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Stewardship Bulletin Reflections *Year B*

Office of Formation for Discipleship
*Parish Vitality & Stewardship**

*What follows are time and talent stewardship reflections for Year B intended for use in parish bulletins and other relevant publications. The summer months of July and August have been excluded as the majority of parishes do not have bulletins during this time. If you do not have the space for the full reflection, a brief summary of it has been included for your convenience of use. Years A and C can be found on our stewardship website at:

<https://www.archtoronto.org/stewardship>.

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1st Sunday of Advent

1st Reading: Isaiah 63.16b-17; 64.1, 3-8

2nd Reading: 1 Corinthians 1.3-9

Gospel: Mark 13.33-37 - *The Necessity for Watchfulness*

Preparing Ourselves for Christ

This First Sunday of Advent marks the beginning of a new liturgical year. The readings during this time of preparation focus on making us aware that it is time to rouse from our sleep and prepare for the Lord's coming. Jesus says in the Gospel to "keep awake – for you do not know when the master of the house will come."

Advent and Christmas are also often times of lights. Whether it be lights on an advent wreath, a Christmas tree or festive lights decorating the house. However, above all these lights is Jesus, the true light of the world. This Advent we should strive to let the light of Jesus into our hearts so that it may even illumine and cleanse the dark and sinful areas of our lives. Our stewardship should reflect that light of Christ to others, so let us first be filled with what we seek to share.

One great way to invite the light of Christ into our lives is to seek God's cleansing healing in the sacrament of Reconciliation. Across the Archdiocese every parish will be hosting an Advent Day of Confessions in which several priests will be available to hear confessions. This is a beautiful opportunity to ready ourselves for the coming of our Saviour on Christmas morning. Let us strive to be reconciled with God and as stewards, let us try to invite our family and friends to join us.

Summary

Advent is a time of preparation that invites us to rouse from our sleep and prepare for the Lord's coming. One great way to prepare for His coming is to seek God's cleansing healing in the sacrament of Confession. Let us strive to be reconciled with God and as stewards, let us try to invite our family and friends to join us.

2nd Sunday of Advent

1st Reading: Isaiah 40.1-5, 9-11

2nd Reading: 2 Peter 3.8-14

Gospel: Mark 1.1-8 – *The Proclamation of John the Baptist*

Preparing the Way of the Lord

“Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.” This was the prophecy by Isaiah concerning John the Baptist who ends the line of prophets pointing to Jesus. John the Baptist played his role in preparing the people of Judea for the coming of Christ. As stewards, we can look to John as a model of how to best lead others to Christ.

Firstly, we must remember that it is never our own merits that convert people but is instead always a pure gift from God. John the Baptist fully recognizes this when he says that he baptizes with water while the one coming after him, Jesus, will baptize with the Holy Spirit. We too should always remember that it is the Lord who does great things, and we are only his instruments.

However, while we may not cause the actual conversion, we do play an important role in helping others encounter Christ. During the encounter, God does all the work, but we must still help facilitate this encounter. People can most readily encounter Christ through His church which is why we must play our part in making our parishes as hospitable and welcoming as possible. This Advent and Christmas season as we may begin to see new faces in the parish, let us welcome them with loving hearts and smiles. The angels and saints in heaven rejoice whenever someone comes back to church, shouldn't we do the same? Let us strive to be charitable stewards and say hello to any new parishioners we may encounter this season as a sign of our love and hospitality.

Summary

As stewards, we must imitate the example of John the Baptist and help prepare the way for others to encounter Christ. People can most readily encounter Christ through His church which is why we must play our part in making our parishes as hospitable and welcoming as possible. This Advent and Christmas season, as we may begin to see new faces in the parish, let us welcome them with loving hearts and smiles.

3rd Sunday of Advent

1st Reading: Isaiah 61.1-2a, 10-11

2nd Reading: 1 Thessalonians 5.16-24

Gospel: John 1.6-8, 19-28 – *The Testimony of John the Baptist*

Choosing Joy

“Rejoice always!” These are the words that St. Paul writes in the second reading this Gaudete Sunday. He exhorts all of us to always rejoice. It is important to note that he doesn’t say to always be happy, but to rejoice always. Happiness, by definition, is utterly circumstantial. We are happy when we are experiencing something good, like eating ice cream on a hot day. However, when the ice cream melts, or it begins to rain our happiness quickly ceases because that good thing we were experiencing is fleeting.

Joy on the other hand is radically different. To experience joy is to remain happy despite the circumstances. This everlasting joy springs solely from recognizing that we are beloved children of God and being aware that we are living in the smiling gaze of Christ. But how do we live in joy? St. James in his letter says, “My brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of any kind, consider it nothing but joy,” To experience joy is to intentionally call to mind God’s love in the midst of our trials.

As stewards, let us not keep this practice of joy to ourselves. One way we can help people rejoice in suffering is by not partaking in complaining about our difficult situations. The next time we are in a tough moment and people around us begin to complain, let us strive to steer the conversation into one of gratitude for the good things the Lord is doing in our lives. This slow adjustment of choosing joy in our trials will begin to revitalize our parishes and communities, and the entire world.

Summary

This Gaudete Sunday St. Paul exhorts all of us to “rejoice always.” One way we can help people rejoice in suffering is by not partaking in complaining about our difficult situations. The next time we are in a tough moment and people around us begin to complain, let us strive to steer the conversation into one of gratitude for the good things the Lord is doing in our lives.

4th Sunday of Advent

1st Reading: 2 Samuel 7.1-5, 8b-12, 14a, 16

2nd Reading: Romans 16.25-27

Gospel: Luke 1.26-38 – *The Annunciation*

Readily Saying Yes to Stewardship

As we approach Christmas the church encourages us to reflect on the Annunciation. The Annunciation can be seen as the singular event that changed the world for it is during this episode that Mary consents to God's will and Christ is conceived within her. As stewards striving to follow Jesus, we can learn a great deal from prayerfully imitating Mary in our own lives.

Mary had an incredible faith and trust in God to be able to accept His will for her life. It is important to note that Mary wasn't told how her life would precisely unfold. She didn't know she would give birth in a manger, or about her flight to Egypt, or that Jesus would go missing in the temple or that she would stand by as He was crucified. Instead, all she knew was that she would conceive the Son of God. Many times we seek to know God's entire will for our lives but we can learn from Mary to readily say yes to the current step of the plan that He is calling us to and, like Mary, ponder God's will in our hearts by spending time in prayer).

As stewards, God too is calling us to a very specific and important mission. St. John Henry Newman says that we should all recognize that "God has created me to do Him some definite service. He has committed some work to me which He has not committed to another. I have my mission." We can live out this mission by being stewards of our time and talents for our communities, our parish and the entire Church. Let us seek Mary's intercession and trust in the Lord's call for our lives and readily follow Him.

Summary

The Annunciation can be seen as the singular event that changed the world for it is during this episode that Mary consents to God's will and Christ is conceived within her. Many times we seek to know God's entire will for our lives but we can learn from Mary to readily and prayerfully say yes to the current step of the mission that He is calling us to. We can live out this mission by being stewards of our time and talents for our communities, our parish and the entire Church.

Feast of the Holy Family

1st Reading: Genesis 15.1-6; 17.3b-5, 15-16; 21.1-7++

2nd Reading: Hebrews 11.8, 11-12, 17-19

Gospel: Luke 2.22-40 - *The Presentation*

Creating Countless Holy Families

On this First Sunday after Christmas the Church invites all of us to reflect on the beauty of the Holy Family. It is through meditating on the Holy Family that we begin to learn how we are called to live in our own homes. St. John Paul II says that “the Holy Family is the beginning of countless other holy families.”

The Holy Family teaches us how to work towards holiness through our daily family life. St. Josemaria Escriva says that “in the home of the Holy Family in Nazareth, Jesus, Mary and Joseph sanctified their ordinary life, without doing anything spectacular or newsworthy. They led a life that was to all appearances, the same as that of their neighbours, a life that was important, not because of the material things they did but because of the love that they put into these things.”

Essentially, the Holy Family did ordinary things with extraordinary love. They too had to work, cook meals, clean the house, and wash their clothes and every other regular activity that we too perform. Yet, endowed with love for one another, these seemingly minute tasks became great sources of sanctification. We too should look to be stewards in our own homes by using our time and gifts to serve our family. One tangible thing we can avoid is complaining about performing house chores but rather strive to see them as an opportunity to love our family members, and by extension, love Christ. As we strive to be stewards in our parish communities, let us also follow the model of the Holy Family and be stewards in our own homes and, by extension, our parish communities as well.

Summary

It is through meditating on the Holy Family that we begin to learn how we are called to live in our own homes. The Holy Family had to work, cook meals, clean the house, and wash their clothes and every other regular activity that we too perform, yet they did all these ordinary things with extraordinary love. We too should look to be stewards in our own homes by using our time and gifts to serve our family members with great love and sacrifice.

Feast of the Epiphany of the Lord

1st Reading: Isaiah 60.1-6

2nd Reading: Ephesians 3.2-3a, 5-6

Gospel: Matthew 2.1-12 - *The Visit of the Wise Men*

Becoming a Star

This Sunday we celebrate the feast of the Epiphany of the Lord. This feast day invites us to reflect on the revelation of Christ to humanity. One principle episode that the Epiphany celebrates is the visit of the Magi. The Magi represents the Gentiles and all nations coming to know and worship Christ.

St. Leo the Great said that this revelation “came to be fulfilled, as we know, from the time when the star beckoned the three wise men out of their distant country and led them to recognise and adore the King of heaven and earth. The obedience of the star calls us to imitate its humble service: to be servants, as best we can, of the grace that invites all men to find Christ.”

As stewards, we should strive to be like that great star that led the Magi to encounter Christ. The star, as spectacular as it was, did not draw the Magi to itself but instead pointed towards Christ. So too, when we perform acts of stewardship and charity we should not take the glory or expect people to sing our praises. We should rather strive to remain humble and direct any praise to Christ who always sustains us in our good works. Moreover, the star stood out from the rest of the stars in the sky. As stewards, the joy of the Gospel should be our identifying characteristic. Therefore, let us strive to imitate that great star and joyfully point others to an encounter with Christ our Saviour.

Summary

This Sunday we celebrate the feast of the Epiphany of the Lord where we reflect on the revelation of Christ to humanity. As stewards, we should strive to be like that great star that did not draw the Magi to itself but instead pointed towards Christ. We should try our best to remain humble and direct any praise to Christ who always sustains us in our good works

Feast of the Baptism of the Lord

1st Reading: Isaiah 42.1-4, 6-7

2nd Reading: Acts 10.34-38

Gospel: Mark 1.7-11 - *The Baptism of Jesus*

Living out our Baptismal Mission

This Sunday we celebrate the feast of the Baptism of Jesus in the Jordan River. On this feast day we are invited to reflect on the meaning and importance of our own baptism as well. St. Gregory of Nazianzus beautifully expresses that “Baptism is God's most beautiful and magnificent gift.” But why is baptism so important?

