

*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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## October 2, 2022 — Twenty-seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time

HAB 1:2-3; 2:2-2-4; PS 95:1-2, 6-9; 2 TM 1:6-8, 13-14; LK 17:5-10

Our readings today show us that living a stewardship way of life, that is, a life focused on serving God and His Kingdom, is not easy. They also show us that our lives belong to God, not to us and that God will indeed bring about the fulfillment of His kingdom. We just need to have faith that He can do it and commit to our small part in His grand design.

We can all relate to the frustration expressed in the First Reading from Habakuk. “How long, O Lord? I cry for help but you do not listen!” “Why do you let me see ruin; why must I look at misery?” The Lord knows that the life of a steward is not easy. When we look around us it can seem as if all our efforts are in vain. We spend time praying but nothing happens. We are faithful to our ministry but no one seems to notice. We give generously of our financial resources but the needs around us remain great. Despite all this, the Lord urges us to remain faithful. “For the vision [the fulfillment of His kingdom] still has its time, presses on to fulfillment and will not disappoint.”

Our Second Reading from St. Paul's letter to Timothy offers encouragement on the difficult path of discipleship, reminding us that we have all the tools we need to remain faithful. Paul says to "stir into flame the gift of God that you have...." Through the sacraments, the Word of God, and the teachings of the Church, we have every possible grace and blessing needed to continue moving forward on the stewardship path. We simply need to return to them over and over so as to stir these gifts into flame. Paul instructs us to "guard this rich trust with the help of the Holy Spirit that dwells within us." Relying on the abundant spiritual gifts God has given to us, and relying on the Holy Spirit's strength, we can bear our share of hardship well for the sake of the Gospel. This is both our privilege and responsibility as Christian stewards.

Jesus makes this privilege and responsibility clear in today's Gospel passage from Luke. When the apostles ask the Lord to increase their faith, He tells them that even a mustard seed-sized faith is all that is needed to move mountains (because it is God who does the heavy lifting). We need only take the tiniest step forward, and He will do the rest. It is a true privilege to cooperate as servants in the work of building His Kingdom.

Living our lives in His service is also very much our responsibility as Jesus explains through the parable of the unprofitable servant later in this passage. Our Lord describes a scene in which a servant has just come in from tending to the master's affairs and asks whether it would be reasonable for the master to begin waiting on his servant. Of course, it would not be reasonable. The servant would be expected to continue to serve his master until he has completed the work the master has given him that day. Jesus says we should have this same attitude before God. The time, talents, and treasure entrusted to us are all God's. Our very lives belong to God. Whatever we do on God's behalf with our lives and our gifts is simply our God-given responsibility.

The stewardship way of life makes the privilege and responsibility of serving Christ and His kingdom a reality.

**October 9, 2022 — Twenty-eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time**

2 KGS 5:14-17; PS 98: 1-4; 2 TM 2:8-13; LK 17:11-19

Gratitude is the key to a stewardship way of life. Today's readings demonstrate the power and vital importance of gratitude in the life of the Christian disciple, for gratitude leads us to worship God who offers us salvation.

We see the power of gratitude at work in the response of two individuals in today's readings who received the gift of physical healing, one in our First Reading, from the book of Second Kings, and the other in our Gospel Reading, from Luke.

In the First Reading, we hear the story of Naaman, a commander in the army of Syria, who presents himself to the prophet, Elisha, "the man of God," to ask for healing from his leprosy. The prophet agrees to this request and intercedes on his behalf before God, telling Naaman to wash in the Jordan River. Naaman receives complete healing from the disease.

Overjoyed, Naaman returns to Elisha, filled with gratitude to God and wanting to offer a gift in thanksgiving for this healing. Though Elisha refuses to accept a gift, Naaman declares that for the rest of his life he "will no longer offer holocaust or sacrifice to any other god except to the Lord." Naaman recognized the great blessing he had received from the Lord and as a result of his gratitude to God, is led to worship Him for the rest of his life.

We find a similar instance of healing in the Gospel passage, this one involving ten lepers seeking healing. They cry out to Jesus in their affliction and feeling pity for the ten, He tells them to go and show themselves to the priests. As they go on their way all ten are healed.

Yet, what we learn in the very next verse is surprising. "And one of them, realizing he had been healed, returned." Only one of the ten recognized the tremendous blessing he had received from Jesus and returned to thank him. It's easy to feel indignant at the failure of the nine others to return and thank Jesus. But how often do we fail to recognize blessings great and small, answered prayers, healings (both physical and spiritual), that the Lord showers upon us, day and night?

The truth is that our very lives and every breath we take are His gift to us. But we can get so caught up in the stresses and distractions of daily life that we lose touch with this truth.

Gratitude begins within our minds and hearts when we take the time to recognize how blessed we truly are and when we have the humility to recognize where these blessings come from — our merciful and loving God.

The Samaritan reacts to his gift of healing in much the same way that Namaan did and demonstrates the proper response to our loving God. Recognizing what he had just received from the Lord, he “returned, glorifying God in a loud voice; and he fell at the feet of Jesus and thanked Him.” He was grateful for what God had done for him and this gratitude led to worship.

## October 16, 2022 — Twenty-ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time

EX 17:8-13; PS 121:1-8; 1-4; 2 TM 3:14-4:2; LK 18:1-8

The four pillars of parish stewardship are hospitality, prayer, formation, and service. They are intentionally presented in this order with the idea that we cannot expect people to respond to calls to increase their prayer life, their formation, and their service within and outside the parish, if they do not first feel welcomed and valued through warmth of hospitality. It just makes good sense.

