

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

September 1, 2019

Twenty Second Sunday in Ordinary Time

Luke 14:1, 7-14

Option 1

**“Everyone who exalts himself will be humbled,
but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.”**

History is full of people who rose to power by use of fortune, corruption or force, or who used corruption to achieve a fortune to gain power. Many, if not all, exalted themselves by building monuments to themselves. Most who proclaimed their own greatness came to a brutal or humiliating end and their monuments were defaced or destroyed by those they oppressed. In contrast, there are many who believe in Jesus and try to imitate him who have done great things without desire for recognition, riches or fame, some in total anonymity, simply because it is the right thing to do. Some of those Christians have been acknowledged as Saints of the Church, but they did not do what they did to declared a Saint. Who do we choose who to emulate; those who exalted themselves; or those who were later exalted because they did not seek recognition, riches or fame for themselves, but rather the good of others.

Option 2

**“Invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, the unwanted;
blessed will you be because of their inability to repay you.”**

A wealthy parishioner noted to his pastor that Jesus dined with the rich and famous of his day. He asked, “Do you think Jesus would belong to an exclusive country club if he were here today?” The pastor answered, “I suspect he might, if he could afford it. But his guest would include people who could not afford it, people who need a bath and a new set of clothes, people who have not recently had a decent meal, people who are lame, who limp, or feel their way with a white cane.” The pastor then said to his parishioner, “You belong to a very exclusive country club. Have you ever brought such guest to your club?” The man said nothing. He had many possessions. The pastor added, “When we leave Mass and go into God’s world we are supposed to be Jesus present in that world. So, when we are at our exclusive country club, or any other group, Jesus *is* a member. We might want to start reviewing our guest list.”

September 8, 2019
Luke 14:25-33
Twenty-Third Sunday in Ordinary Time

Option 1

“Whoever does not carry his cross and come after me cannot be my disciple.”

The right to own and legally use property is deeply ingrained in the Bill of Rights and psyche of the citizens of the United States. Some take that right to own property to extreme and turn possessions and the acquisition thereof into their god. They worship at the altar of the almighty dollar. The ownership and legal use of property is also a Natural Law right and a teaching of the Catholic Church. But Jesus taught us that we will not get to heaven based on the number and value of our possessions, but whether we acknowledge we are God’s possessions and that everything we are and every thing we have is a gift from God that he wants us to use and enjoy to the best of our ability for ourselves and for others. Jesus also knew that giving to others what we do not need for ourselves would be a cross many would not be willing to carry. So he taught his disciples that “Whoever does not carry his cross and come after me cannot be my disciple.” Do we really want to be a disciple of Jesus? Are we willing to take up our cross and follow Jesus?

Option 2

“Anyone who does not renounce all his possessions cannot be my disciple.”

“Ah, Jesus, can’t I just keep my smart phone or tablet?” Jesus might point out that He said renounce [from the Latin words *re* = back and *nuntiare* = tell, meaning: *To give up a claim, right, belief, practice, way of living, feeling, etc.*] Jesus might add, “You may USE your smart phone or tablet, but you may not claim that they, or anything else you think you own, actually belongs to you. Everything you think you possess comes from God and belongs to God, who wants you to have what you need to enjoy life, but not if that means others must do without the necessities of life. That is a hard concept for people in the United States, who cling doggedly to the right to property, to understand and accept. As stewards of all God gave us He expects us to work out how much we need for ourselves and those for whom we are responsible, and how much we should share with others in need. So Jesus would probably say, “Enjoy *MY* smart phone and tablet, and let others enjoy them too.”

September 15, 2019
Twenty Fourth Sunday of Ordinary Time
Luke 15:1-32

Option 1

**“While his son was still a long way off, his father caught sight of him,
and was filled with compassion.”**

We can imagine the chuckles and snickers among the crowd when Jesus told the story of the Jewish father who gave half his property to his younger son. Jesus and all who heard him knew the improbability of a Jewish father, then or now, giving his younger son half of his property, then welcoming him back with love. Jesus used this story to teach important lessons. First, God loves us unconditionally. Nothing we can do or fail to do will stop God from loving us. God does not abandon us. Second, it is very difficult for us to love unconditionally. We place

conditions on our love in the form of expectations, even if it is to be loved in return. When people we love disappoint us we may love them less or not at all. But Jesus challenged the people of his day, and us, to love unconditionally. Such love is hard for us, and can be hard on those we love. Sometimes we must correct or discipline those we love for their benefit and the benefit of others. How do we love? Do we love unconditionally? If no, will we try harder?