The Catechism states that “Holy Baptism is the basis of the whole Christian life, the gateway to life in the Spirit and the door which gives access to the other sacraments. Through Baptism we are freed from sin and reborn as sons of God; we become members of Christ, are incorporated into the Church and made sharers in her mission” (CCC 1213). Baptism gives us our identity as beloved children of God as well as anoints us for mission.

This baptismal mission can be readily lived out through our commitment to stewardship. As stewards, we are called to gratefully recognize that our time and talents are gifts from God and then strive to generously offer them back to Christ within our parish community. One concrete resolution we can adopt this New Year is to look into the various ministries at the parish and see which one allows us to best offer our gifts. If we currently do not take part in any parish groups, let us remember that it is never too late to start. Let us recommit to our baptismal call of stewardship and joyfully serve Christ and His Church.

Summary

As we celebrate Jesus` baptism we are also called to reflect on our own baptism which gave us our identity as beloved children of God as well as anointed us for mission. We can live out this mission by gratefully recognizing that our time and talents are gifts from God and then striving to generously offer them back to Christ within our parish community. This New Year, let us look into the various ministries at the parish and see which one allows us to best offer our gifts as true stewards.

2nd Sunday of Ordinary Time

1st Reading: 1 Samuel 3.3b-10, 19

2nd Reading: 1 Corinthians 6.13c-15a, 17-20

Gospel: John 1.35-42– *The First Disciples of Jesus*

Heeding the Call of Christ

“Come and see.” These are the words of invitation that Jesus says to His first disciples and that He still says to us 2000 years later. This is the call of the steward, to come and see the goodness of the Lord. Let us reflect more deeply on the figure of St. Andrew in this episode and seek ways to imitate him.

Firstly, when Jesus invited him, it says that Andrew obeyed and “came and saw.” He readily and wholeheartedly heeded the call of Christ. After his encounter with Christ, his life was profoundly changed and he left everything to follow Him. Once we encounter the love and goodness of God we too can no longer hold onto our past lives. Let us strive to continue to journey with God, going ever more deeper into His love. If we have not yet personally encountered Christ, let us remember that Christ longs for us to be with Him so it is never too late to turn to Him.

Moreover, upon meeting Christ, Andrew did not keep his new found joy to himself but instead runs to tell his brother Simon. He brings Simon to Jesus which leads to Simon’s call to follow Christ and is where he receives the name Peter. True stewardship leads to evangelization. Once we’ve experienced the joy of the Gospel, we too should seek to bring others into this joy. Perhaps one act we can do this week is invite a friend to Mass or a parish event so that they too can begin to “come and see” the Lord.

Summary

In the Gospel today, after Andrew’s encounter with Christ, his life was profoundly changed and he left everything to follow Him. Moreover, upon meeting Christ Andrew did not keep his new found joy to himself but instead runs to tell his brother Simon. As stewards, let us constantly seek to go deeper in our relationship with Christ and strive to invite others to the parish so that they too may “come and see” the goodness of the Lord.

3rd Sunday of Ordinary Time

1st Reading: Jonah 3.1-5, 10

2nd Reading: 1 Corinthians 7.29-31

Gospel: Mark 1.14-20 – *Jesus Calls the First Disciples*

Fishing for Christ

“Come follow me and I will make you fishers of people.” Just as Jesus called his first disciples 2000 years ago, he continues to call us to follow him. As we reflect on this beautiful Gospel account, let us focus on one particular aspect, the fact that Jesus uses the image of being a “fisher.” It is most interesting to note that as he is calling actual fishermen, he uses their own language.

There is a deep spiritual insight that can be gleaned from this, namely, that Christ uses what we bring to the table to serve Him and the Church. While fishing may seem unrelated to being an apostle, Jesus does not downplay their past experience. He invites them to bring all of the gifts and talents that they’ve received from God, but instead of using it for their own gain, to use it to gain souls for Christ.

So too as stewards, we can sometimes think that God can only use us if we’re already perfect disciples, or have degrees in theology or extensive training in ministry. However, the Lord wants us to bring all of our experiences, even our personal and professional backgrounds to serve Him. If we have backgrounds in finance or accounting, we can use that to help assist various parish ministries. Likewise, if we have experience as a teacher, we can utilize those gifts through various catechist or RCIA groups. This is the heart of stewardship. To recognize that we all bring our own particular gifts that can be used to serve Christ. Let us reflect on our own gifts and graciously heed the call to become “fishers of people,” each in our own way.

Summary

As Jesus calls the apostles, He uses their own language by inviting them to be “fishers of people.” There is a deep spiritual insight that can be gleaned from this, namely, that Christ uses what we bring to the table to serve Him and the Church. This is the heart of stewardship, so let us reflect on our own gifts and graciously heed the call of Christ to become “fishers of people,” each in our own way.

4th Sunday of Ordinary Time

1st Reading: Deuteronomy 18.15-20

2nd Reading: 1 Corinthians 7.32-35

Gospel: Mark 1.21-28 – *The Man with an Unclean Spirit*

Spreading Jesus' Fame

In today's Gospel we hear about Jesus delivering a man with an unclean spirit. When the crowds saw this great miracle they were all amazed by Jesus' words and deeds and began to speak about Him in astonishment. The Gospel ends by saying that "at once Jesus' fame began to spread throughout the surrounding region of Galilee." The news of this miracle helped others in the region come to know about Jesus.

So too, as stewards of Christ we should share with others the wonderful deeds God has done for us. All of us who have chosen to follow Christ more closely have our own testimony of how God entered into our lives. St. Peter says that it is important to "always be ready to make your defense to anyone who demands from you an accounting for the hope that is in you" (1 Peter 3:15).

Therefore, whenever someone asks us why we take our faith and stewardship so seriously, we should be able to tell them why. These are prime opportunities to share the faith with others. The next time a family member or friend asks us why we choose to follow Christ, let us share with them how God has beautifully worked in our lives. This way, just as Jesus' fame spread in the Gospel, it can also spread here in the Archdiocese. Bishop Robert Barron says that "the minute you walk outside of your church on Sunday you're in mission territory." As stewards, let us live this missionary call and spread the good news of Jesus Christ.

Summary

In the Gospel today it says that after Jesus healed a man with an unclean spirit that his "fame began to spread throughout the surrounding region of Galilee." So too, as stewards of Christ we should share the wonderful deeds God has done for us in order to evangelize those around us. This way, just as Jesus' fame spread in the Gospel, it can also spread here in the Archdiocese.

5th Sunday of Ordinary Time

1st Reading: Job 7.1-4, 6-7

2nd Reading: 1 Corinthians 9.16-19, 22-23

Gospel: Mark 1.29-39 – *Jesus Heals Many at Simon's House*

Reflect

This Sunday, one central theme that runs through all of the readings is that of evangelization. St. Paul in his letter to the Corinthians says “woe to me if I do not proclaim the Gospel!” At the end of the Gospel reading today it says that “Jesus went throughout Galilee proclaiming the message in their synagogues.” St. Francis Xavier says that “many, many people hereabouts are not becoming Christians for one reason only: there is nobody to make them Christians.” As stewards, evangelization is one of our core responsibilities so let us take some time to reflect on how we can offer our time and talents to this important work.

Firstly, in order for us to encourage people to follow Christ, we must take the time to journey with them. This is perhaps the most important gift we can offer someone as we evangelize. Jesus often spent His time conversing and interacting with the people of Judea. We too should follow this practice and intentionally make an effort to spend time with those whom we know are away from the faith. It is in these interactions that they will be able to see the joy and love that emanates from the presence of Christ within us.

Secondly, as stewards we are invited to perform concrete actions to help bring others to Christ. St. Teresa of Avila says that “we must all try to be preachers through our deeds.” By performing selfless acts of love we can point others to Love Himself and help them come to know Jesus. Therefore, as stewards, let us take the time and effort to intentionally share the Gospel through our daily witness.

Summary

Since evangelization is a core aspect of stewardship we should heed the words of St. Paul who says “woe to me if I do not proclaim the Gospel!” Firstly, in order for us to encourage people to follow Christ we must take the time to journey with them. It is in these interactions that they will be able to see the joy and love that emanates from the presence of Christ within us.

6th Sunday of Ordinary Time

1st Reading: Leviticus 13.1-2, 45-46

2nd Reading: 1 Corinthians 10.31 – 11.1

Gospel: Mark 1.40-45 – *Jesus Cleanses a Leper*

Being a Billboard for Christ

“You are a billboard for Christ.” These are the words of popular Catholic speaker Father Mike Schmitz. He’s trying to convey that if we are disciples of Christ, everything we do is a representation of Him. This beautiful reality is combined with a heavy responsibility. We must regularly ask ourselves, are we faithfully reflecting the love and goodness of Christ in our lives?

In today’s second reading St. Paul says that “whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do everything for the glory of God.” As stewards, every facet of our lives should be done to try to glorify God. This does not mean that we must always be in the chapel or being performing extraordinary works of charity. Rather, it means that we must infuse the ordinary events of our life with the powerful love of Christ. One aspect that we can sanctify is our daily work.

We should strive to realize that our work can be the sacrifice that we offer up to God. In realizing that we are working for God, we ourselves will be sanctified. We will slowly realize that everything we do is for Him, spurring us onto greater virtue. This will ultimately lead us to sanctify others for they will see the glory of God in our simple witness. Therefore, let us strive to intentionally say a prayer every morning asking God to help us glorify Him through our daily tasks.

Summary

In today’s second reading St. Paul says that “whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do everything for the glory of God.” As stewards, we can glorify God through our work by realizing that our daily tasks can be the sacrifices we offer up to God. Therefore, let us strive to intentionally say a prayer every morning asking God to help us glorify Him throughout our day.

1st Sunday of Lent

1st Reading: Genesis 9.8-15

2nd Reading: 1 Peter 3.18-22

Gospel: Mark 1.12-15 – *The Temptation of Jesus*

Fighting Temptations

During this First Sunday of Lent we hear the account of Jesus's temptation in the wilderness. Facing temptations is a part of life. St. Anthony the Great says to "Expect temptation to your last breath." Each time we face a temptation we have the choice of whether we follow Christ or turn away from Him. We should ask ourselves, how hard do we fight to resist temptations?

St. Josemaria Escriva says to fight temptations "Saint Francis of Assisi rolled in the snow, Saint Benedict threw himself into a thorn bush, Saint Bernard plunged into an icy pond ... what have you done?" When temptations come our way we must intentionally distance ourselves from the source of temptation and pray for strength. Perhaps one practice we can start is praying a Hail Mary as we physically walk away from any potential occasions of sin.

Let us also realize that every sin is tempting us with a twisted version of something good. So instead of just running away from evil, let us run towards what is true, good and beautiful. For example, we won't fall into the temptation to gossip if we form the habit of building people up with our words. We will be less likely to get angry if we practice kind acts towards our neighbour. We won't fall into the sin of lust if we strive to sacrificially love others. This Lent, let us begin to run away from sinful temptations and fill ourselves with good things from God instead. This will allow us to become holier stewards, which will lead to the revitalization of our parishes as our holiness and charity will point others to the love of Christ.

