

What return shall I
make to the Lord

for all the good He
has done for me?

- Psalm 116

Stewardship at St. Walter Parish

Recognizing Stewardship

"When you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right is doing, so that your almsgiving may be secret. And your Father who sees in secret will repay you." (Matthew 6:3-4) One might read this admonition of Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew and believe that all acts of giving must be done in secret without recognition.

Yet, each week we publish a report of giving to the parish, and soon those who have been generous to the parish in 2007 will be receiving thank-you letters and statements indicating their contributions to the parish. Are these practices contrary to Jesus' desire for secrecy in giving? Not really. Jesus words in Matthew 6 refer to the motivations behind prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. These should not be done to draw attention to oneself, but should be done so as to make a difference in one's life with God. As we recognize faithful stewardship, we do, however, need to avoid drawing attention to individual donors or thinking too highly of ourselves for what God is allowing us to do.

*"Your Father
who sees in
secret will
repay you."*

-Matthew 6: 4

Why do we recognize stewardship and generous gifts to the Church? One practical reason is that recognition of gifts received by the Church provides accountability. A parish should accurately report gifts received on a regular basis. We do this on a weekly basis in the bulletin and more comprehensively annually in the Parish Annual Report. Further, twice a year, in January and July, we send statements with a thank-you reporting contributions to the Church.

Recognizing gifts, whether individual or group, may also inspire others to give more generously. One parishioner's gift made it possible for us to complete the lighting program in the circle drive and parking lot. One family's contribution provided the new crucified corpus on the processional cross. One couple's gifts provided two new smart boards for our Catholic school. A memorial gift for a deceased daughter provided much needed support to the poor. These examples of generosity may lead others to more freely share from their financial resources to help make a difference in our parish. I am grateful that all of these gifts, and many others, are made anonymously because the donors do not want publicity about their generosity. The Father who sees in secret will repay them.

Beginning this week, we are changing the way we present our weekly stewardship report to reflect not only Sunday contributions but other ways in which we give and participate in Jesus' mission. The weekly report also compares our contributions to our monthly stewardship goals rather than the budget needs. Hopefully these changes will keep us better informed about how our gifts are shared to make a difference.

Stewardship and Children

Stewardship is not just for adults. Children have wonderful gifts to give. It is also very important that young people see that they are greatly blessed by God and that God, in turn, asks them to share their blessings. Therefore it is important to involve children in our stewardship efforts.

Unfortunately, in today's world, children are bombarded with materialistic messages that often lead to a sense of entitlement and to frustration and dissatisfaction with life. Stewardship encourages an attitude of gratitude. Stewardship teaches children the difference between needs and wants. Stewardship can help kids find peace and joy in a crazy world.

Experts tell us that children usually form their attitudes about sharing sometime between the ages of 6 and 10. They will either develop an entitlement attitude – "The world owes me." "I don't have enough." or a stewardship attitude – "I have been blessed." "I am happy to share."

We plan on incorporating children and family stewardship formation more fully in the Fall 2008 Stewardship renewal program, but we can also begin some elements of stewardship for children now. New offering envelopes that encourage the sense of stewardship among children will be available beginning in March. They will be sent quarterly to every child in grades 3 to 12 who would like to receive them.

A children's stewardship program is not intended to be a money making endeavor for the parish, but another way of helping families live better as disciples of the Lord. It is far better for the child to include a few coins from his/her own money than to put a \$5.00 bill given by a parent.

All parents wanting to have their children receive envelopes should complete the form below and return to the Parish House.



I would like to receive stewardship envelopes for St. Walter Church:

Child's Name: _____

Address: _____

City, Zip: _____

Grade: _____ Age: _____

Parent / Guardian Signature: _____