



## Stewardship and Development

### Stewardship: What it's not!

It's very likely that when someone hears the term "Stewardship" they see dollar signs floating in front of their eyes. Sadly there is good reason for such a thought process – often Stewardship is only ever mentioned when money is needed. Though it is true that Stewardship does indeed contain a financial aspect, it is far from the whole story. Stewardship is not about the money.

### What it is:

Every person has been created in the image and likeness of God, gifted with life, a bountiful world in which to live, and free will to allow us to choose how to live that life. Though He has given us this free will to choose our own direction in life, God desires that we use it to choose Him. God desires that we enter into a relationship with Him! This relationship is called discipleship and like all relationships it is very much a two-way process! We shouldn't need to think too hard to realize exactly how committed God is to this relationship, nor how deeply He has blessed us in abundance. If life, the ability to love and be loved, and the world around us isn't example enough, then we need simply turn our eyes and hearts toward an image of Christ crucified – God has shown no limits in what He has given to us, even to the point of giving us His only-begotten Son. God doesn't hold back anything in loving us, and He desires the same from us. How we participate in this relationship, how we respond to what God has given us, is what Stewardship is all about. It is about giving back to God in abundance, from the abundance that we have received. So how do we live this life of Stewardship?

## Time + Talent + Treasure = Prayer + Presence + Priority

Many people will be familiar with the three "T's" of time, talent, and treasure, but not all know exactly what they mean.

Time is literally just that – it is the time we devote to our relationship with God. Every healthy, functioning relationship requires a time commitment from both parties. How much time do we commit to our relationship with God? The absolute bare minimum should be the one hour for Sunday Mass. God has no office hours, no limit on the amount of time He devotes to us, so the least we can

do is give Him back that one hour at Sunday Mass. And this really should be the least we give of our time! Remember God is with us always and therefore we should strive to continuously turn our hearts and minds toward Him. Time is ultimately about our life of prayer ó how much time do I spend talking to God? How much time do I spend, each and every day, in prayer? It is prayer that will ultimately draw us ever closer to the heart of God and therefore prayer is the starting point of all Stewardship. If I don't have a life built upon prayer I won't ever be able to fully give back to God.

Talent is the natural follow-up for the person who is giving back to God in a life of prayer. Prayer draws us out of ourselves and into a relationship with God who then further draws us into relationship with the rest of the human family. An important part of giving back to God is giving back to the community He has formed around us. Talent is about making our presence felt in a good, positive, constructive way in the community and beyond. It is about bringing our strengths to bear in an atmosphere of service, realizing that our God-given gifts are not meant for my benefit alone, but for the benefit of all.

Treasure can be a major stumbling block for many people. Often it seems as though the Church is only ever after our money for one reason or another. People get turned off the Church, and therefore abandon the truth at the heart of the Church ó Jesus ó because they think that it is ruled by the dollar sign. But the reality is that the Church is ruled by the sign of the Cross. The Church is here because God wills it to be so, and the Church has a sacred duty to carry on the work of Christ in the world. In order to do that to the best of its ability, financial support is essential. The problem lies in how we approach the subject. If we approach it as the first priority then we will no doubt run into feelings of resentment and so on. However, if we approach it by first establishing a sound prayer life, which is then expressed in an active presence in the community, we will find that it becomes much more of a priority for us to give as best we can for the upkeep of our parish community, the wider Church, and the world at large.

## **How does St. Margaret Mary help you become a stronger Steward?**

St. Margaret Mary Catholic Church is committed to helping people become stronger Stewards of the Kingdom of God. We recognize that the foundation of this must be to encourage a continual growth and renewal of the spiritual life of each person. Throughout the year we offer a number of different programs designed to help participants draw closer to God through prayer. Programs include *õOremus: A Guide to Catholic Prayerö* - an eight week study designed by Ascension Press; a weekly spiritual reading group where a number of different spiritual classics will be examined and prayed with; reflections on the Eucharist; and reflections on various aspects of the Catholic Faith.