Summary

As we read the account of Jesus' temptation in the desert we should realize that we too have to fight temptations. When temptations come our way we must intentionally distance ourselves from the source of temptation and pray for strength. . This Lent, let us begin to run away from occasions of sin and fill ourselves with good things from God instead which will slowly help us grow in holiness.

2nd Sunday of Lent

1st Reading: Genesis 22.1-2, 9-13, 15-18

2nd Reading: Romans 8.31b-35, 37++

Gospel: Mark 9.2-10 – *The Transfiguration*

Conquering all through the Love of Christ

Following Christ is hard. This is a simple reality that anyone who has sought to be a disciple has quickly learned. In a culture that is increasingly secular, living out the Gospel can lead to many trials. Even as stewards we can often face many difficulties and sufferings from striving to offer all of our gifts to God. These sufferings could come from setbacks or failures in ministry or mocking and persecutions from our peers.

All of these things can cause us to lose hope and tempt us to stop fighting for Christ. This is where St. Paul's beautiful letter to the Romans can help bring us tremendous consolation. St. Paul boldly proclaims, "If God is for us, who is against us?" He encourages us to place all our hope in God despite the challenges we face. He goes on to say "Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us."

This is the lifeline that we must firmly hold onto if we wish to keep our head above water in the midst of an ocean of suffering. To know that we will always remain in the love of Christ is to know that Christ will bring us through any problem we face. When our life of stewardship becomes difficult, let us take a moment to simply pray: "I love you Jesus, help me to be more aware of your love for me."

Summary

In a culture that is increasingly secular, living out the Gospel and practicing stewardship can lead to many trials that may tempt us to give up our pursuit of holiness. In times like this we can find great consolation in the words of St. Paul who says that nothing can separate us from the love of Christ. When our life of stewardship becomes difficult, let us take a moment to simply pray: "I love you Jesus, help me to be more aware of your love for me."

3rd Sunday of Lent

First Reading: Exodus 20.1-17

2nd Reading: 1 Cor. 1.18, 22-25++

Gospel: John 2.13-25 – *Jesus Cleanses the Temple*

Confession is a Place of Victory

In today's first reading we hear about how Moses received the Ten Commandments from God on Mount Sinai. The Church has always taught that the Ten Commandments are a gift that God has revealed to us to help us orient our lives in a way that best leads us to holiness. In the Gospels, in addition to teaching about the Ten Commandments, Jesus teaches about the importance of loving God and loving our neighbour. The Catechism states that the Ten Commandments "must be interpreted in light of this twofold yet single commandment of love, the fullness of the Law"

As we are in this penitential season of Lent let us take some time to reflect on how well we are living up to these commandments. One common way of doing this is to perform an examination of conscience. This involves reflecting on our own lives in light of the Commandments and their related sins. This isn't meant to be a sadistic practice of self-loathing but rather an opportunity to see in which ways we can grow in deeper love for Christ and our neighbour.

The best way we can start this process of growth is to avail ourselves to the sacrament of Confession. Confession always remains a place of victory for the Lord is achieving our salvation through the forgiveness of our sins. To be reconciled with God is always a source of celebration. Let us not look to our examination of conscience and confession as a place of guilt and defeat. Instead, this Lent let us be cleansed through the grace of the sacrament so that we may grow as ever holier stewards of Christ.

Summary

In today's first reading we hear about how Moses received the Ten Commandments from God on Mount Sinai. As we are in this penitential season of Lent let us take some time to reflect on how well we are living up to these commandment through an examination of conscience. Let us then avail ourselves to the sacrament of Confession so that the Lord can victoriously heal us of our sins, helping us grow in holiness.

4th Sunday of Lent

1st Reading: 2 Chronicles 36.14-17a, 19-23++

2nd Reading: Ephesians 2.4-10

Gospel: John 3.14-21 – *Nicodemus Visits Jesus*

Carrying our Crosses

Spreading the Gospel can be difficult in our increasingly secular society. As stewards who are called to receive our gifts from God and put them at the service of the Church, this challenge can sometimes seem daunting. We may be tempted to think that today's society is just too far gone to accept Jesus. We may even see this within our own circle of friends and family members. However, this resistance from society is nothing new and nothing to fear.

In today's first reading from 2 Chronicles, we hear how God sent many people on His behalf to spread His word "but [the people] kept mocking the messengers of God, despising his words, and scoffing at his prophets." Even in the Old Testament, those who sought to serve God faced hardships and retaliation. Therefore, as stewards, we should not expect everything in our ministry to be perfect or easy.

Jesus says in the Gospel of Matthew that whoever wants to follow Him must take up their cross and follow. To take up the cross is to take up suffering and hardships for the sake of serving Christ. As stewards, let us not shy away from these crosses but accept them willingly. The cross will forever be the symbol of our hope and salvation. To take part in the cross of Christ by carrying our own crosses is a supreme dignity. Therefore, the next time we face a difficulty in our stewardship, let us simply pray "Lord, help me to carry this cross out of love for you."

Summary

In the first reading from 2 Chronicles we hear about how God's messengers were persecuted and despised for listening to God. As stewards, we will often also face difficulties in our ministry which is a share in the cross of Christ. To suffer for Christ is a great dignity so the next time encounter sufferings in our stewardship, let us simply pray "Lord, help me to carry this cross out of love for you."

5th Sunday of Lent

1st Reading: Jeremiah 31.31-34++

2nd Reading: Hebrews 5.7-9

Gospel: John 12.20-33 – *Jesus Speaks about His Death*

Heart Speaks to Heart

As we approach Holy Week, the readings begin to point towards Jesus' sacrifice on the cross. His sacrifice was a sacrifice of love done to reconcile us with God. It is through His sacrifice that we now live in the new covenant between God and humanity. In the first reading, God tells the prophet Jeremiah, "But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people."

Through Jesus, a new covenant is formed. One that is not ruled by strict adherence to laws and regulations, but rather one that is based on living in the love of God. The Lord says that He will write the covenant on our hearts. For the Lord to insist on writing it on our hearts, He implies that this covenant will be extremely personal and intimate.

As stewards, we are called into a deep relationship and friendship with God. St. John Henry Newman's motto was "Cor ad cor loquitur", or "Heart speaks unto heart." He fully understood the depths and importance of what it means to be in an intimate relationship with God. Do we likewise try to foster a personal relationship with Christ? Jesus' life, death and resurrection forever changed the way we go to God in prayer. Let us strive to go to Him and bear our heart to Him, that we may be able to grow deeper in relationship with Christ.

Summary

In the first reading, God tells the prophet Jeremiah, "But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." For the Lord to insist on writing the law on our hearts, He implies that this covenant will be extremely personal and intimate. Let us strive to go to Him and bear our heart to Him, that we may be able to grow deeper in relationship with Christ.

Palm (Passion) Sunday

Procession Gospel: Mk 11.1-10 – *Jesus' Triumphant Entry into Jerusalem*

1st Reading: Isa 50.4-7

2nd Reading: Phil 2.6-11

Gospel: Mk 14.1-15.47 – *The Passion of our Lord*

Radical Humility

As we enter Holy Week we are faced with the great paradox of the cross. The crucifixion from a mere human standpoint was an utter and humiliating defeat for Jesus. How could God let Himself be killed by His own creatures? The only way we can recognize the sublime beauty and victory of the cross is if we view it through a Divine lens.

The Jews resisted accepting the necessity of the crucifixion because they expected Him to be a wondrous king that would set them free from the political rule of the Romans. Jesus on the other hand comes as a poor and lowly carpenter sent to set them free not from political tyranny, but from the tyranny of sin. To do this, he “humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death – even death on a cross” (Philippians 2:8). Jesus hid all of His Divine majesty with His humanity and allowed Himself to die for love of us. It was because of this humility that “God highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name” (Philippians 2:9).

As stewards, we may sometimes forget the truth found in the paradox of the cross. It is not our own strength or achievements that make us great but it is rather our humility and obedience to God. The Lord can bring about tremendous good out of our willingness to humbly serve Him wherever He places us. As we enter Holy Week, let us take some time to meditate on the radical humility of Christ crucified and seek to imitate Him in our own lives as stewards.

Summary

As stewards, we may sometimes forget the truth found in the paradox of the cross. It is not our own strength or achievements that make us great but it is rather our humility and obedience to God. As we enter Holy Week, let us take some time to meditate on the radical humility of Christ crucified and seek to imitate Him in our own lives.

Easter Sunday

1st Reading: Acts 10.34a, 37-43

2nd Reading: Colossians 3.1-4 or 1 Corinthians 5.6b-8

Gospel: John 20.1-18++ – *The Resurrection of Jesus*

Recognizing the Risen Lord

Rejoice, the Lord is risen, truly He is risen! Today is the Solemnity of Solemnities, the most holy day in the Church's calendar. Let us take a moment to rejoice in the glory of the resurrection. These past forty days we've been preparing for this great feast where we will be met with the risen Christ. However, let us ask ourselves, how often do we fail to recognize Him in our daily lives?

In the Gospel today, we hear the account of Jesus appearing to Mary Magdalene. Mary is face-to-face with Jesus risen from the dead and yet she didn't recognize Him. She has spent the last couple years of her life following Him and now she cannot even identify Him as the man before her. While we may be quick to judge Mary, we should remember that Christ makes Himself present to us in countless ways that we often don't perceive.

One way that Jesus comes to us is through our neighbour. St. Teresa of Calcutta says "I see Jesus in every human being. I say to myself, this is hungry Jesus, I must feed him. This is sick Jesus. This one has leprosy or gangrene; I must wash him and tend to him. I serve because I love Jesus." This Easter, let us rejoice in Jesus' resurrection and seek to find Him in our neighbours. The same way that we would run to serve Christ, let us serve Christ dwelling in those around us and fully live out our call of stewardship.

Summary

These past forty days we've been preparing for this great feast where we will be met with the risen Christ yet how often do we fail to recognize Him in our daily lives? St. Teresa of Calcutta believes that we encounter Jesus through our neighbour as she says "I see Jesus in every human being. I say to myself, this is hungry Jesus, I must feed him." This Easter, let us rejoice in Jesus' resurrection and seek to find and serve Him in our neighbour by being good stewards.

2nd Sunday of Easter – Divine Mercy Sunday

1st Reading: Acts 4.32-35

2nd Reading: 1 John 5.1-6

Gospel: John 20.19-31 - *Jesus Appears to the Disciples*

Building a Community of Stewardship

As we continue along in this season of Easter, we are invited to reflect on the lives of the early Christians. In the first reading from the Acts of the Apostles we hear the wonderful account of them living in great unity and joy as they were “of one heart and soul.” It says that “there was not a needy person among them” because everyone shared of their gifts for the good of the entire community.

This is the perfect model of a community where stewardship reigns. A parish community built on stewardship is one in which every member is welcomed, involved and nourished. The parish should be seen as our second home. It is where we join together with our brothers and sisters in Christ so that we can love and serve God side by side.

