

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(s) who produces the bulletin.

Bulletin Bites

October 6, 2019

Twenty Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time

Luke, 17:5-10

Option 1

“When you have done all you have been commanded, say,

‘We are unprofitable servants, we have done what we were obliged to do.’”

We begin life totally dependent on our parents and guardians. Some of us continue to expect others to do for us long after we are more than capable of doing for ourselves. When a father was asked by one his children to do something he would tell them, “Move your legs, then your arms, and wiggle your fingers.” Then he would tell them, “You look capable of doing it yourself.” When they really needed help, he was there for them. In today’s Gospel the disciples asked Jesus to “Increase our faith.” He tells them, and us, to “Move your legs, your arms and wiggle your fingers” He is teaching us that we have the gift of faith from God, but we must use our head and heart to grow in faith. He cannot do for us what only we can do for ourselves. A wise sage said, “God gave us two ends to use, one to think and one to sit. Success depends on which we use, heads we win, tails we loose.” God has given us the gifts of life, intelligence, reason and free will. Do we use those gifts to increase our faith in God? Or do we just sit there

Option 2

“Lord, increase our faith.”

The apostles, grown men who reveal their lack of spiritual maturity, appeal to Jesus, "Lord, increase our faith." Jesus responds by challenging the apostles to "Increase your own faith!" We are all stewards and responsible for our spiritual maturity and the quality of our faith. We can always learn more about the life and message of Jesus. We learn from Jesus. Jesus assures us that with faith the size of a mustard seed, as compared to much larger seeds, we can accomplish great things. But such faith involves constantly growing in our knowledge and understanding of Sacred Scripture, which will not happen unless we immerse ourselves in the Bible on a daily basis. The more we know and understand Jesus, the better stewards we can be of our faith. We can then stand before Jesus and say "Thank you for teaching us by your life and your words how to increase our faith." And we will have done no more than we are obliged to do.

October 13, 2019
Twenty-Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time
Luke 17:11-19

Option 1

“Ten were cleansed, were they not? *Where are the other nine?*”

On his way to Jerusalem ten lepers approached Jesus. They apparently had heard of Jesus and asked him to have pity. Jesus does not perform any special ritual or say a special prayer, but simply tells them to go show themselves to the priest to confirm that they no longer had leprosy. One of them, a Samaritan, seeks out Jesus to thank him. Only one out of ten made the effort to express gratitude. Jesus tells him his faith had cured him. In the course of our day family, friends, neighbors, teachers, co-workers and strangers do things for us. How often do we recognize their help and say “Thank you”? One out of ten is probably a high percentage. What is our percentage? How can we increase it? First, recognize that our life and all we have is a gift from God and thank God every day for what he has given us. Then say “Thank you” to everyone who does an act of kindness, and spend a few minutes at the end of each day remembering each act. Did we thank them? How did our benefactor react? How did we feel? Keep a record.

Option 2

“Has none but this foreigner returned to give thanks to God?”

Would we have been the one who returned to thank Jesus? Or would we have been one of the nine? Gratitude begins with the awareness that someone has done something for us. In order to be grateful to God we must be aware that God is the source of all that we are and have. Our response to God is gratitude. And we can best express our gratitude to God by accepting, developing and using all that He gave us to the best of our ability for ourselves and for others. Note that the one who comes back to thank Jesus is a Samaritan, not a Jew. He recognized that Jesus, a Jew, had done a great thing for him. Many people who are imitating Jesus do great things for us; our parents, family, friends, teachers, priest, deacons and other members of our faith community. We may not be able to repay them, but we can say “Thank you!” In thanking them we are thanking God for sending them to us. Gratitude is an important part of being a good steward. It is the beginning of generosity.

October 20, 2019
Twenty Ninth Sunday of Ordinary Time
Luke 18:1-8

Option 1

**“There was a judge in a certain town who neither feared God
nor respected any human being.”**

Sadly that describes many people in power in the time of Jesus and in our own time. But Jesus describes a woman whose persistence moves the self-centered judge to render a just judgment. Notice that Jesus does not say that the judge ruled in favor of the woman. Just that his decision was JUST. That is what the woman was so persistent to obtain. In contrast to that judge, God wants what is right and just for us. But that may not be what we want. We should pray for God to reveal what HE wants FOR US. Often our prayer is what WE want FROM GOD. When we

are persistent in prayer to learn God's will for us we grow in our faith. Such faith is not easy. Even St. Theresa of Calcutta had periods of doubt, but she prayed to discern God's will for her and did it regardless of her doubt. We may not achieve the accomplishments and gain the notoriety of St. Theresa, but we can be persistent in prayer to know God's will for us. God does not ask any more of us than that. But he does ask that.