However, those who are already well-versed in the spirituality and practicalities of stewardship, know well that stewardship cannot succeed unless it is steeped in prayer. Today’s readings show us the immense value of prayer and the privileged place it must have in our individual lives and in our parish community.

In our first reading, from Exodus, we find Moses interceding for the Israelites as they engage in a fierce battle against Amalek. As long as Moses keeps his hands raised, the Israelites succeed. But when his hands grow tired and droop, the Israelites begin to lose ground.

In his wisdom, Moses anticipated that he would need support from his community as he engaged in this spiritual battle. He brought Aaron and Hur along with him to support him (quite literally) as he began to grow weary. Moses relied on his friends to hold his hands up so that they remained steady until the battle was won. We modern-day stewards would do well to follow the example of Moses and gather together in our families and as a faith community to support each other in our own spiritual battles, great or small.

In our second reading, from St. Paul's letter to Timothy, Paul gives wise counsel on a particularly efficacious source of prayer — the Holy Scriptures. He reminds us that “All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for refutation, for correction and for training in righteousness” so that when we truly study it and pray with it, we may be “competent, equipped for every good work” the Lord has for us to do. Paul says that it is not enough to simply study and pray over the Scripture, however. He exhorts us to proclaim it! And to be persistent in proclaiming it “whether it is convenient or inconvenient; convince, reprimand, encourage through all patience and teaching.” Since we cannot give what we do not possess, it is vital that we develop a relationship with God and in a special way through praying over His living Word to us.

Our Lord Himself continues this call to prayer and persistence in the Gospel passage from Luke. He tells the parable of the nagging widow who finally wears down the judge with her unrelenting persistence in her pursuit of a just ruling from him on her behalf. Jesus goes to great length to describe this judge, saying he “neither feared God nor respected any human.” Yet even this corrupt judge responds with a just judgment because of the widow's persistence.

Jesus uses this outlandish example to draw a vivid contrast between a reluctant, dishonest judge and our loving, all-merciful Father. If even a bad judge will give a good result in response to a persistent request, how much more (infinitely more) eagerly and perfectly will our good Father respond to our persistent prayers to Him. If he delays in responding, if he provides a different response than the one we were expecting, we can remain confident and trusting in His goodness, knowing that His response whenever it comes and in whatever form, will be the very best one for us.

Our job then, as Christian stewards, is simply to remain faithful to our relationship with God through prayer. We should prioritize the Scriptures as a source of prayer, and we must lean on each other in our communities — family and parish — as we support each other in prayer. A strong pillar of prayer will make all our other our stewardship efforts fruitful.

## October 23, 2022 — Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time

[SIR 35:12-14, 16-18](#); [PS 34: 2-3, 17-19, 23](#); [2 TM 4:6-8,16-18](#); [LK 18:9-14](#)

One of the wonderful aspects of stewardship spirituality is its balanced approach to all areas of life. We see this balance in play as we continue to explore the Pillar of Prayer. As stewards, aware of our total dependence on God for everything, we come to Him in awe and gratitude. At the same time, we approach God with an awareness of the great dignity He has given us, creating us in His own image and likeness and calling us to join Him in the work of advancing His kingdom.

In last week's readings we were encouraged to remain persistent and constant in our prayer life. Today we focus on the proper attitude of a steward at prayer.

The first reading, from the Book of Sirach, gives us the confidence to turn to God with all our needs assuring us that “the Lord is a God of justice, who knows no favorites. Though not unduly partial toward the weak, yet he hears the cry of the oppressed.” Whether rich and powerful or poor and obscure, our loving Father delights in hearing from all His children. We are all His favorites!

But we learn that a particular attitude in our approach to prayer will make our prayer lives more effective: “the prayer of the lowly pierces the clouds; it does not rest till it reaches its goal.” When we pray with a humble attitude, God will respond.

In today's Gospel from Luke, Jesus Himself gives further instruction on the humble attitude we must have as we approach God in prayer as He tells a parable of two praying men. One is a Pharisee, a man with respected status, theological training and all the right credentials. He marches right up to the front of the temple to speak a prayer "to himself," thanking God for making him just a little bit superior to everyone else!

The other man is a tax collector, known by all those of his day to be a cheater and a sell-out to his fellow Jews. In contrast to the Pharisee, he stands near the back and cries out to God in a simple and honest way: "Be merciful to me a sinner."

Jesus tells us that it is the tax collector and not the Pharisee who leaves the temple justified. Why?

The Pharisee was full of self as he approached God. He felt no real need for God as he rattled off his resume of good works and spiritual practices. He was simply going through the motions of prayer. His lack of humility prevented him from entering a real dialogue with the Father. He was not transformed by his time of prayer because he was so full of himself that He left God no space to enter in.

The tax collector, by contrast, emptied himself as he approached God. He recognized who he truly was (a sinner) and asked simply for mercy, leaving all the rest up to God. This is the kind of attitude that God can work with! This is how a good steward prays — with trust, with complete openness to God's will, with a listening mind and heart, ready to serve as God leads.

The good steward knows he needs God, and that God has chosen to need him in advancing the Kingdom. His prayers pierce the clouds and God is glorified!