How well are we contributing to the building up of our community of stewardship? We must all play our own role in building up the Church. In the same way the early Christians offered all of themselves for the sake of the mission, we too should offer all of our gifts to the parish. We should spend time praying in the church and journeying with fellow parishioners through the joys and trials of their lives. Moreover, all of our talents and gifts should be offered up to the service of various ministries and apostolates within the parish. In this way, we will be able to echo the words from the first reading and joyfully proclaim: “There was not a needy person among them.”

Summary

In the first reading we hear the wonderful account of the early Christians living a beautiful community of stewardship in which they were all “of one heart and soul.” Likewise, in the same way the early Christians offered all of themselves for the sake of the Church, we too should offer the gifts of our time and talent to our parish community. In this way, we will be able to echo the words from the first reading and joyfully proclaim: “There was not a needy person among them.”

3rd Sunday of Easter

1st Reading: Acts 3.13-15, 17-19

2nd Reading: 1 John 2.1-5

Gospel: Luke 24.35-48 - *Jesus Appears to His Disciples*

Befriending God

One of the most wholesome and life-giving relationships we can enjoy in this life is that of friendships. The book of Sirach says that “faithful friends are a sturdy shelter; whoever finds one has found a treasure.” Of course, the greatest friendship that we can have is our friendship with God. However, many people find it difficult to see God, the creator of the universe, as a friend. This is why Jesus became incarnate as a man, so that He could reveal God to us in a way that we could more fully grasp.

The Catechism teaches that “Jesus is inseparably true God and true man. He is truly the Son of God who, without ceasing to be God and Lord, became a man and our brother” (CCC 469). Since we know what it is like to befriend other humans, we can extend this same means of friendship to Jesus. However, this friendship doesn’t remain like all of our other friendships. Rather, since Jesus is also fully God, our friendship with Him also implies that we are friends with God.

This beautiful reality of Jesus being both God and man is visible in the Gospel today. Jesus appears to the disciples in His glorious new risen body, yet like all humans, he took a piece of fish and ate it. While this is a small example, it points to the reality of Jesus’ identity. As stewards, our friendship with God is the most important relationship we need to foster. Let us take some time each day in prayer to converse with Jesus as we would a close friend and by doing so, enjoy friendship with God.

Summary

We all love having friends and since we know what it is like to befriend other humans, we can extend this same means of friendship to Jesus because he too is fully human. However, this friendship doesn’t remain like all of our other friendships but is elevated to the status of being friends with God, since Jesus is also fully God. As stewards, let us take some time each day in prayer to converse with Jesus as we would a close friend and by doing so, enjoy friendship with God.

4th Sunday of Easter – World Day of Prayer for Vocations

1st Reading: Acts 4.7-12

2nd Reading: 1 John 3.1-2

Gospel: John 10.11-18 – *Jesus the Good Shepherd*

Sheep and Shepherds

This Sunday we are invited to reflect on the image of Jesus the Good Shepherd. Jesus shepherds us, His flock, by protecting us from any ravaging dangers, helping us stay in the fold and seeking us when we're lost. We as sheep must listen to and obey His voice. There is a familiarity and closeness between a shepherd and his sheep, and so too, there is an intimacy between Jesus and us.

As stewards, we are called to imitate Jesus in all ways, including His role as shepherd. We all have people in our lives we are called to look out for, whether it be our families, friends or fellow parishioners. The most important step in effectively shepherding others is to first become a holy sheep in Jesus' flock. We must seek to grow in prayer and virtue, and through that flows the grace to journey with others heavenward.

Within this call for all of us to be shepherds, God gives a special grace to particular men to more closely imitate the Good Shepherd through the vocation of priesthood. In regards to vocations, Jesus gives us only one instruction: "to pray to the Lord of the harvest, that He may send more labourers" (Matthew 9:38). Therefore, all of us have a role to play in fostering vocations. God continues to call priests, and through our prayers we can help young men answer the call. One great practice we can adopt is praying one Hail Mary every day for an increase in vocations.

Summary

As stewards, we are called to imitate Jesus in all ways, including His role as the Good Shepherd. The most important step in effectively shepherding others is to first become a holy sheep in Jesus' flock. God also calls many people to more closely shepherd His people in the priesthood and through our prayers, we can help young men answer the call.

5th Sunday of Easter

1st Reading: Acts 9.26-31

2nd Reading: 1 John 3.18-24

Gospel: John 15.1-8 – *Jesus the True Vine*

Abiding in Christ

In today's Gospel we are invited to reflect on the image of Jesus, the true vine. Jesus says "Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me." As stewards, there is much to be gleaned through reflecting on this passage.

Firstly, Jesus desires to abide in us. He does this whenever we receive Him in the Eucharist. In the same way, we are called to abide in Him by prayerfully placing our very selves in His presence, whether it's through praying in our rooms or before the Blessed Sacrament. This close relationship with Jesus is where our stewardship originates and is sustained. Jesus bluntly proclaims that we can do nothing without abiding in Him first.

As stewards, more than the actual works we perform, we are giving other people Christ through our time and talents. We can only give what we have first received. Therefore, it is of paramount importance that we focus on our prayer life above all. For example, before we plan on giving our time to a fellow parishioner and journeying with them, let us say a prayer asking God for the strength to work through us. Similarly, before we offer up our talents through various ministries in the parish, we should try to say a prayer asking that our works may point others to Christ, not to ourselves. Therefore, through abiding in Christ we may share His love and presence with others.

Summary

In today's Gospel Jesus says "Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me." We can abide in Jesus by placing ourselves in His presence whenever we pray and He likewise abides in us, especially through receiving Him in the Eucharist. This close relationship with Jesus is where our stewardship originates and is sustained so let us never fail to go to Him before we offer up our time and talents to the parish.

6th Sunday of Easter

1st Reading: Acts 10.25-26, 34-35, 44-48

2nd Reading: 1 John 4.7-10

Gospel: John 15.9-17 – *No Greater Love*

Laying Down our Lives

“No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends” are the beautiful words we hear from Jesus in the Gospel today. Jesus goes on to say that He no longer calls us servants but His friends. This is the radical truth of our faith. That God became man in order to befriend us and show His love for us through His death on the cross. As stewards we too are called to befriend Christ and lay down our lives for Him.

While the most literal way to lay down our life is to become a martyr for the faith, few are actually called to this type of death. It is more likely that we are called to lay down our lives by sacrificing our own wills and own comforts for the sake of the Kingdom. Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI says, “The world promises you comfort, but you were not made for comfort. You were made for greatness.” This is how we can display love’s greatest act in our lives, to live not for ourselves but to live for the Gospel.

As stewards, we can live for the Gospel by giving our time and talents to our parish community. Our lives are made out of time, so to freely offer our time to help serve those in our community is a beautiful way to lovingly give to others. Likewise, to give of ourselves through the sharing of our talents is another way to lay down our lives for Christ and the Church. Let us strive to commit more faithfully to our call of stewardship.

Summary

As stewards, we are called to befriend Christ and lay down our lives for Him for there is “no greater love than this.” Since it’s unlikely that we’ll be called to martyrdom, we are instead called to lay down our lives by sacrificing our own wills and own comforts for the sake of the Kingdom. Let us strive to accomplish this through a renewed commitment to stewardship.

Ascension of the Lord

1st Reading: Acts 1.1-11

2nd Reading: Eph 1.17-23 or Eph 4.1-13

Gospel: Mark 16.15-20 – *Jesus Commissions the Disciples*

Being Authentic Stewards

This Sunday we celebrate the great solemnity of the Ascension of the Lord. Before Jesus ascended into heaven he told his apostles, and us as well, to “go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation.” To spread the Gospel is an essential aspect of our stewardship. The greatest gift we possess is the knowledge and experience of Christ’s love and mercy and we should seek to share this with as many people as possible.

In order to spread the Gospel, we must overcome the temptation of having a split personality or a double life. We shouldn’t hang up our faith on the door as if it were a jacket we took off when we walked into the office. Our faith should instead be woven into every aspect of our lives. To always live as a disciple of Christ and showcase the joy of being a Catholic is perhaps the greatest good we can do in evangelizing our neighbour.

St. Charles Borromeo says, “Be sure that you first preach by the way you live. If you do not, people will notice that you say one thing, but live otherwise, and your words will bring only cynical laughter and a derisive shake of the head.” If people know we are practicing Catholics, we can potentially scandalize them if we act uncharitably or contrary to the faith. Therefore, let us strive to make our entire lives a reflection of God so that we may constantly spread the Gospel.

Summary

Before His ascension, Jesus tells His apostles, and us, to go into the world and spread the Gospel. To be authentic stewards we can’t hang up our faith on the door as if it were a jacket we took off when we walked into the office. Rather, we should realize that living as a disciple of Christ at all times and showcasing the joy of being a Catholic is perhaps the greatest good we can do in evangelizing our neighbour.

Pentecost Sunday

1st Reading: Acts 2.1-11

2nd Reading: 1 Corinthians 12.3b-7, 12-13 or Galatians 5.16-25

Gospel: John 20.19-23 or John 15.26-27; 16.12-15 – *Jesus speaks of the Holy Spirit*

Living in a Spirit of Unity

The Holy Spirit is often times the least recognized person of the Trinity. He seems more mysterious to us and harder to grasp. However, on this great Feast of Pentecost, let us take some time to reflect on the Holy Spirit and how He unites all of us in the Church. St. Cyril of Alexandria, a doctor of the church, says “All of us who have received one and the same Spirit, that is, the Holy Spirit, are in a sense blended together with one another and with God.” There are two beautiful impacts of this statement.

Firstly, this means that all the baptized are bound together as one. How often do we perceive this sense of unity in our own parish? As stewards, we should strive to create a charitable and hospitable community for all of our parishioners. Let us go out of our way to meet one new family at the parish this week as a sign of this commitment to unity.

The second implication in St. Cyril’s words is that this is not a mere human club or group. Rather, we are connected to one another “and with God.” Our unity is essentially rooted in God Himself. This elevates our community to one that is truly divine, and as a divine community, we should strive to eliminate all anger and unforgiveness that may exist between us. These vices run the risk of wearing away at the life and joy of our parish. Let us strive to make amends with anyone in the parish who has wronged us so that a spirit of stewardship may continue to flourish among us.

Summary

On this feast day of Pentecost let us reflect on the words of St. Cyril of Alexandria who says that those who’ve received the Holy Spirit are “in a sense blended together with one another and with God.” We are firstly connected to one another and so as stewards we should strive to create a charitable and hospitable community for all of our parishioners. Secondly, we are all connected with God, so we should strive to forgive those who’ve hurt us in order to foster a divine community free of all anger and resentment.

Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity

1st Reading: Deuteronomy 4.32-34, 39-40

2nd Reading: Romans 8.14-17

Gospel: Matthew 28.16-20 - *The Commissioning of the Disciples*

Signing Ourselves with the Trinity

Today we celebrate the Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity. The Catechism says that the “mystery of the Most Holy Trinity is the central mystery of Christian faith and life ... It is therefore the source of all the other mysteries of faith” (CCC 234). As Christians, we profess the mystery of the Trinity every time we make the sign of the cross, in the name of the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

The practice of signing ourselves with the cross is an ancient tradition that likely dates back to the time of the Apostles. Around the year 200, Tertullian wrote that “we Christians wear out our foreheads with the sign of the cross.” By signing ourselves, we are joining the countless saints that have gone before us. We can be a witness to the world whenever we sign ourselves in public. For example, the next time we eat in public let us strive to make the sign of the cross as we pray our grace before meals.