Option 2

“When the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?”

Jesus tells of a woman who seeks a *just* decision from a judge who, by his own admission, does not “fear God nor respect any human being.” She is not asking for special treatment, but simple *justice*. The judge is resistant - not much different than many judges today. But the woman is persistent. The judge becomes alarmed by her determination and renders the *just* decision she seeks. The woman had faith in the justice of her claim. Persistence in prayer is a sign of our growth of faith in God. Consider that most of the products we enjoy today are the result of people who had faith in a great idea and the persistence to find someone who could help them produce and market their invention. Such persistence in prayer reveals our faith that God loves us. That is the kind of faith Jesus wonders whether he will “find on earth?” That is the faith of a good steward. Is it out faith?

October 27, 2019

Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Luke 18:9-14

Option 1

“Two people went up to the temple area to pray; one was a Pharisee and the other a tax collector.”

The two men did not go into the temple because only priest could go into the temple, and only at certain times of the year. The two men clearly had different attitudes about praying and holiness. The Pharisee studied every word of the law and the prophets, and he observed every minute detail. That was his idea of holiness. And he was in the temple area to brag to God about how well he was doing. And he wanted others to see him in the temple area. To him, holiness was observing every minute detail of the law, even if doing so meant he ignored the needs of neighbor and did not love them as he loved himself. The other man was a hated tax collector. He did not have time to learn every letter of the law, and probably did not want to. He knew he was not perfect and was aware of his offenses against God. Jesus tells us that the tax collector, who humbled himself before God, went home justified, but not the Pharisee, who had exalted himself before others. Jesus is challenging us to consider why we pray, out of pride or humility?

Option 2

“O God, be merciful to me, a sinner”

Jesus tells of a Pharisee and a tax collector in the temple to pray. Actually, the Pharisee went to the temple to brag: “O God, I thank you I am not like the rest of humanity . . .” The Pharisee is probably a good man. But he seems to be thanking God that he has no need of God; that he is self-made and self sufficient. The tax collector does not even raise his eyes to heaven. He is aware that he is a sinner and prays for mercy. He acknowledges his dependence on God for all

that he has, all that he is and all the he ever will be. He stands present to God with all of his flaws and ask God's forgiveness for the ways he failed to be all that God created him to be. Both are stewards of all that God gave them. But it is the tax collector, not the Pharisee, who understands that. It is the tax collector who ask for forgiveness. Good stewards know and admit when they have failed to be a good steward, and ask God for forgiveness. When we stand before God, are we like the Pharisee or are we like the tax collector?

November 3, 2019
Thirty-First Sunday in Ordinary Time
Luke, 19:1-10

Option 1

“He has gone to stay at the house of a sinner.”

Are there any like Zacchaeus among us? Can any of us say “I shall give HALF of my possessions to the poor, and if I have defrauded anyone I will repay them four times over.” There are some. But we live in a world in which “grabbing the brass ring” has, for many, turned into grabbing for all the money we can get, regardless of the means we use or harm we do to others. Yet there are people who “Do not do to others what you do not want others to do to you” [Rabbi Hillel]; who “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you” [Jesus]. There are people who take responsibility for themselves and for others dependent on them; who share with people in need. Many people in the world have very little; some lack the basic necessities of life. They understand the need to share. St. Theresa of Calcutta tells of giving a cup of rice to the mother of a desperately poor family in the slums of India. The woman got a container, divide the rice in two and sent half to the family next to her. When asked why she did that she said, “They are hungry too.” Are we aware of the hungry among us? Do we share what we have with them?

Option 2

**“Behold, half of my possessions, Lord, I shall give to the poor,
and if I have extorted anything from anyone I shall repay it four times.”**

Everyone willing to join with Zacchaeus, raise your hand. Only a man who is aware that everything we have comes from God and that God wants us to use it for ourselves and others, and who has been a good steward, would give half of his possessions to the poor. Only a man who had lived honorably in the sight of God can declare that he will return four times over whatever he had unjustly taken from another. Jesus was willing to enter the house of Zacchaeus, over the objection of his friends and other, because He had entered the heart of Zacchaeus and was able to declare, “Today salvation has come to this house because this man, too, is a descendant of Abraham.” Are we ready for Jesus to stay at our home and enter into our heart? Have we been a good stewards of all God has given to us and lived honorably in God's sight? Will Jesus say “salvation has come to this house” when he visits our home?