

Thanking God

through our stewardship of treasure



What do you treasure?

I have asked that question throughout the United States and Canada, and in every group at least one brave person (often most of the people in the room) has exclaimed, "MONEY!" So imagine my surprise when I asked a group in Australia the question and the whole group in chorus replied, "AGRICULTURE!" These people have kept much more of the original meaning of the word "steward." The steward is one who cares for the farm, livestock or vineyard of another. In fact, the *good* steward does not simply care for the valued property of another; the good steward nurtures it and brings it to yield with increase.



What does stewardship have to do with our lives?

When we really

think about it, we know that all we are, everything we have, all we will ever be is given to us by God. That is quite a lot to take in, isn't it? Yet it is true.

Living as stewards means that we care for and nurture all that we have been given: our very selves, our relationships, our material resources, every hour of every day we are alive. The good

steward puts God first, nurtures loving relationships with family and friends, cares for one's health, lives simply rather than being consumed by material wealth, establishes a good balance between work and leisure, and so much more. These are all aspects of living a lifestyle of stewardship. When that nurturing "yields with increase," we find abundance overflowing: our relationships flow out to draw others in; our material resources are shared willingly and with love; our care of our selves gives us physical and emotional energy with which to be productive. Recognizing that all is given to us by God, we nurture one more important thing: gratitude. In seeing that all is pure gift from God, we become grateful for the gifts we have been given.

The message

The use of our treasure - our money and material resources - is a sign of what we treasure or value.

We are created in God's image, designed to be living representations of God on earth. Our stewardship of our lives and resources is the way we bring God's love, care, attention, and mercy to the world.

The challenge: Stewardship requires us to trust in God's care for us. We must develop a sense of gratitude and be willing to be generous, as a response to all we have been given by God.



Let's get practical. Our daily decisions, from the way we use our time to the spirit with which we interact with others, take on new focus and meaning when we consider them from the perspective of stewardship. See the reverse of this sheet for practical ideas for growing as a good steward.

Let's be spiritual. As you can see, stewardship is also a deeply spiritual way of life. Remembering that everything is pure gift from God leads us to see that Jesus is our best teacher of what it means to live as a steward. The way in which we embrace stewardship is closely tied to the way we commit ourselves to being followers of Jesus Christ. We will be called to sacrifice for the sake of others, and to give as lavishly as our loving God who has given us everything. And in this, our lives will be forever changed.

- Leisa Anslinger

Practical ways to grow as good stewards

What is in your treasure chest?

Jesus is clear about the way God intends for us to use money. He describes the consequences of wasting it or hoarding it. He also tells us we have responsibility for the needs of the poor, and Scripture tells us of the importance of contributing to the Church community. Let us plan our use of treasure accordingly:

Begin with prayer: This may sound a bit odd if you've never done anything like this before, but begin the process of planning for your wise use of money by praying about it. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide your thoughts and actions, and you will not be disappointed!

Create a budget and live with it: Most of us do not make an annual budget for our personal or family use of money, but there is no better

way to capture a view of how you currently use money and how you plan to do so in the future. Sit with your weekly or monthly income; plan to give a consistent percentage to your parish

need to save for the future. If you have debt, decide how you will eliminate that as part of your plan; determine what other specific needs you will address, both for yourself and for the sake of others.



(many set as their target 5% to the parish, and 5% to other giving, including Catholic school tuition, but most people have to work up to

that percentage over time); make a promise to fulfill this pledge; account for your house, car, food, and insurance costs, along with other annual expenses; determine how much you

Separate wants from needs: This is one of the most difficult tasks we face in growing as a good steward of our treasure. What do you truly need? What do you simply want? How much of what you want is enough, and how much is too much? Is more and bigger always better?

Discover the joy of giving: Planning to use our financial and material resources as a good steward changes our perspective in so many ways. We look at daily expenses through the eyes of our relationship with God and gain a wider view into the needs of others; we find joy in giving, and we realize that our generosity is a real sign of our gratitude for the blessings we have been given.

Stewardship of creation: Be mindful of wastefulness of water, soil, electricity, and carbon fuels; recycle whenever possible; plant a garden; avoid pesticides; enjoy the beauty of creation!



After he had washed their feet, had put on his robe, and had returned to the table, he said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord -- and you are right, for that is what I am. So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet." (Jn 13:12-14)

HOW ARE YOU A GOOD STEWARD?

We are already stewards, whether we are conscious of it or not. We will always have ways to grow as stewards, too, aspects of our lives in which we don't care or share as readily as we should. How are you already living as a good steward? What areas of your life need attention in order to grow as a steward in the coming year? Use this space to record your thoughts and your commitment for the future: