

Share Our Giftedness with the Parish Communion

"There are different gifts but the same Spirit; there are different services but the same Lord; and there are different activities but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each person the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good". (1 Cor. 12:4-7)

As St. Paul teaches, we are all endowed with unique and special gifts by the Lord. Some of us have gifts for leadership, some for healing, others for administering. Some of us have gifts for building or growing things, some for nurturing or consoling others, still others for teaching or serving as mentors. But whatever gifts we are blessed with, as Christians, we recognize that these gifts come from God. We bless these gifts and we bless the Lord for His goodness.

As Christian stewards we also recognize that our gifts are meant to be cultivated and shared with others, beginning with our family and friends, with those whom we gather to share the Eucharist, and with the world. The challenge for us is recognizing the sacredness of our gifts and acknowledging the importance of sharing them.

How Americans Spend Their Time

It has been reported that by the time the average American reaches 50 years of age, he or she will have spent a full 10 of those years in front of the television set. Other recent studies reveal sobering insights into how the average American chooses to spend the forty hours of "free" time he or she has each week

1. Television viewing	12 hours
2. Socializing and eating out	6 hours
3. Shopping and self improvement	5 hours
4. Movies and reading	4 hours
5. Hobbies	3 hours
6. Sports and exercise	2 hours
7. Religious activities and volunteering	1 hour
8. Other activities	7 hours

How we gather together as Christians to live, work, minister to one another and worship together is a sign of how we anticipate the coming reign of God. It also gives evidence of the third fundamental aspect of Christian stewardship: sharing our talents and skills with our parish communion. The list of activities above reveals something significant about how Americans choose to spend their time. For the Christian, re-prioritizing time in order to share our giftedness means confronting cultural values.

Participating in the Life of Our Parish

Celebrating the Eucharist means more than just attending Mass for one hour on Sunday. We are called to participate in the life of our parish communion. Christ calls us to make His presence known in concrete ways. That call requires involvement, and the gift we give of ourselves blesses the particular community of Christians we are involved with and blesses those whom our parish hopes to touch.

Standing at a Crossroad?



Choose to Walk with the Lord

Share Our Giftedness with the Parish Communion ...Continued....

Christ has called us to use our gifts "to love and serve the Lord" - to be sent forth. Sharing our giftedness by actively participating in the life of our parish communion is an expression of stewardship. Christians contribute their talents in whatever way they can. A commitment to stewardship motivates us to use our gifts to serve our community of faith. If we are going to love and serve God's people and thus God, a particular place and specific group of people help assure that such service is real and responsible.

Building Up the Body of Christ

The life of a parish communion is animated by the life of God because it is the embodiment of the presence of the risen Christ. The parish further embodies the presence, fruits, and work of the Holy Spirit. In short, the parish lives a life appropriate to Christian stewardship. It is the vocation of all of us who gather together around the Eucharistic table to live lives of gratitude by serving others (*diakonia*), proclaiming the reign of God (*kerygma*) and promoting communion among ourselves (*koinonia*).

It is important to remember that our mission as Christians entails first going to those we know, those who share communion with us: our family, our friends, and those with whom we celebrate the Eucharist. The parish communion is where we most profoundly experience the many ways in which Jesus is made present. First and foremost our task is to build up the Body of Christ, sharing with others who also believe that Christ is risen.

Stewardship and Evangelization: Offering Hope to the World

Having entered into communion with Jesus and created community with those who know that he is present among us, we are enabled to proclaim together as one body of faith to all people that God is indeed active in the world.

"Every member of the Church is called to evangelize, and the practice of authentic Christian stewardship inevitably leads to evangelization" (**Stewardship: A Disciple's Response**, p. 35).

From the commitment we make to our brothers and sisters with whom we gather we are able to move in all directions and reach out to all people. **The Parish Pastoral Council Guidelines and Handbook** teach:

For most of us, an important way we experience communion and mission is in our respective parishes. It is there that we hear God's Word and are nourished by the Eucharist so that we can live the reality of our communion with God and each other. In the Parish setting we experience power in the Eucharist. Its energy sends us forth in mission to evangelize and serve, inviting others to share our life (p. 6).

A commitment to Christian stewardship by our parish communion allows us to teach, heal, to inspire and to offer hope to the world as an expression of our faith in Jesus Christ that all we have to give comes from Him who brought us together.

"This is how all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (Jn 13:35).

