Using our talents is one way to use our time, but the Christian life is made up of more than action. It must also consist of prayer.

In the gospels we see again and again how Jesus would retire from teaching and ministry in order to pray. Even though he is the eternal Son of the Father, he took time on earth to pray and to be in communion with his Father. This should be a natural thing for Christians since the two greatest commandments teach us that we must love God with all our heart, all our strength, all our soul and all our mind, and to love our neighbor as our self (Luke 10:27). One way to prove that we love someone is to spend time with the person.

St. Paul said, “pray without ceasing” (1 Thes. 5:17). In the Garden of Gethsemane, the night before he died, Jesus was dismayed that his apostles could not keep watch with him for just one hour. He encouraged them, “Watch and pray that you may not undergo the test. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak” (Mt. 26:40-41). We see here the connection between time spent with God in prayer and drawing strength to fight temptation. What happened to the apostles? Despite their closeness to Jesus, they fell asleep and then they fled. Only St. John stayed with the Lord until the end.

How many people in our time have given in to temptation? Consider how within our lifetime we have watched people who once kept holy the sabbath day (the second commandment) by attending Sunday Mass have not only stopped going, but some of them have even stopped believing! As I mentioned in last week’s Cabrini Notes, this modern “Exodus” calls for a loving response. To counter the many who have fallen away, I am asking people to come and sacrifice the gift of time. The 40 Hours devotion is a time for us as a parish to “keep watch” and pray that we may not fail the test and to pray that those who have “fled” may return to the Lord.

40 Hours will take place at Annunciation church from 8:00 pm Friday, Jan. 31 until 3:00pm Sunday, February 2. At 8:00 pm on Friday and 7:00 pm on Saturday I will give a talk on the causes of this modern Exodus. The final hour 2-3:00 pm Sunday will conclude with a recitation of the Divine Mercy chaplet and Benediction.

God bless you all,

Fr. Mickey