Option 2

**“I shall get up and go to my father and I shall say to him,
‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you.’”**

It is important for parents to *tell* their children *I love you!* Parents nurture, protect and provide for their children during their early life, then become role models, teachers, and disciplinarians. That last role may cause a child to doubt the love of a parent. One young couple learned early in their marriage to tell their children *I love you* and to *hug* and *kiss* them every day. Their children learned to respond. Later, when their sons and daughters were covered with sweat or dirt after a tough game or makeup after a play or recital, they searched out their parents to *hug* and *kiss* them and say, *I love you*, regardless of how they performed or the outcome of the event. The parents, children, and now grandchildren, all hug and kiss and tell each other, *I love you!* They all know that they can go to each other, when necessary, and say, “I have sinned against heaven and against you, and I am sorry.” They know they will be hugged and kissed and told *I love you*, no matter what they have done or failed to do. That is true stewardship of Christ-like love.

September 22, 2019

Luke 16:1-13

Twenty Fifth Sunday Ordinary Time

Option 1

**“For the children of this world are more prudent in dealing
with their own generation than are the children of light.”**

Jesus tells of a steward who is caught squandering his master’s property. The master gives him time to prepare to lose his position. He decides to make deals with the master’s debtors so they who will owe him a favor when he is no longer steward. In the time of Jesus a steward had the power to make such deals, even if they did not benefit his master. In our own time it is not unusual for people to make deals to curry favor with others and have them beholden to them, even if such deals do not benefit, or even defraud, their employer. Jesus acknowledges that some may consider that to be shrewd. But it is probably dishonest and illegal in an effort to avoid the consequences of failure to be responsible or to take advantage of others. Jesus is not approving the actions of the worldly and dishonest wealth. He is challenging the people of his day, and us, to be trustworthy and responsible in all things. We cannot serve two masters. We can either imitate Jesus or be like shrewd and dishonest in the world. Which do we choose?

Option 2

“Prepare a full account of your stewardship!”

Here are some simple truths about stewardship you might want to keep in mind: A steward is a person who is given responsibility for the preservation and productivity of the property of another. The first question of a *Good Steward* is “For what am I responsible?” For *disciples of*

Jesus Christ, being a Good Steward is not an option! It is an obligation of our baptism. A Good Steward is aware that everything we have and everything we ever will be comes from God and belongs to God. Good Steward is not a title - it is the way we imitate Jesus Christ! A Good Catholic Steward accepts responsibility for a constantly growing Faith; for a mature Prayer Life that is about Listening to God; for all of the Talents and Abilities and Gifts we have received from God; for the welfare of our Community of Faith; and Evangelization - helping others find God. A true disciple of Jesus Christ will eventually hear: "Good and faithful steward, come, enter into My Kingdom." Don't we all hope to hear that?

September 29, 2019
Twenty Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time
Luke 16:19-31

Option 1

"Abraham told the rich man, 'My child, remember you received what was good during your lifetime while Lazarus likewise received what was bad.'"

Jesus paints a depressing picture of Lazarus, a poor man covered with sores laying at the door of a rich man who obviously ignored the poor man just outside of his house. Both men die. From the netherworld [hell] the rich man sees Lazarus in the bosom of Abraham [where all Jews hope to be when they die]. The rich man had clearly ignored the Word that God gave Moses to reveal to the Israelites: to love our neighbor as ourselves. Lazarus, laying outside the rich man's house was clearly his neighbor. He was obviously in need of love and care. But the rich man ignored him. He did not love Lazarus as he loved himself. He did not even love him enough to provide him with the basic necessities of life. Jesus uses this graphic story to teach us that our neighbors can be just outside our door or across the street. In our current age of instantaneous global communications, our neighbors are all over the world. And many of them are in the same condition as Lazarus. Will we love and help them before it is too late for us?

Option 2

"If they will not listen to Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded if someone should rise from the dead."

Those words of Jesus at the end of the story about the rich man who had more than he needed and Lazarus the beggar seem rather harsh. There is no gentle way to say that when we are dead it will be too late to do the good we should have done when we were alive. Unfortunately, when it comes to imitating Jesus, we all have a little Scarlet O'Hara in us: "I'll take care of that tomorrow!" *We will get **around to it**.* Try this exercise. Get a pencil or pen and a blank sheet of paper. Draw a circle and cut it out. Now write inside the circle the letters **TOIT**. You now have a **Round TOIT**. You no longer have any more excuses for not imitating Jesus. That is, of course, unless you do not know Jesus. And whose fault is that? Here is another exercise: **Pick up the Bible! Read it!** You will learn what Jesus promised and that He rose from the dead as proof of his promise. With that knowledge and your **Round TOIT**, you should be all set. Get busy imitating Jesus by loving God and your neighbor as yourself.