

## *Stewardship Bulletin Message (November 2014)*

### **"STEWARDSHIP"**

*It's all in the word*

Some of you may be familiar with National Public Radio's Sunday morning program "Weekend Edition". A regular weekly segment features Will Shortz, puzzle editor of "The New York Times", and the only known person to have a degree in enigmatology, the study of puzzles (Bachelor of Arts, Indiana University). Will often challenges listeners to "deconstruct" a word by taking its letters and rearranging them to form other words.

A relevant example here could be the word: "stewardship". Its letters can be rearranged to form the words: "steward", "ship", "step", "pew", "star", "wish", "wear", "saw", "tear", "sew", "idea", "hear", "heart", "share", etc. There are undoubtedly many others. Perhaps you can come up with another dozen.

Although our parish formally adopted the stewardship way of life over a decade ago, it would be prudent to review the spirituality of stewardship again, as well as for the benefit of new parishioners. We can use the last four words in our list of "deconstruct" words; specifically "idea", "hear", "heart" and "share" to frame our discussion.

The "idea" of stewardship is the humble recognition and sincere appreciation of the fact that all that we are and all that we have are gifts from God. His universal and unending love for us is manifest every day in his gifts of our very lives, health, abilities, families and friends. Jesus' disciples and Christian stewards recognize God as the origin of life, the giver of freedom, and the source of all things.

In shaping our gratitude for these gifts and our response, we "hear" what Jesus expects of us as his disciples through the Mass, sacred scripture, the Catechism and homilies. Formation, the life-long development of our understanding of the responsibilities of discipleship serves to guide us in our actions. The Catechism states that stewards "receive God's gifts gratefully, cultivate them responsibly, share them lovingly in justice with others, and return them with increase to the Lord".

That understanding fills our "heart" with love for all God's creation. Stewards are grateful for the gifts they have received and are eager to use them to demonstrate our love for God and for one another. Safeguarding material and human resources, and using them responsibly, are attributes of a Christian steward.

To "share" our God-given gifts of time, talent and treasure with others to help build the Kingdom of God in Lawrence and beyond is central to the spirituality of stewardship. Sharing is loving, and loving is sharing. In John 13:34-35, we hear Jesus say "I give you a new commandment: love one another. As I have loved you, so you also should love one another. This is how all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another".

Today could be the start of a new understanding of discipleship. If you love someone, tell them "I love you". But, couple that with the question "What can I do for you today?" In the stewardship way of life, service, sharing and love are all interrelated.

Four little words: "idea", "hear", "heart" and "share". They can help us to understand what stewardship is all about. After all, it's all in the word.

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