Additionally, often times the sign of the cross is the quickest prayer we can muster in times of great stress. St. Francis de Sales, Doctor of the Church, recommends that we “make spiritual aspirations to God by short, ardent movements of [our] hearts.” We can do this by invoking all three persons of the Trinity and marking ourselves with the cross, which is the sign of our salvation. Therefore, the next time we experience a difficult moment let us not despair but boldly make the sign of the cross. This will allow us to continually raise up our minds and hearts to the Blessed Trinity, the greatest mystery of our faith.

Summary

Today is the Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity which we profess every time we make the sign of the cross saying “in the name of the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit.” St. Francis de Sales recommends that we “make spiritual aspirations to God by short, ardent movements of [our] hearts.” Therefore, the next time we experience a difficult moment in our lives or ministries, let us not despair but boldly invoke all three persons of the Trinity and make the sign of the cross.

Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ

1st Reading: Exodus 24.3-8

2nd Reading: Hebrews 9.11-15

Gospel: Mark 14.12-16, 22-26 – *The Last Supper*

You Are What You Eat

We celebrate today the Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ – Corpus Christi. The Eucharist is the center of the Mass and of our entire Catholic faith. St. Padre Pio said that “it would be easier for the world to survive without the sun than to do without Holy Mass.” Let us spend some time reflecting on the Eucharist so that we can echo St. Padre Pio and come to a greater understanding of the beauty of the Mass.

Let us first contemplate what took place 2000 years ago on Good Friday. Jesus’ death on the cross is what won for us our salvation. It was the event that defeated Satan and opened wide the gates of Heaven so that we who seek to follow Him can enter into that eternal rest. St. Thomas Aquinas says that “the celebration of Holy Mass is as valuable as the death of Jesus on the cross.” If we are able to understand just how extraordinary Jesus’ crucifixion was, so too, each and every Mass opens us up to abundant grace and healing.

Moreover, the Mass allows us to receive the very body of Jesus and in doing so, become who we consume. We become another Christ in this world. As stewards, our goal is to imitate Jesus as closely as possible so that we can more fully share of our time and talents with our parish community. Therefore, let us run to Mass as often as we can for Jesus is waiting for us on the altar, waiting to transform us into better stewards for His Kingdom.

Summary

Jesus’ death on the cross is what defeated Satan and opened wide the gates of Heaven so that we who seek to follow Him can enter into that eternal rest. St. Thomas Aquinas says that “the celebration of Holy Mass is as valuable as the death of Jesus on the cross.” Therefore, we as stewards should run to Mass as often as we can because Jesus is waiting to pour out the same love, mercy and grace that he showed on the cross.

11th Sunday of Ordinary Time

1st Reading: Ezekiel 17.22-24

2nd Reading: 2 Corinthians 5.6-10

Gospel: Mark 4.26-34 – *The Parable of the Mustard Seed*

Making the Church a Home

In today's readings we hear about small things having large impacts. In the Gospel, Jesus says that the kingdom of heaven "is like a mustard seed, which, when sown upon the ground is the smallest of all the seeds on earth; yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes the greatest of all shrubs, and puts forth large branches so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade."

The mustard seed in this parable represents the Gospel that Jesus came to proclaim. It started with just a small handful of people but now, 2000 years later, has spread to all the corners of the world. The birds that come to find refuge in the tree represents all of us who come to find rest and shelter in the Gospel and the Church.

As stewards, we should play our part in helping the tree continue to grow through the gift of our time and talents. We should seek ways to help spread the Gospel message in our parish, whether it be through assisting at liturgies, helping with catechesis or serving the poor in our community. We should also spread the message that God desires all of us, even those who have fallen away from their faith, to find healing, safety and comfort in the Church. Let us be committed to making the Church a home for all who seek Christ.

Summary

In today's Gospel we hear about the parable of the mustard seed in which Jesus explains that the tiniest seed can grow into the largest tree that houses many birds of the air. The mustard seed represents the Gospel message that began with a few people 2000 years ago and has now spread all over the world. As stewards, we should play our part in helping the tree continue to grow through the gift of our time and talents.

12th Sunday of Ordinary Time

1st Reading: Job 38.1-4, 8-11++

2nd Reading: 2 Corinthians 5.14-17

Gospel: Mark 4.35-41 – *Jesus Stills a Storm*

Riding Through the Storms

Life, by its very nature, is filled with storms and difficulties. More than once in the Gospel do we hear about Jesus calming a storm. In the Gospel passage today we are invited to reflect on the account of Jesus asleep on the boat while the storm raged all around.

We can use our imagination to create the scene of this episode in our minds. Presumably the storm was violent and loud, yet the Lord did not rise from his sleep. Moreover, the disciples in their panic-stricken state were likely yelling and making noise as they tried to steer the boat through the waves. Lastly, the intensity of the storm likely meant that waves, wind and rain would have been beating against Jesus' sleeping body, yet he remained asleep. However, when the disciples turned to Jesus for help, Jesus immediately wakes up and calms the storm with three words: "Peace! Be still!"

In the midst of the storms of our lives, when we think we are all alone, we should realize that Jesus is with us through it all. Instead of panicking, we should strive to be still and peacefully take the time to turn to God and ask for help. This should be the first thing we do before we even try to solve the problem ourselves. Being a merciful and loving Father, God will not delay in coming to our aid.

Summary

In Gospel today we hear the account of Jesus asleep on the boat despite a harrowing storm raging all around. Jesus slept through the wind, waves, rain, and noise, but awoke immediately when the disciples came to Him for help. In the midst of the storms of our lives, when we think we are all alone, we should turn to Jesus for help and He will speedily come to our aid.

13th Sunday of Ordinary Time

1st Reading: Wisdom 1.13-15; 2.23-24

2nd Reading: 2 Corinthians 8.7, 9, 13-15

Gospel: Mark 5.21-43 – *A Girl Restored to Life and a Woman Healed*

Recreation vs Re-creation

Summer is a great time to travel with friends and family. It is also within these days that we have the opportunity to slow down from our fast paced lives and enjoy some rest and leisure time. However, while the summer may be a time for vacation, it should never be a vacation from God. We should still strive to be committed to our prayer life, although adapted for summer time and different daily routines. We should still make it a priority to attend Sunday Mass even when away on vacation in another city, province, or foreign land. We can even use the extra free time to attend daily Mass when possible.

Essentially, if we want to make the best of our summer, we should use it to grow deeper in our relationship with God. Summertime is either a time of recreation or re-creation. We can relax, go on vacations with family and friends, which are all good and beautiful. However, if we're not using the summer as an opportunity to grow deeper in our relationship with Christ, we are not making the most of our time.

Moreover, as we utilize the summer to grow in our own relationship with Christ, as true stewards we should look outward to our neighbour. One beautiful practice we can adopt is to volunteer as a family with various ministries or organizations. There are also many Catholic summer camps for children that we can take part in, whether as a participant or adult volunteer. Let us use this beautiful time of summer to grow in our stewardship.

Summary

While summer is a beautiful time for rest and vacation, it should never be a vacation away from God. If we're not using the summer as an opportunity to grow deeper in our relationship with Christ, we are not making the most of our time. Along with our time of leisure, we should try to use our time to volunteer with various summer programs including Catholic summer camps across the diocese.

14th Sunday of Ordinary Time

1st Reading: Ezekiel 2.2-5

2nd Reading: 2 Corinthians 12.7-10

Gospel: Mark 6.1-6 – *Jesus is rejected in his hometown*

The Cost of Discipleship

When Jesus went back to his hometown after beginning his public ministry, one can imagine the feelings that he would have felt – the excitement and joy of going back to the place he called home. Yet in the Gospel, we see that the reaction of the people in his hometown was one of disbelief and rejection. The people of Nazareth couldn't believe that Jesus, the son of Joseph the carpenter, one whom they knew for all his life turned out to be this man of great wisdom who would perform great miracles. This response was also experienced by Ezekiel in the first reading, when God told him that if the Israelites rejected God himself, how much more would they reject God's prophet?

When we begin to live a life pleasing to the Lord, a life of generous offering of our time and talent, it is not uncommon to experience various difficulties in trying to do so. Like Jesus, we may be ridiculed or rejected by those closest to us and shunned by others. These difficulties, like St. Paul mentioned in the second reading, are permitted not because God can't take them away, but because God uses them for our sanctification and holiness.

The Christian life was never promised to be easy, and Jesus himself experienced those hardships. What are we willing to give up for the sake of Christ and the Gospel? Are we willing to experience hardships, rejection, and persecution the way Jesus was? This is the cost of Christian discipleship – a cost which Jesus readily paid in His ministry. Are we willing to do the same?

Summary

The experience of Jesus being rejected by the people of His hometown when he began his public ministry is not an uncommon experience for those who are trying to live a life of Christian stewardship. We should take consolation in that Jesus experienced these hardships and was willing to pay the price for the sake of the Gospel. When we can be good stewards despite the challenges, the giving becomes all the sweeter. What are you willing to give for the sake of the Gospel?

15th Sunday of Ordinary Time

1st Reading: Amos 7.12-15

2nd Reading: Ephesians 1.3-14

Gospel: Mark 6.7-13 – *The Mission of the Twelve*

Go Forth

Every Christian by virtue of their baptism is called to be a disciple of Christ, to share in Christ's mission to proclaim the good news to all people of the Earth. We hear from St Paul in the second reading today that "God choose us in him before the foundation of the world, to be holy and without blemish before him." God calls us to be holy, and one of the ways we do this is by sharing our gifts which has been so generously given to us to build the Kingdom of God.

When Jesus sends the Apostles in today's Gospel, He doesn't send them because of their great abilities or qualifications. Rather, the men he chooses and sends were a group of unlikely fishermen and tax collectors. With nothing but a walking stick in their hand and sandals on their feet, Jesus gives these men the authority to do great deeds in his name, to drive out demons and heal the sick. With both their physical needs and spiritual needs, the Apostles relied totally on the providence of God to sustain them in their mission.

This command from Jesus to go forth in his name continues today. At the end of every Mass, we hear from the priest "go forth, the Mass is ended." This is not simply a conclusion, but rather a reminder to all present there like the apostles, we too are called forth to proclaim the good news. Like the Apostles, we may not be the most qualified, and yet Christ still calls us and qualifies us through his grace. What are the gifts that we have which we can offer to others as good Christian stewards?

Summary

We are called to be disciples of Christ, to be holy, and to share in Christ's mission of proclaiming the Good News to all people of the world. It was through God's grace alone that the Apostles are sent two by two by Jesus and able to preach, heal, and drive out demons. Although we may not be called to do great miracles as the Apostles did, we are called to go forth and build up the Church through the sharing of our time and talents.

