

THE HARVEST IS ABUNDANT BUT THE LABORERS ARE FEW

The Role of Stewardship in Responding to the Call to Mission

The title of these remarks is taken from the Gospel of Matthew, chapter 9, verse 37. This section of the gospel narrative describes Jesus' commissioning of the twelve disciples to cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, and drive out demons. He cautions them that they will encounter challenges and persecutions. He also tells them to not be afraid and of his heavenly Father's reward of eternal life to those who respond to his mandate. Clearly, the disciples had a call to mission.

I see in this a foreshadowing of our call to mission in our time and place. In our archdiocese, we are being called to ensure the viability, vision and vitality of the People of God for future generations. As those who have gone before us have done for us, now is the time for us to further build the Church through the ongoing spiritual renewal of the ARISE Together in Christ program.

For two hundred years our archdiocese has confronted harsh realities, and with God's grace it has not only survived, but flourished. We are on the brink of a new Pentecost, a rebirth of the Church resulting from the collaborative work of legions of Catholics who are choosing to respond to the present call to mission: a more active level of discipleship.

Archdiocesan pastoral planning is steadily moving forward to address the challenges ahead, including: enabling vibrant worship communities, reaching out to both the uninvolved and the alienated, and serving the poor and those on the margins of society.

In our parish, we are already witnessing the results of effective collaboration among clergy, staff and dedicated lay leaders: unprecedented growth and true building of community. Young and old, men and women, native-born and immigrant, married and unmarried – increased numbers of people are worshipping at Saint Patrick's, and becoming involved and engaged in the myriad of activities that day by day and hour by hour further build the Kingdom of God in South Lawrence.

I believe that our adoption of parish stewardship is in large part responsible for these accomplishments. Many of our parishioners have come to recognize that everything they are and have are gifts from God. As prudent stewards, we have developed an attitude of gratitude, through which we thank God for these gifts, develop and advance the gifts, and share the gifts – all in response to our call to mission.

During the upcoming weeks, we will be formally renewing our roles as good stewards and committed disciples of Jesus Christ by prayerfully discerning and actively committing to concrete ways by which we will share our gifts of time, talent and treasure in 2009.

Stewardship has enabled our parish to achieve much. Continued and more widespread living of the spirituality of stewardship will enable us to achieve even more. Clearly, we also have a call to mission.

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