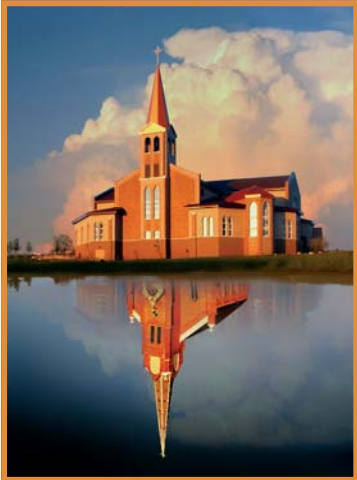


STEWARDSHIP IN SEPTEMBER

Dear Parishioners of St. Joseph,

As we begin a new year of living, witnessing and growing in our Catholic faith, I offer you a month of reflections on how we are good stewards of our gifts and talents here at St. Joseph Parish. In this first newsletter I share for your reflection the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Guiding Principles for their 1992 Pastoral Letter on Stewardship; an outline of the document is enclosed. These principles are *Gratitude, Accountability, Generosity, and a Willingness to Give Back.*



Gratitude. We as Catholic Christians are grateful and thankful for our gifts and blessings from God. We as members of St. Joseph Parish are grateful and thankful for our faith and our faith community. We pray and receive the Eucharist each week in thanksgiving for all we have received from God.

Accountability. We are mindful of our responsibility to give account to God at the end of our life for how we used our gifts, our talents, our resources. We are grateful as a parish for all who so generously share their time and talents for the good ministries and programs of St. Joseph Parish. It shows an awareness of our decision to know the peace of eternal life.

Generosity. A generous person is one who knows the importance of giving to others out of justice and love; thinking about how we can make the world a better place by being generous with our time and talent; using our God-given abilities to help those less fortunate. St. Joseph Parish is blessed with many generous people who contribute to the many programs, services, activities and events which make St. Joseph a special place to grow in faith.

Willingness to Give Back. Willingness to give to the Lord with Increase. “God loves a cheerful giver” (2 Cor 9:7) is the call and teaching of St. Paul in his second letter to the Corinthians. Our personal challenge is first, to be grateful and thankful for our blessings from God; and second, to return a gift to God for all we have received. This giving back is not a one-time gift but a continual awareness and desire to be generous with our blessings. As a parish, we know our strength is in those who faithfully share Time, Talent and Treasure for the good works of St. Joseph Parish. We pray in thanksgiving for all who sacrifice for our parish.

Stewardship Events

- ▶ *Ministry Signup—September 12/13, 19/20, 26/27*
- ▶ *ARISE Sign-up—September 12/13*
- ▶ *State of the Parish—September 26/27*

THE THEOLOGY OF STEWARDSHIP

A Summary of the United States Bishops' Pastoral Letter on Stewardship

In 1992, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops published *Stewardship: A Disciple's Response*. The bishops defined a Christian steward as one who:

- Receives God's gifts gratefully
- Cherishes and tends God's gifts responsibly
- Shares God's gifts in love and justice
- Returns God's gifts with increase.

Stewards acknowledge that God is Creator and Owner of all and shares of their gifts out of love for God and one another.

DISCIPLES AS STEWARDS

As members of the Body of Christ, Jesus calls us to be disciples. This has astonishing implications.

- Mature disciples make a conscious decision to follow Jesus, no matter what the cost.
- Christian disciples experience conversion, life-shaping changes of mind and heart, and commit their very selves to God.
- Christian stewards respond in a particular way to the call to be a disciple. Stewardship has the power to shape and mold our understanding of our lives and the way in which we live.

Christian stewards recognize God as the Origin of Life, the Giver of Freedom, and Source of All. We are grateful for the gifts we have received and are eager to use them to show our love for God and for one another. We look to the life and teachings of Jesus, the model steward, for guidance in living as Christian stewards.

STEWARDS OF CREATION

The Bible contains a profound message about the stewardship of material creation: God created the world, but entrusts it to human beings. Caring for and cultivating the world involves the following:

- joyful appreciation for the God-given beauty and wonder of nature;
- protection and preservation of the environment;
- respect for human life—shielding life from threat and assault, doing everything that can be done to enhance this gift and make life flourish;
- and development of this world through noble human effort—physical labor, the trades and professions, the arts and sciences—our work.

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

STEWARDS OF VOCATION

Each of us has a human vocation—our human role in carrying out God’s divine plan. Our challenge is to understand our role in this plan, and respond generously to this call.

Work is fulfilling a human vocation. The Second Vatican Council points out that, through work, we build up not only our world but the kingdom of God, already present among us. Work is a partnership with God—our share in a divine human collaboration in creation. It occupies a central place in our lives as Christian stewards.

STEWARDS OF THE CHURCH

Stewards of God’s gifts are not passive beneficiaries, but collaborators with God. We are obliged to be stewards of the Church, collaborators and cooperators in continuing the redemptive work of Jesus—the Church’s essential mission. This mission, proclaiming and teaching, serving and sanctifying, is our task. It is the personal responsibility of each of us.

All members of the Church have their roles to play in carrying out its mission:

- Parents, who nurture their children in the light of faith;
- Parishioners, who work in concrete ways to make their parishes true communities of faith and vibrant sources of service to the larger community;
- All Catholics who give generous support—time, money, prayers and personal service according to their circumstances—to parish and diocesan programs and to the universal Church.

OBSTACLES TO STEWARDSHIP

People who want to live as Christian disciples and Christian stewards face several obstacles. In the United States and other nations, a dominant secular culture often contradicts religious convictions about the meaning of life. This culture encourages us to focus on our pleasures and ourselves. At times, we can find it far too easy to ignore spiritual realities and deny religion a role in shaping human and social values. As Catholics who have entered into the mainstream of American society and experienced its advantages, many have also been adversely influenced by this secular culture. The struggle against selfishness and greed is almost constant; for many, it is harder today to accept the challenge of being a Christian steward. It is essential, therefore, that we make a special effort to understand the true meaning of stewardship and live accordingly.

A STEWARD’S WAY

The life of a Christian steward models the life of Jesus. It is challenging and even difficult, in many respects, yet intense joy comes to those who take the risk to live as Christian stewards. Women and men who seek to live as stewards learn that “all things work for good for those who love God.” (*Romans 8:28*).

OUR NEW PARISH PRAYER

TO ST. JOSEPH OUR PATRON WE PRAY:
GRANT US STRENGTH, WISDOM AND GUIDANCE
AS WE STRIVE TO FAITHFULLY FOLLOW
IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF JESUS.

LET US SEE HIM IN WHERE
WE HAVE BEEN,
WHERE WE ARE,
AND WHERE HE WANTS US TO BE.

MAY WE CONTINUE TO GROW
AS A CATHOLIC COMMUNITY
THAT CARES FOR THOSE AROUND US
WITH COMPASSION AND SELF-SACRIFICE
AS WE CONTINUE ON OUR
STAIRWAY TO THE FUTURE.

AMEN.