16th Sunday of Ordinary Time

1st Reading: Jeremiah 23.1-6

2nd Reading: Ephesians 2.13-18

Gospel: Mark 6.30-34 – *The Return of the Twelve, and Jesus being moved by the crowd*

Jesus the Good Shepherd

In today's Gospel, we get a glimpse into the heart of Jesus as the Good Shepherd. After the Apostles had returned from their ministry, Jesus invites the Apostles go to a deserted place to rest a while. Yet even in this deserted place, a crowd follows Jesus and seeks Him out. The crowd was desperate to be with the Lord, for they sought the truth he proclaimed and the healing of body and soul that he provided. When Jesus looked at the crowd who sought him out in the deserted place, he was moved for he saw a people who "were like a sheep without a shepherd."

Jesus continues to look at us and be moved in the same way he was in the Gospel. Are we aware of Christ's gaze on us today? When Jesus sees our heart, he sees our hunger, our thirst, and all the aspects of our life that cause us despair and he seeks to give us repose. As St. Paul says to the Ephesians, "He is our peace." Christ wishes to feed and nourish us just as he did for the crowd in the Gospel.

Jesus was keenly aware of the importance of rest, but like Christ are we simultaneously aware of the needs of the people around us even while we are resting? We are always able to offer a short intercessory prayer for our parish community and for people who need prayers. By doing so we remain attentive and present to the missionary activity of the Church. A small prayer for the needs of our parish, for a family member, a friend or even a stranger who crosses our path during the normal course of our day can go a long way.

Summary

When Jesus looked at the crowd who sought him out in the deserted place, he was moved for he saw a people who "were like a sheep without a shepherd." Jesus the Good Shepherd continues to look at us and be moved in the same way He was in the Gospel and He wishes to feed and nourish us. As we rest in Christ, let us also continue to pray for our brothers and sisters in need and for our parish community.

17th Sunday of Ordinary Time

1st Reading: 2 Kings 4.42-44

2nd Reading: Ephesians 4.1-6

Gospel: John 6.1-15 – *Jesus feeds the five thousand*

God Cannot be Outdone in Generosity

The readings today should remind us of a simple truth - God cannot be outdone in generosity. In the Gospel, we hear of people who followed Jesus to be nourished by him spiritually, yet little did they know that the Son of God would go even further and provide for even their physical needs. When the people were hungry and had nothing to eat, it was the offering of a child, a meager offering of five barley loaves and two fish which would be multiplied by Jesus so that all five thousand people would be fed. The small offering of the boy through Jesus' hands was transformed to be more than enough food for all five thousand people, so much so that there were twelve baskets of food left over.

This story of the multiplication of the loaves and fish remind us of a very particular and beautiful moment in the Eucharistic celebration. During the offertory, we present to the Lord our gifts, bread and wine, and just as Jesus performs a miracle in the Gospel, He takes our small offering and transforms them into His Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity for us to be nourished by.

When we come to Mass, at the offertory, what gifts are we offering to the Lord? Just as Jesus transforms bread and wine to His body and blood, God wishes to take whatever gift we offer to Him, whether it be our time or talent, and multiply it for the sake of those we share our gifts with. Let us spend some time and reflect on the ways which God is calling us to share our gifts. Whatever we give to the Lord with a generous and giving heart, God will not let go to waste, for He is a God that cannot be outdone in generosity.

Summary

When the people were hungry and had nothing to eat, it was the small offering of a child which would be multiplied by Jesus so that all five thousand people would be fed with more than enough to eat. In the same way, when we offer to God - especially during the Mass - the gifts of our time and talent, God multiplies it and blesses it to be made fruitful for those around us. Nothing is too small to God, and no gift goes unnoticed, for God cannot be outdone in generosity.

18th Sunday of Ordinary Time

1st Reading: Exodus 16.2-4, 12-15

2nd Reading: Ephesians 4.17, 20-24

Gospel: John 6.24-35 – *The Bread of Life*

To Give Thanks

In the first reading, we hear of the Israelites who have just been freed from generations of slavery and are now wandering the desert. Once in the desert, the Israelites became hungry and begin to grumble against Moses, saying that their life in Egypt in slavery was better, for at least there they weren't hungry. The same scenario happens to Jesus in the Gospel, where just after multiplying five loaves and two fish for five thousand people, the very same people who witnessed this miracle asks for a sign from Jesus so that they may believe him.

How quickly we can forget the goodness of the Lord! It is easy to forget the good things that the Lord has done for us in our lives especially when going through hardship. Jesus tells the crowd that he will give them even a greater sign, greater than the multiplication of the loaves and fish, and greater than the manna which fell from heaven for the Israelites. Jesus would give us the Eucharist, His very body and blood, soul and divinity for us to eat.

The word Eucharist means “to give thanks.” When we approach Jesus who is hidden in the Eucharist are we filled with gratitude? There may be times in our life when we feel like the Egyptians, hungry and going through a desert, and in these moments, it can be very easy to forget the goodness of the Lord. These difficult times are the moments when it is most important to go back to Jesus in the Eucharist. Jesus waits for us in the Mass, and it is in the Eucharist that we receive all the sustenance we need to continue and eventually complete our journey on this earth. Let us try this week to go to one more Mass than we normally do, to receive Jesus who wishes to nourish us.

Summary

In the Gospel, we read of the Jewish people who ask Jesus for a sign so that they can believe what he teaches, just after he performs the miracle of multiplication of bread and fish to feed five thousand. In the same way, we can be so quick to forget the good things the Lord does for us especially when facing hardships. As we approach the Eucharist this week, let us approach with a grateful heart, remembering how the Lord cares for us and will bring us through hardships, just as he did for the Israelites.

19th Sunday of Ordinary Time

1st Reading: 1 Kings 19.4-8

2nd Reading: Ephesians 4.30-5.2

Gospel: John 6.41-51 – *Jesus, The Living Bread*

The Bread from Heaven

The Gospel today begins with a response from the Jewish people that seems unfounded. Jesus had just finished performing a great miracle in their midst, and afterwards reveals his identity to them, that he is the bread of life which comes down from heaven. One would think that after witnessing the miracles, the people would believe the words of Christ, however, the response of the people to Jesus' claim was of disbelief. They could not believe or understand how Jesus could be from heaven. Didn't they know his family, know his parents, and where he came from?

Jesus doesn't take back or mince his words with this teaching. In the Gospel, he goes on to tell the crowd "I am the living bread that came down from heaven; whoever eats this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world." Christ is the living bread, who gives himself to us to eat, so that through Him we may have eternal life and life in abundance. This teaching is the core of our belief in the Eucharist – that God loves us so much that he wants to give us the gift of himself, food that will last forever.

This love that God has for his people is a deep and special one. As Catholics, we believe that receiving Jesus in the Eucharist leads us to eternal life. Through the Eucharist, we are given every grace needed to journey in this life and make our way to him in the next. How often do we participate worthily in the Mass, and receive the living bread? Let us make a greater effort to approach the Eucharist more often, and with greater reverence, praying for a deeper awareness of the presence of Christ, for he comes to give us life.

Summary

The people who came to hear Jesus began to question him when Jesus reveals to them that he is the bread of life which came from heaven. They could not understand how Jesus could be from heaven, and how his flesh would become the means to eternal life for them all. We now understand that Jesus was speaking of the Eucharist, which through the appearance of bread and wine, Christ nourishes us with his body and blood, soul and divinity, giving us all the graces needed to live a life of Christian stewardship.

20th Sunday of Ordinary Time

1st Reading: Proverbs 9.1-6

2nd Reading: Ephesians 5.15-20

Gospel: John 6.51-58 – *The Bread of Life*

Pursue Understanding

In the Gospel, we hear of the crowds who were wrestling with the words of Jesus from the previous week's Gospel, as he reveals himself to be the bread from heaven. They were not able to understand how Jesus could give them his flesh to eat, and instead of taking back his words, Jesus tells them: "Amen, amen, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you do not have life within you." These words of Jesus in today's gospel were difficult to hear, and the crowd began to quarrel among themselves trying to understand what Jesus meant. How could Jesus give them his flesh to eat and his blood to drink? The Jewish people lacked the faith and understanding to be able to accept this teaching, and many left Jesus as a result.

There is a famous saying that says the longest journey one takes is that from the head to the heart. To be able to transform what we hear and know to that which we believe is one of the greatest challenges in the Christian life. Paul understood deeply that this pursuit of wisdom is a noble one, as he urges the church in Ephesus to strive to be wise, to leave ignorance and pursue understanding of the will of the Lord. The first reading from the book of proverbs reiterates this, saying "forsake foolishness that you may live; advance in the way of understanding."

What is our response when we encounter difficult teaching? It is easy as the crowds did to leave and live-in ignorant bliss, but what is truly more noble is to wrestle with the truth. How are we seeking the truth in our life? Do we ask Jesus for the gift of faith, understanding and wisdom, especially when we approach the life-giving sacrament of the Eucharist? Do we approach our priests with the questions on our hearts, seeking understanding?

Summary

When the people were hearing the teaching on the Bread of Life, they had a difficult time understanding how Jesus is the bread of life, and as a result many left. To understand and to have faith in the words of Jesus is not always easy, and yet it is our duty as Christian stewards to seek and understand truth. When we encounter difficult teachings of the Church, we must mull over it instead of dismissing it, seeking understanding above all.

21st Sunday of Ordinary Time

1st Reading: Joshua 24.1-2a, 15-17, 18b

2nd Reading: Ephesians 5.21-32

Gospel: John 6.60-69 – *The words of Eternal Life*

Jesus, I Trust in You

The Gospel today concludes Jesus' teaching on the Bread of Life, and we see many disciples who were with Jesus beginning to leave because they were unable to accept Jesus' words. Jesus' teaching was difficult to accept, and instead of softening the gravity of his words to keep everyone around, Jesus says "For this reason I have told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by my Father." Jesus knew that following him is a difficult task. Only those who are chosen by the Father, and willing to take up the hardships that come with belief in Christ can follow Jesus to the end.

The crowd slowly begins to dwindle, from five thousand disciples down to the twelve, whom Jesus turns and asks if they also will leave. Peter responds with a beautiful confession of faith, saying "Lord to whom shall we go, you have the words of eternal life." What differentiated the Twelve Apostles from the disciples was simply trust. The teaching of Jesus would have been just as difficult for the twelve to grapple with, however, they believed that Jesus was truly the son of God. Their trust in the person of Jesus, the man whom they've spent all this time with, and the man who performed these miracles in their midst, wasn't wavered because of the unbelief of the crowds.

The decision to follow and trust in Jesus is completely in our hands. As in the first reading of Joshua, when the Israelites approached the promised land, they had the option to go back to where they came from, for the road of a Christian is not easy. Before them were great obstacles, yet behind them was an easy life. When we are faced with a similar decision, how do we respond? It has become increasingly difficult to be authentically Christian in a world which is not. To be able to truly live out our calling as stewards, we must know Jesus and trust him. The best way to know Jesus is through his word. Let us spend time this week immersed in the scripture, getting to know our Lord.

