

Forming Good Stewards

Good stewards are formed by other good stewards!

Please make sure this is distributed to the **pastor**, to the other **priest** and **deacons** in the parish, and to the person who produces the bulletin.

Bulletin Bites

November 1, 2020
Solemnity of All Saints
Matthew 5:1-12a

Option 1

“He began to teach them, saying: . . .”

The Mount of the Beatitudes is at the northwest side of the Sea of Galilee. A small chapel surrounded by a wide balcony provides a panoramic view of the Sea and adjoining hill that slopes down to the water like the end zone of a football stadium. The prevailing winds carry sound up the hill without aid of electronic speakers. People gathered on the slopes to listen to a carpenter whose Life was a Reflection of his Words and a Testament that such Truth and Wisdom is from God. Patriarch Elias Chacour of the Melkite Catholic in the northwest of Israel and southwest of Syria speaks Aramaic, the language Jesus spoke. He says the Beatitudes were NOT Passive, but a Challenge by Jesus to the people who gathered, and to us, to “Get up and do something” to: Identify with the Poor; Mourn the Dead and Help their Survivors; Be Polite and Cooperative; Feed the Hungry; Be Merciful; Have a Pure Heart; Make Peace by Confronting Evil; and Endure Persecution for what Right. When we do all that we will truly be BLESSED.

Option 2

“Blessed are the Pure in Spirit . . .”

The passive tone of the typical translation of the *Beatitudes* in the *Sermon on the Mount* in St. Matthew's Gospel must be read in concert with the *mandate to act* in St. Luke's version of the same event in his *Sermon on the Plain* [Luke 6:20-38]. Rev. Abuna Elias Chacour, a Melkite Catholic priest who was born in Biram in Gallilee and whose family and fellow villagers were forced off of their land and out of their homes by the Israelis, speaks Aramaic, the language that Jesus spoke. He translates the *Beatitudes* in a more *proactive way*. Instead of the familiar “*Blessed . . .*” he begins with the phrase “*Get up, go ahead, do something, move, you who are hungry and thirsty for justice, for you shall be satisfied; Get up, go ahead, do something, move, you peacemakers, for you shall be called children of God . . .*” Jesus was challenging the people listening to him, and he is saying to us, *Get up, go ahead, do something, move!* Are we getting up? Are we going ahead? Are we doing something? Are we moving? If not, why not?

November 8, 2020
Thirty-Second Sunday in Ordinary Time
Matthew 23:1-13

Option 1

“Therefore, stay awake, for you know neither the day nor the hour.”

The parable of the five wise virgins who brought extra oil and the five unwise who did not seems to suggest that Jesus was a Boy Scout and was well aware of their motto, “Be Prepared.” It is more likely that the Boy Scouts were aware of that parable, and others, and based their motto on the teaching of Jesus. People who live in areas prone to hurricanes, earthquakes, tornados, blizzards and other climate or geology related events know the value of being prepared. Jesus clearly meant that being prepared involved more than having an extra vile of oil for a lamp or the right supplies and equipment in the event of an emergency. He intended that we should live our life always prepared to grow in the understanding and use of all the talents, abilities and gifts God has given to each of us, to the best of our ability, for ourselves and for others. That is truly “being prepared,” especially the part about using all that God has given us *for others*.

Option 2

“The foolish ones, when taking their lamps, brought no oil with them,”

“I thought you brought the _____” Everyone has heard those words at some point. It is the sudden awareness that something important was left behind because everyone involved thought someone else had taken the missing object. Sometimes such oversight is the result of the rush to get to a destination. Sometimes it is the result of carelessness or laziness. Whatever the reason the cause is lack of preparation. Jesus was not concerned about bridesmaids not having enough oil. He was using the story to teach the Israelites to prepare for the time when they would be before God to explain whether or not they had loved him with all of their heart, mind, soul and strength, and loved their neighbor as themselves. Jesus is also trying to prepare us to stand before God to make that same accounting. We have the advantage of the sacraments, especially the Sacrament of Reconciliation, and the counsel of clergy who can help us examine our lives and discern how we can do better. Do we avail ourselves of the sacraments and counsel?

November 15, 2020
Thirty-Third Sunday of Ordinary Time
Matthew 25:14-30

Option 1

“Well done my good and faithful servant. . . ”

In golf a short put is called a *gimme*. In tennis a high, lofting return near the net is called a *lob*. In baseball four balls will get you a *walk*. And in basketball a ball passed to a tall forward or center over the goal is called a *slam dunk*. For a writer seeking to convey a message about the nature and consequences of being a good steward, today’s Gospel reading is a *gimme*, a *lob*, a *walk* and a *slam dunk*. We can learn that God created each of us with a vast array of talents, abilities and gifts, and free will to choose to accept and use them for ourselves and for others; or to reject them. What an awesome God! What an awesome gift! What an awesome responsibility! What an awesome reward for being a good steward! But the consequence for

failing to be the good stewards God expects us to be is awesome. Take some time this week to reflect several times on the Gospel passage for today. How have we done with our stewardship? Can we do more?

