

## A MESSAGE FROM MAGGIE

*Given at Mass at St Augustine & St Mary Catholic Churches*

*October 28 & 29*

Thank you, Father Paul.

It is hard to talk about something with honesty and accuracy unless you have a clear understanding of what you are talking about. So, when Father Paul asked me to speak on Stewardship, I responded that I wouldn't know what to say. His response was "talk from your heart, your experience." Easier said than done, but here I am.

Growing up, my family did not go to Church, so I did not know about Stewardship. Even once I was Catholic, the word didn't mean anything to me; stewardship was a commitment for someone else—older people or families - not me. My obligation was that if I had money in my purse, I should contribute when the offering basket came. After I was married, however, my mother and father-in-law were an inspiration and good example of how important Stewardship was to them and to their Parish Church.

I began to realize that Stewardship was not just a word and not just for everyone one else. I began to understand that my support for the parish should be planned, budgeted and honored and not just come from whatever I had in my purse and was willing to give that week. It wasn't always easy to honor that pledge and it was often tempting to back away from giving. But each time I would think that, something would bring me back to the reality that the parish was counting on me. My contribution, no matter the amount, was important.

Usually, I would be reminded of the many blessings and gifts God has given me, a beautiful sunset or a hug from a loved one—I would be remember that all I have is a gift from God and to show my thankfulness, I should give back to God.

Or, I would hear a reference to giving, or re read what has become one of my favorite lines from Bishop Fulton Sheen - "Never measure your generosity by what you give, but rather by what you have left."

Or, the Gospel reading, or other scripture verse would pop up and I again would know I needed to honor that pledge. Both Old and New Testament have many references to Stewardship. One that has always resonated with me is from 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 9:7. It reads “Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.”

So, over the years, my thoughts and feeling about Stewardship and developed into new meaning and appreciation in relationship to be a disciple and trying to live a good Catholic Christian life. Now when I fill out my commitment card and when I write my check - and I do still like to write my check - I feel accountable as is the Parish - when it comes to answering to God about what I have done with the gifts that have been given me.

I can sum up my response to Stewardship with three reasons: 1) it is scriptural, 2) it is a tangible way to give back to God, and 3) it makes me accountable—I will be able to answer God when He asks about my use of His gifts.

When I write my check, I do so with a sense of gratitude and acknowledgement for all the gifts and blessings God has given me.

When I write my check, I place my trust in God that He will continue to provide for me - maybe not with all I want, but surely with all I need.

Thank you.

*Maggie Paczkowski*