Summary

To follow Jesus is not an easy decision to take, and one that can only be done through the grace bestowed on us through Jesus. When the crowds dispersed in the Gospel, the Apostles did not leave but instead proclaimed Jesus as the Lord who has the words of eternal life, a proclamation that came from trust and knowledge of Jesus the person. As we make the decision to be stewards, let us get to know Christ more intimately, especially through the Word of God, which gives us life.

22nd Sunday of Ordinary Time

1st Reading: Deuteronomy 4.1-2, 6-8

2nd Reading: James 1.17-18, 21b-22, 27

Gospel: Mark 7.1-8, 14-15, 21-23 – *The Tradition of the Elders*

The Law of Love

The Pharisees were devout Jewish men. They diligently followed the laws of Moses and the traditions of the elders which were passed on to them, and yet in the Gospel we see them being rebuked for being the hypocrites that Isaiah prophesized about. Although the Pharisees followed the law, Jesus sees their heart and saw that their actions did not come from a place of loving God and his law, but of pride and self-reliance. He tells the crowd “Nothing that enters one from outside can defile that person, but the things that come out from within are what defile.”

In our desire for holiness, it can be easy to be caught up with the externals. As we participate more fully in the work of stewardship, it can be a temptation to share our time and talent because of the praise that we receive from the parishioners or pastor, and feel dejected when that praise does not come. Yet as Jesus reminds us in the gospel, our actions alone aren't what makes us holy, but it is what comes from within. As St Paul says in the second reading, “be doers of the word and not hearers only.” When we truly listen and allow God's word to take root in our hearts, we undergo conversion and our actions that come from this conversion will be out of love and gratitude for God.

As we listen to God's word, let us pray that we can allow it to take root in our hearts and transform us, producing within us fruits which we can share with those around us. Let us remember the words of St. Paul in the second reading, that every perfect gift comes from God. The gifts that we have come from the Lord, and we should share them out of gratitude for Him. Let us take time this week to evaluate the work that we do towards building up the kingdom of God, and ensure that all that we do is a labour of love, responding to the generous gifts God has given us and not out of selfish desires to be noticed.

Summary

To follow the law means nothing if not done out of love, for as Jesus says in the Gospel, the things that come out from within are what defile the person. It can be easy for us in the work of stewardship to no longer share our time and talent out of love, but selfish motives as the Pharisees were doing in the Gospel. Let us always keep in mind that the gifts that we have are from the Lord and that we share them out of gratitude for God who blesses us.

23rd Sunday of Ordinary Time

1st Reading: Isaiah 35.4-7a

2nd Reading: James 2.1-5

Gospel: Mark 7.31-37 – *Jesus cures a deaf man*

Ephphata!

In the Gospel today, Jesus encounters a deaf man who is brought to Jesus to be healed of his impairment. The deaf man didn't come on his own initiative, but rather was brought by the people who begged Jesus to lay his hands on this man and heal him. This selfless action of the people, who didn't seek healing for themselves or for some favour to be granted to them, but instead sought the healing of the deaf man is a beautiful example of the power of intercessory prayer. The deaf man was healed not because of his faith or desire, but of the faith and desire of those who brought him to Jesus.

As the prophet Isaiah declared in the first reading, "Be strong, fear not! Here is your God, he comes with vindication; with divine recompense, he comes to save you." Christ came to bring healing, comfort, and forgiveness. Jesus desires to speak those healing words we hear in today's Gospel to everyone, 'Be opened!', yet many people, including ourselves, are not able to hear it because of our spiritual deafness. We may not even realize that we need the healing, after being so caught up in our own spiritual deafness. When people are unable to come to Jesus because they feel unworthy, or maybe don't know that Jesus loves them, our intercessory prayer becomes crucial as we bring before the Lord the people who need Jesus' healing touch and love.

As stewards, we are responsible for bringing people to Christ through our prayers and work of evangelization. Stewards understand that they have received many gifts from the Lord and wish to share that with others so that those around them can also partake in God's blessings. In what ways do we bring people to Christ so that Christ can bestow his blessings? Do we participate in the missionary action of the Church? Do we welcome new parishioners? Do we pray often for the needs of the people around us? Even if we are unable to bring people physically to church, let us make a greater effort to spend more time in prayer, praying for those we know in our lives who require Christ's healing.

Summary

The healing of the deaf man in today's Gospel was a result of the people bringing the deaf man to Jesus, a beautiful example of the power and necessity of intercessory prayer. Christ came to bring healing, but many times people we know, or even ourselves don't go to Christ because we feel unworthy and stop ourselves from going to Him. Through our prayers, we do what the people in the Gospel did, bringing to Jesus those who need healing and allowing Christ to heal them through us.

24th Sunday of Ordinary Time

1st Reading: Isaiah 50.5-9

2nd Reading: James 2.14-18

Gospel: Mark 8.27-35 – *Peters Declaration about Jesus*

A Living Faith

“What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but do not have works?” In our second reading from the Letter of James we are challenged to have a living faith, a faith that is backed up by action. Let us take some time to reflect on how we can live out our faith through stewardship.

While prayer and our relationship with Christ should always remain the most important aspect of our lives, it should still lead us to take action. This is the life of a steward. Before we can bring Jesus to others, our hearts must be filled with His love through our prayer and frequent reception of the Eucharist. We can only give what we have first received.

Moreover, we should always realize that the most generous and loving thing we can do for someone is pray for them. This is the humbling reality of being a disciple. It is not our own merits that bring about change but rather God’s mercy and providence. Therefore, we should always turn to intercessory prayer before we take any action. However, after entrusting everything to God, we can then play our part and concretely try to help. For example, St. James cautions us against only praying for people who are hungry while not actually offering some of our food. The prayer is essential, but as stewards, we must strive to offer tangible support as well. Let us take some time to reflect on how we can better put our faith into action through proper use of our time and talents.

Summary

In our second reading from the Letter of James we are challenged to have a living faith, a faith that is backed up by action. However, we should first realize that the most generous and loving thing we can do for someone is pray for them. However, after entrusting everything to God, we can then play our part and concretely try to help through proper use of our time and talents.

25th Sunday of Ordinary Time

1st Reading: Wisdom 2.12, 17-20

2nd Reading: James 3.16 – 4.3

Gospel: Mark 9.30-37 – *Jesus Foretells His Death and Resurrection*

Celebrating the Stewardship of Others

In today's readings we learn the importance of having the right attitude and disposition in our approach towards stewardship. A steward is called to live in humility. We are not the owners of our gifts but are simply the humble caretakers of them and it is our job to give them back to God with increase.

St. James in the second reading says, "Where there is envy and selfish ambition, there will also be disorder and wickedness of every kind." As stewards, we will often face the temptation to compare our gifts with those of others. It is a human reaction to seek recognition for our good works and want to be rewarded. However, the goal of stewardship is not our own glory, but rather the glory of Christ and the Church. One way to combat envy and ambition is to intentionally celebrate the talents of others. Since we are all one Body of Christ, the gifts of our brothers and sisters are the gifts of the whole Church.

Relatedly, in the Gospel today Jesus instructs His apostles saying, "Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all." True stewards seek to serve others before themselves. We should ask ourselves, am I assisting at the parish to serve my own ego or to serve my neighbour? Let us constantly try to reorient our priorities so that we can serve Christ first through serving our brothers and sisters.

Summary

St. James in the second reading says, "Where there is envy and selfish ambition, there will also be disorder and wickedness of every kind." As stewards, we will often face the temptation to compare our gifts with those of others and seek recognition for our own talents. One way to combat this envy and ambition is to intentionally celebrate the talents of others for the gifts of our brothers and sisters are the gifts of the entire Body of Christ.

26th Sunday of Ordinary Time

1st Reading: Numbers 11.25-29

2nd Reading: James 5.1-6

Gospel: Mark 9.38-43, 45, 47-48 – *Temptations to Sin*

Removing the Obstacles

In today's Gospel, Jesus gives us the bold teaching that we should rid ourselves of anything that causes us to sin, for the price of losing our eternal salvation is far too great. This teaching can seem harsh at times, yet it is actually one of great truth and love. The radical implication in Jesus message' is that the salvation of our souls is the most important thing in life.

As followers of Christ, we should ask ourselves, is there anything that is causing us to sin? Sin begins to weaken our relationship with God which hinders our ability to truly love others and act as authentic stewards. If we want our stewardship to flourish, we should take concrete actions to avoid the near occasions of sin and seek forgiveness in the sacrament of Confession for whenever we do fall.

Additionally, not only should we seek to remove the causes of sin in our lives, but we should try to remove all those things that hinder us from being better stewards of our time and talents. For example, if our pride and ego get in the way of us being willing to humbly serve others, we should pray for the strength to grow in humility. Likewise, if our addiction to television or movies stops us from giving our time to others, we should try to intentionally limit our viewing time. There are many ways we can grow as faithful stewards of Christ so let us start by taking small steps towards being more generous.

Summary

Jesus instructs us in the Gospel to remove anything that causes us to sin for the most important thing in life is the salvation of our souls. Likewise, we should strive to remove anything that hinders us from being better stewards of our time and talents. There are many ways we can grow as faithful stewards of Christ so let us start by taking small steps towards being more generous.

27th Sunday of Ordinary Time

1st Reading: Genesis 2.7ab, 15, 18-24

2nd Reading: Hebrews 2.9-11

Gospel: Mark 10.2-16 – *Teaching about Divorce & the Little Children*

The Origins of Stewardship

In the first reading this Sunday we hear about our first parents, Adam and Eve. By reflecting on their lives we can learn a great deal about how we too are called to live. It says in Genesis that, “the Lord God formed man ... and put him in the Garden of Eden to till it and keep it,” It is from this that the spirituality of stewardship finds its origins, all the way from the first book of the Bible.

To be a steward is to gratefully acknowledge our lives and all we possess as gifts from God that should be used for the glory of Christ and the Church. We must maturely take care of them, not for selfish reasons, but out of love and generosity. This is exactly what God is asking of Adam in Genesis.

God gives Adam the gift of Eden and the beauty of creation, yet, He doesn't instruct him to use all these gifts for his mere enjoyment and pleasure. Instead, he is told to work at nurturing and fostering these gifts so as to allow them to increase. God tells him to till the land. So too as stewards, we need to till the lands of our time and talents. Let us strive to not passively use them for our own gain but work on using them for God's will. God desires us to share our gifts for His glory, so let us reflect on how we can better offer ourselves for the good of God and the Church.

Summary

God gives Adam the gift of Eden and the beauty of creation, yet, He doesn't instruct him to use all these gifts for his mere enjoyment and pleasure but to “till” the land. So too as stewards, we need to till the lands of our time and talents. Let us strive to not passively use them for our own gain but work on using them for God's will.

28th Sunday of Ordinary Time – Thanksgiving Weekend

1st Reading: Wisdom 7.7-11

2nd Reading: Hebrews 4.12-13

Gospel: Mark 10.17-30 – *The Rich Man*

Fostering an Attitude of Gratitude

This Thanksgiving weekend provides us the perfect opportunity to reflect on our lives and our commitment to stewardship. Let us consider the following passage from Cardinal Collins' *Pastoral Letter on Stewardship**. "Deep stewardship begins with gratitude and ends with accountability. Stewardship is sometimes called 'the attitude of gratitude.' We recognize gratefully that everything in life is a gift of God ... If each of us is profoundly aware that all is gift, then we are freed from possessiveness, and can be good stewards of what has been entrusted to us in life, sharing generously."

