

## Homily Notes for Sunday, October 29, 2017 Stewardship Sunday, 30<sup>th</sup> A Ordinary Time (OT).

Readings: Exodus 22:20-26, 1 Thessalonians 1:5-10, Matthew 22:34-40

**1. Summary:** The central theme of today's readings is the greatest commandment in the Bible, namely to love God and express it in action by loving Him in our neighbor. God wants our whole selves, our whole lives. This makes an excellent match for today's theme of "stewardship" of time, talent, and treasure, which is indeed, discipleship, at its fullest, intentional discipleship.

### Scripture lessons:

**2. In the Gospel** today, Jesus combines the commandment to love God with the commandment to love one's neighbor and gives the result as one commandment of supreme importance in Christian life. This command is found in the N.T. and in the O.T. in Deuteronomy 6:4-5 and in Leviticus 19:18:

**3. The first reading** from Exodus gives explicit content to the second greatest commandment, namely, loving one's neighbors.

**4. In the second reading,** St. Paul reminds them that he worked hard to support himself (he was a tentmaker). He therefore is a good model for them and they have done so well as to be a model for other churches. He praises the Thessalonians for becoming good stewards, good disciples.

"In fact, when we were with you, we instructed you that if anyone was unwilling to work, neither should that one eat" (2 Thess 3:10).

### Traditionally in the Church this Sunday is Stewardship Sunday. How does that help us live the Great Commandment(s)?

**5. What is stewardship?** The Bishop's Pastoral Letter, "Stewardship: A Disciple's Response" states:

"Who is a Christian steward? One who receives God's gifts gratefully, cherishes and tends them in a responsible and accountable manner, shares them in justice and love with others, and returns them with increase to the Lord" (p.9).

**6. Stewardship and Discipleship are closely related.** "Stewardship always starts with the personal experience of the Risen Christ in our midst and in our hearts. It is a vocation to discipleship. The following of Christ as a disciple entails a personal response, and this call can result in a positive impact on our faith communities." This response of faith to Jesus must involve works of love and care on behalf of others (James 2:14-26). Hence love of God and neighbor.

**7. While stewardship is often understood only in terms of money, the Church wants us to see it biblically as embracing our whole selves, a way of preparing ourselves** to worship and serve God and love our neighbors. To indicate that this is a commitment and transformation of our entire lives, we speak of time, talent and treasure. In Spanish it works out even better, "tiempo, talento, tesoro, y trabajo".

### Let's look at these three areas and see how they help us fulfill the "Great Commandment."

**8. Time:** Here we focus on our prayer life, on time spent with God, and with our availability to be of service to others. How successful are we in taking time for God each day? This can transform our lives. Example of a Catholic doctor currently at CTMFH.

"My first year in college I was not very close to God nor to his Church." My second year I turned to God in prayer and the Mass. My grades went up. Each year I became deeper and more involved in my faith and my studies improved each year. I would have never been able to become a doctor with the successes and satisfactions it has brought, if I had not come to God."

Each of us can become happier, more joyful, more satisfied with who we are and better thought of by others if we commit ourselves to Jesus and become his intentional disciples.

**9. Talent:** This has to do with using the abilities and gifts that God has given us.

Example: As students, a disciplined approach to our studies is an important way to respond to God. He has given us our bodies, our minds, our lives. To prepare ourselves to best serve Him is a major aspect of our discipleship. He will ask us how well we have done this when we pass before Him when we die.

Example: A group of students went to the East Texas Food Bank to help put together food baskets. It was a beautiful example of use of time and talent in service to others. God smiles on such help.

Example: Taking the time to learn how to be good altar-servers. This shows we care about serving God.

**10. Treasure:** This has to do with money and possessions. Everything we have belongs to God and is given us in trust. This is a First Commandment issue. Jesus said,

“No one can serve two masters. He will either hate one and love the other, or be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Mammon” (Matt 6:24)

**11. The way we manage our money and possessions may well determine who our God really is.** I have **two additional sheets** that deals with this issue. I commend them to you. One deals with the biblical foundations of the stewardship of money. The other provides guidelines for giving and how to calculate a “Depreciable Item Reserve Account (DIRA). I am also going to put into the bulletins for about six weeks study sheets on Christian Financial Planning. If we want to be available and helpful to others we do have to have our debts and expenditures under control.

**How can this understanding of stewardship help our discipleship, our marriages, our families, our personal maturity and our strengthening the mission of Jesus?**

**12. In our discipleship: Because we love God we will desire to fulfill his commands.** Therefore, know that we must make ourselves available to help our neighbor, not just care for ourselves.

**13. In our marriages and in finding a mate:** Management of money with agreement on spending and on a budget is critical for the happiness of a marriage. Fights over money used to be the #1 cause of divorce. Over the last ten years pornography has become the primary cause of divorce. If we love God, we wish to keep his commandments. The sixth and the ninth commandments should help to keep our sexuality in order. Would you rather have your daughter date someone who was mature and able to “delay gratification” or some guy who was consumed by “immediate gratification?”

**14. In our families:** How much better would we get along if we intentionally loved everyone in our family with the sacrificial “agape” love of Jesus? How about the Fourth Commandment with all children honoring and obeying their parents? How happy the household?

**15. Our maturity:** To be disciplined in the use of our time, talent and treasure means that we will have developed the ability to put off getting what we want (delayed gratification) instead of wanting to get it immediately (immediate gratification and enslavement to credit card debt).

**16. The Mission of the Church and receiving God’s blessings:** God himself promises blessings if we “tithes”.

“Return to me, and I will return to you, says the Lord of hosts. Yet you say, “How must we return?” Dare a man rob God” Yet you are robbing me! And you say, “How do we rob you?” In tithes and in offerings! You are indeed accursed, for you, the whole nation, rob me. Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house, and try me in this says the Lord of hosts: Shall I not open for you the floodgates of heaven to pour down blessing upon you without measure” (Malachi 3:6-10)?

**17. Obtaining a good “Catholic” education for our children: How important for the next generation?**

Better use of time and talents would give us more catechists. We can’t improve our program by going to more times for classes because we don’t have enough teachers. St Paul speaks to this in Hebrews:

“This is difficult to explain, for you have become sluggish in hearing. Although you should be teachers by this time, you need to have someone teach you again the basic elements of the utterances of God. You need milk, and not solid food. Everyone who lives on milk lacks experience of the word of righteousness, for he is a child. But solid food is for the mature, for those whose faculties are trained by practice to discern good and evil” (Heb 5:11-14).

**18. Then, how about tuition support for our children to attend Catholic schools?** The Catholic Diocese of Wichita Kansas requires no tuition from active church families for their children to attend Catholic School. They are a diocese our size with thirty-five Catholic schools! They do it by tithing. Most Catholic churches average less than 1.5%. Some of our most prominent parishes appear to be under 1% for the general budget! How can we obtain a good, moral Catholic education for our children, thereby protecting them from evil?

**19. In conclusion,** do we believe that growing in stewardship of time, talent and treasure can truly help us fulfill God’s command to love Him and our neighbor? What might be your next step in growth in stewardship? Could it be offering ourselves to teach? Could it be attending further classes to deepen our faith (time and talent development)?

