

What return shall I  
make to the Lord

for all the good He  
has done for me?

- Psalm 116

## Stewardship at St. Walter Parish

### A Disciple's Response

Mature disciples make a conscious, firm decision, carried out in action, to be followers of Jesus Christ no matter the cost to themselves.

Beginning in conversion, change of mind and heart, this commitment is expressed not in a single action, nor even in a number of actions over a period of time, but in an entire way of life. It means committing one's very self to the Lord.

Stewardship is an expression of discipleship, with the power to change how we understand and live out our lives. Disciples who practice stewardship recognize God as the origin of life, the giver of freedom, the source of all they have and are and will be. They are deeply aware of the truth that "The Lord's are the earth and its fullness; the world and those who dwell in it." (Ps 24:1) They know themselves to be recipients and caretakers of God's many gifts. They are grateful for what they have received and eager to cultivate their gifts out of love for God and one another.

\* from the introduction of *Stewardship: A Disciple's Response* — A Pastoral Letter on Stewardship, USCCB, 2002.



**Once one chooses to become a disciple of Jesus Christ, stewardship is not an option.**

- Bp. John J. McRaith

**As each one has received a gift, use it to serve one another as good stewards of God's varied grace.**  
(1 Peter 4:10)

### Living in Borrowed Clothes

#### *a reflection on Stewardship*

Many years ago, I spoke with a man who had lost literally all of his earthly goods during a devastating flood along the Ohio River. The man's family was alive, fortunately, but they had lost their home, which simply didn't exist any more, all of their possessions, and all but the clothes they were wearing when they were evacuated. In fact, at the moment I was talking to him, he mentioned, "You know, I don't own a thing in the world any more. The money I have was given to me by the Salvation Army and Catholic Charities. In fact, every stitch of clothing I'm wearing now is from someone else. It's kind of a weird feeling, knowing that you're wearing someone else's clothes."

That statement has always remained with me. Over the years, I've come to see that, in a very real way, we're all living in someone else's clothes. For instance, my stubby body is the gift of my father, since I'm only as tall as he was. On the other hand, my father also passed on his good health, which I have had in abundance. I also picked up the bonus of nice thick hair from both Dad and Mom. Later, my wife shared her life with me and gave me the gift of our sons. If you've ever been blessed enough to share your life with someone who loves you enough to undergo childbirth (three times, no less), you'll know what I mean when I say, "I am truly grateful for everything Laraine has shared with me." Again, when you hold your newborn child for the first time, you know how profoundly grateful you are to God for the gift of life He has entrusted to you--your child's life and your own.



At that moment, I realized I was simply living this life in clothes I had borrowed from God. Everything I have, including life itself, is a gift from God. What I "have" in this life—my family, my health, my community, the opportunity to live in the greatest country on the Earth—all my possessions, really are a set of clothes donated by God, to a man who can't claim any of these wonderful things in his own right.

I am truly grateful to God for the good things He has given to me. So the question remains, "What return shall I make to the Lord for all the good He has done for me?" (Psalm 116:12)

by Tom Parker (St. Walter Parishioner)

## Stewardship at St. Walter Parish

### The Story of Desert Pete

Old cowboy lore tells the story of a leathery gold miner who called himself Desert Pete. Living out in the sun-beaten country where water is so very precious, Desert Pete wrote a note, put it in a baking-powder can and wired it to an old pump. Here is what he wrote:



*Under the white rock I buried a bottle of water, out of the sun, cork end up. There's enough water in it to prime the pump, but not if you drink some first. Pour about one fourth, and let her soak to wet the leather. Then pour the rest medium fast and pump. You'll get water. The well has never run dry. Have faith. When you get watered up, fill the bottle and put it back like you found it for the next feller.*

Desert Pete

*P.S. Don't go drinking up the water first. Prime the pump with it ... I've given my last dime away a dozen times to prime the pump of my prayers, and I've fed my last beans to a stranger while a 'sayin' "Amen." It never failed yet to get me an answer. You've got to get "Your Heart Fixed to Give" before you can be given to.*

Desert Pete in his own style was teaching the gospel lesson, "Give and it will be given to you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For the measure you give will be the measure you get back."

The reader of the note needed to follow the instructions, to not drink the water first. He had to first trust and use the little water he had to wet the leather and prime the pump. Then there would be plenty of water, so he could drink all the water he needed, to wash his face to his feet, and leave the bottle full for others.

However, if the next guy only thought of himself, and his immediate need, and drank the water from the jug, he would leave the jug empty, the message would be meaningless, there would be no water for the next fellow, no pumping, no one else could drink their fill, no bottle would be left full for those who followed him! Just one guy coming along who didn't obey the instructions, would mess the whole thing up, and everyone else coming along after him would only find a dry pump!



This is a parable of stewardship. Desert Pete's message to "get your heart fixed to give before you can be given to" shares the truth that a generous heart primes the pump to receive God's grace. Have you ever met anyone who really had his "heart fixed to give" who did not testify that he was the one who benefited by the giving?

Think about that as we consider giving to our Lord's work through our Church. It is in giving that we truly receive.

## Counting Our Blessings at St. Walter Parish

True stewardship requires an attitude of gratitude, an ability to recognize blessings and gifts around us. We have many things to be grateful for at St. Walter Parish. Below is a short report of blessings that can be counted in our parish. All of us are a part of some blessing here at St. Walter Parish!

See how the wondrous works of God shine  
when we share the blessings God has given us.

Parishioners .....	13,281
Catholic Families .....	3,785
Baptisms.....	140
First Eucharists.....	158
Confirmations .....	177
Weddings .....	42
Funerals .....	67
Baptism, Confirmation, Marriage & Funeral Volunteers .....	40
Church & School Administrative Councils & Committees .....	104
St. Walter School Students   Teachers and Staff   Volunteers .....	740   50   300
School of Religion Students   Volunteers .....	796   113
Children's Liturgy Participants   Volunteers .....	140   47

Bible Camp Participants   Volunteers	173   79
Boy and Girl Scouts   Scout Leaders	190   40
St. Walter Youth Ministry Participants   Volunteers	120   16
Adult Faith Formation Participants   Volunteers	391   33
Worship Ministries <sup>1</sup>	415
Music Ministries <sup>2</sup>	155
Welcoming Ministries <sup>3</sup>	45
Membership Ministries <sup>4</sup>	130
Social Justice Ministries <sup>5</sup>	33
Ministers of Care   Recipients <sup>6</sup>	45   60
PADS Overnight Stays & Meals Served   Volunteers	1700   200
Abbingdon Residents Served   Volunteers	50   85
St. Vincent DePaul Recipients   Volunteers	198   15
Giving Tree Gift Recipients   Volunteers	1600   25

**Sacramental statistics** are for the year of July 1, 2006 to June 30, 2007—  
<sup>1</sup>**Worship Ministries:** Altar Servers, Art & Environment, Cross Bearers, Eucharistic Ministers, Lectors, Sacristans, T.L.C., Ushers — <sup>2</sup>**Music Ministries:** Adult Choir, Cantors, Children's Choir, Instrumentalists, Teen Choir  
<sup>3</sup>**Welcoming Ministries:** Garden Angels, Greeters, Ministers of Hospitality, Welcome Ministry — <sup>4</sup>**Membership Ministries:** Catholic Knights, Council of Catholic Women, Knights of Columbus, Moms & Tots, Young At Heart  
<sup>5</sup>**Social Justice Ministries:** Catholics for Life, Peace & Social Justice, Transitional Housing, Vocation Committee — <sup>6</sup>**Recipients:** Homebound, Residents of Abbingdon and Sunrise receiving communion