

A Personal Stewardship Journey

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Even though our family was absent from church from the 1970's through the first half of the 1990's, I was still aware of, and in touch with God regularly through private daily prayer that continues. Upon returning to church, I chose not to be simply another "bum in the pew"; rather, I chose to be active and involved. And, in the early days after our return, my "stewardship" was mostly time, a little talent, and a limited amount of money. However, our monetary giving to our parish has increased yearly, and has been supplemented by extra giving for specific projects or programs in the church. Our giving to other charities has also continued.

When pre-authorized giving was first offered at our parish, we signed on, initially by credit card (partly to take advantage of the points—what a lousy reason!) and more recently by automatic bank withdrawal. PAG has put God into the proper perspective for us—giving from our first "fruits" rather than from what is left over. We have accepted that we need to give back to a very generous God from whom so many blessings flow.

As a family are we giving enough? This begs the question, what is enough? As we have travelled this stewardship journey, we have stopped thinking of a tithe as enough, and we have stopped thinking of our giving as an obligation. We are striving to become joyful givers. We are coming to terms with our need, as God's creatures, to give. We are "working" at accepting that God will provide everything we need.

Stewardship involves taking care of the least among us. How am I doing in this regard? I still find myself walking past beggars but if approached for help with transit fare, I willingly give away transit tickets. I guess this means I'm getting better, but ...

Stewardship also includes taking care of the world around us, our environment. What have we done in this regard? Most of our light bulbs, including Christmas lights, are low energy. We have turned down our thermostat and wear sweaters (even though in our condo we pay for natural gas in common with all of the owners). We drive a four cylinder car, try to synchronize errands/shopping trips, and I use transit to and from work unless I need to be out of the office. We try to eat "locally". We turn off lights when leaving a room and we turn off computers at night (both at home and work).

In 2005 I became the Planned Giving Officer for the Diocese and began visiting parishes to talk about planned giving. We had arranged a planned gift for the church in 2000 which means that, when talking to people about a planned gift, I am coming from the premise of "been there, done that". In 2006 I was asked if I would add a homily to my parish visits which I did willingly, using it to talk about all aspects of stewardship, about stewardship as discipleship and as an introduction to my planned giving presentation.

I titled this "A Personal Stewardship Journey". A life journey is something one embarks upon, with occasional side trips and detours, only completing it when meeting one's maker. A stewardship journey is not much different—we have begun, and have moved along on it, but we are still a long way from our destination.