Before we can generously share our time and talents with the parish community we must first realize that they are gifts from God. There are many fruitful practices we can adopt to help us cultivate this deeper sense of gratitude. Firstly, we must always remember that life itself is a beautiful gift. We can try to begin each day while we still lie in bed to simply say "thank you Lord for blessing me with another day." We will then be able to have a greater appreciation for our time on earth and work towards making better use of our lives.

Additionally, this weekend when we have our family Thanksgiving dinner, perhaps we can go around the table and have each person say what they are thankful for this past year. Let us challenge ourselves to go deep and truly examine all of the blessings God has bestowed on our lives that we so often take for granted. Let us grow in our stewardship this weekend as we foster an "attitude of gratitude."

Summary

This Thanksgiving Weekend let us ponder the following words from Cardinal Collin's *Pastoral Letter on Stewardship*. "Deep stewardship begins with gratitude and ends with accountability. Stewardship is sometimes called 'the attitude of gratitude.' We recognize gratefully that everything in life is a gift of God ... If each of us is profoundly aware that all is gift, then we are freed from possessiveness, and can be good stewards of what has been entrusted to us in life, sharing generously."

* Thomas Cardinal Collins, Pastoral Letter on Stewardship. Available at:
<https://www.archtoronto.org/stewardship/Pages/Pastoral-Letter-Cardinal-Thomas-Collins.aspx>

29th Sunday of Ordinary Time

1st Reading: Isaiah 53.10-11

2nd Reading: Hebrews 4.14-16

Gospel: Mark 10.35-45 – *The Request of James and John*

Looking to our Role Model

As Christians, we are always called to seek ways of imitating Christ. The Catechism says that “in all of his life Jesus presents himself as *our model*. He is “the perfect man”, who invites us to become his disciples and follow him.” Jesus was also the perfect steward so we can constantly look to Him for guidance in our own commitment to stewardship.

However, many people may have reservations in trying to imitate Christ because it seems like an unattainable ideal. We may feel that Jesus, being God, doesn’t know what it’s like to struggle here on earth. However, this does not mean he didn’t have to fight the same fight that we do in our path towards virtue. St. Paul in his letter to the Hebrews says “For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sin.”

St. Paul beautifully shows us that Christ fully understands what our struggles and difficulties are. Although He never succumbed to temptations, He too would have faced the desire to despair or give up on His call to love and sacrifice for us. Therefore, when we face trials in our stewardship, let us turn to Jesus and ask Him to help us overcome our struggles just as He did during His time on earth. Stewardship is not an impossible ideal, we just need the strength and guidance of God.

Summary

As Christians who are called to imitate Christ, we may sometimes feel that Jesus, being God, doesn’t know what it’s like to struggle here on earth. However, St. Paul says “we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sin.” Therefore, when we face trials in our stewardship, let us turn to Jesus and ask Him to help us overcome our struggles just as He did during His time on earth.

30th Sunday of Ordinary Time – World Mission Sunday

1st Reading: Jeremiah 31.7-9

2nd Reading: Hebrews 5.1-6

Gospel: Mark 10.46-52 – *The Healing of Blind Bartimaeus*

Raising our Hearts in Prayer

As stewards, we are called to devote a portion of time every day to prayer. Prayer is what allows us to foster and deepen our relationship with God. However, we may sometimes be intimidated by prayer because we are unsure of what words to say or how to say them. We may seek to use complicated and inorganic formulas instead of simply praying in our own natural way.

Today's Gospel shows us that we don't really need to have our "act together" before we begin to pray. In the passage from Mark, we see the blind man Bartimaeus simply sitting on the roadside, yelling at Jesus in pure desperation. His posture probably wasn't reverent, his words not exactly eloquent, yet it was the most earnest prayer that he could have possibly made.

St. Therese of Lisieux says, "For me, prayer is a surge of the heart; it is a simple look turned toward heaven, it is a cry of recognition and of love, embracing both trial and joy." This simple look towards Heaven is what Bartimaeus fully embodied and is what we too are called to imitate as stewards. Whenever we are in a difficult moment and feel that we cannot pray, let our prayer simply be to raise our minds to God and contemplate His goodness. In times of joy, perhaps our prayer is just to sit before the tabernacle with a spirit of genuine gratitude for all of our blessings. Let us strive to turn to prayer in all circumstance for these moments are very pleasing to God.

Summary

Today's Gospel with the blind man Bartimaeus shows us that we don't really need to have our "act together" before we begin to pray. St. Therese of Lisieux says, "For me, prayer is a surge of the heart; it is a simple look turned toward heaven, it is a cry of recognition and of love, embracing both trial and joy." This simple look towards Heaven is what Bartimaeus fully embodied and is what we too are called to imitate as stewards in all circumstances.

31st Sunday of Ordinary Time

1st Reading: Deuteronomy 6.2-6

2nd Reading: Hebrews 7.23-28

Gospel: Mark 12.28-34 – *The First Commandment*

A Steward's Way of Loving

“You shall love The Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength ... You shall love your neighbor as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these.” Love – that is what is at the core of our Christian stewardship. In response to God’s love and goodness for us, we are inspired to love Him and our neighbour.

Jesus isn’t vague in his explanation on how we ought to love. Instead, he specifies in great detail that we are to love with our whole heart, soul, mind and strength. In essence, we are called to love with our entire lives. In order to love in this manner, it is essential to embrace a spirituality of stewardship. An authentic steward is called to offer the gifts of their time and talent to God and the Church.

One way in which we can love through the gift of our time is through our dedication to prayer. We are woven out of time, so what we spend our time on greatly reflects what is most important to us. As stewards, we should set aside a portion of each day that is reserved solely for prayer. In regards to our talents, we can love others by sharing these gifts with our parish community through various ministries. For example, if we have an ability to sing, perhaps we can look to join a parish choir. Let us take some time to reflect on how we can better use our time and talents to love God and our neighbour with our entire lives.

Summary

Jesus teaches us that we are to love God and our neighbour with our whole heart, soul, mind and strength. In essence, we are called to love with our entire lives, which requires us to embrace a spirituality of stewardship. Let us take some time to reflect on how we can better use our time and talents to authentically and generously love Christ and the Church.

32nd Sunday of Ordinary Time

1st Reading: 1 Kings 17.10-16

2nd Reading: Hebrews 9.24-28

Gospel: Mark 12.38-44 – *The Widow's Offering*

Offering our All

In the Gospel this Sunday we hear the account of the poor widow's treasury offering. Jesus observes many wealthy people put in large sums of money yet He only praises the lowly widow for her contribution of two small copper coins. He exclaims, "truly I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the treasury. For all of them have contributed out of their abundance but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had." (Mark 12:43).

We can learn a great lesson in stewardship through the example of this widow who symbolically offered her entire life through her small monetary offering. We too are called to give our entire lives to God. We shouldn't imitate the wealthy people in the Gospel and give from what we have leftover. Rather, we should give the "first fruits" of our time and our talents because we want to show God how grateful we are for all He has given us.

Additionally, by giving everything she had, the widow is inherently saying "God I trust that you will take care of me." As stewards, do our sacrifices show that we trust God? To trust God means knowing that even though our time spent in the parish might mean we have less time for work or other commitments, that God will still bless us abundantly. Let us strive to give all we can and trust that God will take care of all our needs, for St. Paul says, "God loves a cheerful giver." (2 Corinthians 9:7).

Summary

We can learn a great lesson in stewardship from the widow who put in all she had, two small copper coins, into the treasury. We shouldn't imitate the wealthy people in the Gospel and give from what we have leftover. Rather, we should give the "first fruits" of our time and our talents because we want to show God how grateful we are for all He has given us.

33rd Sunday of Ordinary Time – World Day of the Poor

1st Reading: Daniel 12.1-3

2nd Reading: Hebrews 10.11-14, 18

Gospel: Mark 13.24-32 – *The Coming of the Son of Man & the Fig Tree*

Contemplating the End

Today's readings point our attention to the second coming of Christ and our final judgement. "Heaven and earth will pass away" and though no one knows when that day will come, we are all aware that it will indeed come. Each of us will stand before the judgement throne of God. Let us ask ourselves, will He be pleased with us and with the way in which we used the gifts He granted us?

Today's apocalyptic message gives us a great opportunity to reflect on the meaning of our lives. We were not created to live solely for our time on earth. Rather, we were made for something greater. We were made for Heaven. The way in which we live our lives should reflect our eternal destination and not focus merely on this short earthly stopover.

One beautiful way of life we can choose to adopt here on earth that will greatly prepare us for our heavenly home is that of stewardship. If we live our lives worthy of the call that Christ has given us, by being united to Him in prayer, being strengthened by the sacraments, and striving to offer our gifts to others, we need not fear judgment. We should instead rely solely on the mercy of God and do our part of being faithful stewards that are sustained by His grace. Let us decide today to recommit all the more fervently to our call of stewardship.

Summary

Today's apocalyptic readings give us a great opportunity to reflect on the meaning of our lives and on our own eventual day of judgement. One beautiful way of life we can choose to adopt here on earth that will greatly prepare us for our heavenly home is that of stewardship. If we live our lives worthy of the call that Christ has given us, by being united to Him in prayer, being strengthened by the sacraments, and striving to offer our gifts to others, we need not fear judgment.

34th Sunday of Ordinary Time – Christ the King

1st Reading: Daniel 7.13-14

2nd Reading: Revelation 1.5-8

Gospel: John 18.33b-37 – *Jesus before Pilate*

Enthroning the King

On this final Sunday of the liturgical year we celebrate the great solemnity of Christ the King. Jesus always remains the King of the Universe, but does He also remain the king of our lives? Let us reflect on how we can enthrone Jesus in our hearts through our commitment to stewardship.

Kings often receive the finest of things in order to showcase their importance. If we want to make Jesus our King, He too deserves our very best. We can do this by striving to offer Christ the “first fruits” of our time in prayer. When we set aside a portion of everyday for prayer, we are expressing the importance of God in our lives. We become loving and faithful servants who simply long to be in the presence of their master. Let us not try to fit in our prayer after all our other commitments are taken care of, but rather, let us schedule the rest of our day around our times of prayer so as to give our King the very best we can.

Once we enthrone Jesus as King of our lives, we can then begin to serve Him as one would an earthly king. But what kind of service does our Divine King desire? The Lord desires the service of charity and sacrifice. St. Rose of Lima says, “When we serve the poor and the sick we serve Jesus. We must not fail to help our neighbours, because in them we serve Jesus.” As stewards, let us strive to use our gifts to serve our fellow parishioners, and in turn, serve the King of kings.

Summary

On this solemnity of Christ the King let us reflect on how we can enthrone Jesus in our hearts through our commitment to stewardship. Firstly, we can let God rule in our lives by giving Him the “first fruits” of our time in prayer. We should then strive to use our gifts to serve our fellow parishioners, and in turn, serve the King of kings.