

These reflections are provided to help you focus your thoughts for your homily to incorporate a more pronounced stewardship message.

— *Stewardship Reflections by Catholic Stewardship Consultants*

Stewardship Homily Reflections

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DECEMBER 12, 2021 — THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

ZEP 3:14-18A; IS 12:2-6; PHIL 4:4-7; LK 3:10-18

“Rejoice in the Lord always, I shall say it again: rejoice!”

We have arrived at Gaudete Sunday (Gaudete is the Latin word for “rejoice”) this Third Week of Advent, and the Scriptures take on a joyful tone as we continue our preparations for the feast of our Savior’s birth and ultimately for His Second Coming.

Our First Reading, from Zephaniah, certainly gives us cause to rejoice. “Fear not... be not discouraged! The Lord, your God, is in your midst, a mighty savior.” Even more cause for joy, this Savior delights in us — “He will rejoice over you with gladness, and renew you in His love, He will sing joyfully because of you.” How can we not be moved by a God who pursues us, who comes to us as Savior, and who actually sings for joy over us!

Our Second Reading gives still more cause for joy as St. Paul reminds us, “The Lord is near. Have no anxiety at all.” Then he gives us a prescription for maintaining this peace: “In everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, make your requests known to God. Then the peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.” Paul’s instructions for obtaining peace come as an early Christmas gift. They remind us that we can and should go to God with all our needs and present them to Him along with our thanks. This guidance calls to mind a vital aspect of a stewardship way of life: gratitude to God in response to His great love and countless gifts to us.

The Gospel passage, from Luke, shows us how to live out this sense of thankfulness, making our lives a “Christmas gift” to Christ in joyful response to His love for us. When the crowds hear John the Baptist’s message that their Savior is coming, they ask him what they should do to prepare. He responds, “Whoever has two cloaks should share with the person who has none. And whoever has food should do the same.” He tells tax collectors to stop collecting more than is prescribed and soldiers, to be satisfied with their wages. In other words, he tells them to be good and generous stewards of all God’s gifts to them!

As the great feast of Christmas draws near, let us rejoice in Christ’s extravagant love. Let’s avail ourselves of the peace He longs to give us. And let’s look carefully at our lives to make sure we are indeed making of them a gift fitting for Him. When we get this “gift” right, all the other gifts and to-dos on our Christmas list will fall into their proper place.

December 19, 2021 — Fourth Sunday of Advent

MI 5:1-4A; PS 80: 2-3, 15-16, 18-19; HEB 10: 5-10; LK 1: 39-45

Our Blessed Mother takes center stage on this fourth Sunday of Advent, and fittingly so as we draw near to the celebration of her Son’s birth. After our Lord Himself, Mary is our model and guide to a stewardship way of life. We see her steward’s response in every passage of Scripture that relates to her, from her “yes” at the Annunciation, to her faithfulness at the foot of the Cross.

Mary's response to the angel Gabriel in our "Alleluia" today captures her stewardship spirit: "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word (Lk 1:38)." At the moment of the Annunciation, Mary recognized God's gift to her and made a generous and trusting return to Him, offering her very self to God as His servant. This reply to such an overwhelming request — made by an angel, no less — shows us how extraordinary our Blessed Mother is. She is indeed "full of grace."

But her response also displays the depth with which she possessed of two of the pillars of stewardship, Formation, and Prayer. Because of her formation (in her own Jewish faith) she knew that a Messiah had long been prophesied and promised to her people. Because of her intimacy with God in prayer, she was ready to offer her "yes" to Him when asked to be mother of this Messiah.

Today's Gospel passage, also from Luke, goes on to describe Mary's actions immediately after her "yes" to the angel Gabriel's message. We read that "Mary set out and traveled to the hill country in haste to a town of Judah... and greeted Elizabeth." Mary immediately begins to think of others before herself, setting out quickly to be with her cousin, modeling two other of the pillars of stewardship, Hospitality, and Service. What warmth and humility the Mother of our Savior shows, traveling to Elizabeth to spend time with her, rejoicing with Elizabeth over her own incredible pregnancy, and assisting her in a time of need. And what joy this hospitality and service bring to Elizabeth who exclaims, "how does this happen to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For at the moment the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the infant in my womb leaped for joy."

How beautifully our Blessed Mother models the mind and heart of a steward. It is an example that we, her children, can follow in our own lives 2,000 years later. With all the gifts God gives us — our time, our talents, our material possessions — we, too, can offer ourselves to God by using all these gifts to serve and glorify Him. In so doing, we will effectively spread the Good

News of the Gospel to the world around us today. We will be stewards after our Mother's own heart.

December 26, 2021 — Feast of The Holy Family

[SIR 3:2-6, 12-14 OR 1 SM 1: 20,22, 24-28; PS 128: 1-5 OR PS 84:2-3, 5-6, 9-10; COL 3:12-21 OR COL 3: 12-17; OR 1 JN 3:1-2, 21-24; LK 2:41-52](#)

Today's Gospel reading on this Feast of the Holy Family gives us a glimpse into the childhood of Jesus with his Mother, Mary, and his foster father, Joseph. This is a family like no other — consisting of the very Son of God, Mary, Queen of all Saints, and St. Joseph, patron of the Universal Church. Yet as we see in today's Scripture passage, they led a life typical of the families of their day. They experienced many of the same joys and trials that all parents and children experience even today. And so, we can look to this Family for help in our own family lives and see in them a model of Stewardship in family life.

The Gospel passage, from Luke, starts by telling us something about Jesus' parents: "Each year Jesus' parents went to Jerusalem for the feast of the Passover, and when he was 12 years old, they went up according to festival custom." In other words, this Family took seriously the Stewardship of their Time. The "Holy Couple" carefully observed the traditions and practice of their Jewish faith and brought up their Son to do the same. They worshiped as a family and with their faith community. And they did so faithfully.

We can take their example to heart by making Sunday Mass attendance a priority for our families, by making prayer with our family a priority every day, by making sure that we regularly celebrate the sacrament of reconciliation, and by observing in our family life the feasts and fasts appropriate to the liturgical calendar. When we, as families, prioritize our Time with God and worship of Him we will be imitating the Holy Family.

And when we are faced with the inevitable challenges that come with family life, we will be far better equipped to handle them, just as the Holy Family did. We read just a few verses later in

our scripture passage, that Mary and Joseph faced every parent's worst nightmare — they can't find Jesus! What parent cannot relate to this awful moment or at least the fear of such a moment. Perhaps a little child wanders off in the store and is physically missing as young Jesus was. Or perhaps an older child, though physically present, is spiritually or emotionally "missing" through addiction or loss of faith. In these times, too, we can look to the Holy Family for guidance. Mary's very human initial reaction upon finding Jesus — "Son, why have you done this to us? Your father and I have been looking for you with great anxiety" — comforts us in our own suffering as we realize that our Blessed Mother has been through difficult times in family life, too. The Holy Couple didn't always understand their Divine Son. But they loved Him deeply and gave Him the best of themselves as parents. The Divine Son, though God, obeyed His parents, giving witness to the value of parents and family life.

On this Feast of the Holy Family, let us reclaim the beauty and importance of family life. Let's commit to steward our families well in 2022, making time spent with God and practicing our faith the most important appointments on our family calendars. Let's make 2022 a year in our parish like never before. Happy Feast Day, parish family!