Option 2

“Should you not then have put my money in the bank so that I could have got it back with interest on my return?”

Jesus told several parables about people given responsibility for different quantities of talents and the consequences for the recipients who used their talents well in contrast to the recipients who failed to use their talents at all. Jesus seems to act harshly toward the person in the stories who receives the least amount and does nothing with it. The lesson of these stories is not that the people who receive the least amount of talents did not have much to work with. Jesus is teaching us that no matter how much or how little for which God makes us responsible, God expects us to make our best effort to make the most of it. It is not about the amount of the talents. It is about the amount of the effort. A steward is a person who is given the responsibility for the preservation and *productivity* of the possessions of another. Everything we are and have comes from God. He expects us to be good stewards and make the most of it.

November 22, 2020

The Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ the King

Matthew 25:31-46

Option 1

“Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for the least ones, you did for me.”

Our image of Jesus as a carpenter who cared for people in need and the necessities of life does not fit our image of Christ as King. The problem is that our image of *kingship* is not very positive. Kings were often tyrannical and self serving. And we often forget that at our Baptism we are all anointed *priest, prophet and king*. So what is the true function of a king? It is to see that all of his subjects, everyone entrusted to his care, is treated equally and shares equally in the benefits and resources of the kingdom. That is the message Christ the King taught and demonstrated to us. We share in Christ's kingship. Whatever we *do for the least* in His kingdom, we do for Him. He depends on us to do it. As we celebrate Thanksgiving this week, we should be grateful to live in a country that allows us to be kingly like Jesus - to do all we can for those who are *the least* in His Kingdom: the unborn, the elderly, the homeless, the sick, the dying, and the imprisoned.

Option 2

“Whatever you did for one of the least brothers of mine, you did for me.”

How can we identify a real king or a queen? Is it the fine clothes and jewel encrusted crowns they wear or their regal demeanor and stately appearance? Do they sit on thrones raised above all the other people and give orders that make others fearfully rush to fulfill their every command? No!!!! Hollywood may portray them as such and that may be how some kings and queens actually lived. But a real king or queen is one who cares equally about everyone for whom they are responsible. David was a real king. Despite his well documented faults and sins, he sought to assure that all of the Kingdom of Judah shared equally in the resources and protection of the kingdom. He understood that whatever he did for the least in God's kingdom, he did for God.

That is why the Northern Kingdom of Israel prevailed upon David to be their king. Jesus is a Davidic King so today we honor him as *Christ the King*. Jesus challenges us to be Davidic kings and queens who understand that whatever we do for the least in God's kingdom, we do for God.

November 29, 2020
The First Sunday of Advent
Mark 13:33-37

Option 1

“Be watchful! Be alert!”

Practically every child in the United States can complete the jingle that begins with “You better watch out, you better not pout. . . .” Somebody is coming to town and he is going to have that dreaded “list.” Signs of his coming are everywhere. There is great anticipation of the night when he will bring to people around the world the toys, clothing and other material things they most desire. His very popularity surrounds an event that was one of the most important things to happen for the salvation of mankind - the birth of a Jewish child, Jesus, son of Mary and her husband, Joseph, a carpenter from the small hamlet of Nazareth in Galilee. Over the next four weeks we have an opportunity to read and reflect and pray for a greater insight into the true meaning of the Nativity of the child, Jesus. Push aside the hype and the hoopla and prepare a true gift for Jesus - a heart that is more like His and a life that imitates Him in how we treat others. Be watchful and be alert to every opportunity to be like Jesus.

Option 2

“What I say to you, I say to all: ‘Watch!’”

“Watch out! Don't cry or pout. He's making a list and checking it twice. He's gonna find out who's naughty or nice. He sees you sleeping and knows when you're awake. He knows who is bad or good, so be good for goodness sake.” Have you figured out who HE is? There is going to be celebration of His birth, including singing and eating and drinking. People will visit family and friends and exchange expensive gifts, some of dubious value and usefulness. Do you know who HE is? It is Jesus, of course! This First Sunday of Advent is the beginning of a brief time for us to reflect on the incredible miracle and mystery of God Incarnate, God become man. It is a time for us to contemplate why the God who created us become one of us? His unconditional, unlimited love for us is certainly one reason. The celebrations, the food, the gifts, are nice. But spending time to comprehend the magnitude of God's love for us is the real purpose of Advent. That is a gift we can give to the God who created us and became one of us.