

# ENCOURAGEMENT ENCOURAGEMENT

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## *Being a Good Steward...*

Another year has come and gone and once again we enter this year with our hopes and cares, our thoughts and prayer for what this year may bring. It is often a time to reflect on what we would like to change or do in the coming months. As much as we hope for better things, do we consider that we may be part of these 'better things', in other words, that we are responsible to a degree as to how things happen. Many things are entrusted to us and for which we have responsibility, such as our homes, our families, our friends and affiliations. Jesus himself spoke of 'stewardship' when he praised the good steward and reprimanded the lax one. He also had much to say on the use of what we have been given, multiplying what we have and give away to others. There is also the parable of the 'talents', and the reminder that much will be given those who return to the master double of what He has 'invested' and again a criticism of those who did not multiply 'blessings' and gifts. (Matt 25 14-30).



The word 'steward' comes from the Greek 'oikonomia' which means the management of household or household affairs. Stewardship – the management of resources, benefits, goods and yes, even 'talents', gifts or skills is an important part, though often ignored, of our duty as Christians. The stewardship or caretaking of things given on trust, guiding the 'ship' so to speak, is often seen as the domain of the Pastor and of a small group of people or even a parish council. Indeed they have a critical role to play using their gifts and in the case of the Pastor, true authority. However, much neglected is the domain of co-responsibility which is shared by the parish or congregation or members of a group. This has many dimensions and levels.

Wherever structures are involved, they have to be maintained. Buildings have to be secure and safe. They have to be decorated, heated and embellished. How well do we know how much all this costs?

Are we interested or have we left this to someone else to sort out and are happy to simply give an odd coin or two. Maybe you covenant or even make a special donation. Maybe you even leave something in a will, but are you really aware of the responsibilities of being a Good Steward?

Are you willing to sometimes make a special donation because resources are meagre? What about flowers, or should they just appear for you to enjoy? What about cleaning materials, altar cloths, paper for the printer or money toward printing ink, paper, or even baking for that stall at the fayre. Or do you often say, 'oh, such and such does that? Do we really engage in Stewardship and are we aware of the needs of our Parish, community or group? Of course, we have different incomes and responsibilities but surely a just contribution is an issue of Justice and Peace especially where responsibility is shared. Each person has to ask if they are contributing adequately within their means...

The New Catechism stresses that we have a moral obligation to care for the goods entrusted to us and those which we share with others. Indeed, it reminds us that failure to do so is part of the failure to observe the Seventh Commandment!

However, there is another aspect of stewardship. We have to repay the Lord for His goodness to us. In this land, so far, we are free to worship. We are free to serve. There are literally hundreds of gifted people in our congregations. Everyone has a gift to share. Apart from sacristans, readers, altar servers, flower arrangers, musicians, organisers and fund raisers, visitors, welcomers, and teachers and catechists, not to mention our gifted parish priests, there are other gifts that could be used for our churches; all which make for the smooth running of our services and prayer. But there are many who could help with these rôles but who leave it to a few!

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*"If a man wishes to be sure of the road he treads on, he must close his eyes and walk in the dark." St. John of the Cross*

Have you ever thought that your gifts could be a special blessing to someone? Could I contribute my gifts for God's people? Are you engaged with your local community....?

An example... a lady hairdresser thought that she had nothing to offer but wanted to serve; 'Can't do flowers, can't sew, not good at fund raising, am too nervous to read, and I haven't got much money spare. She then thought, but I know Hair! Inch by inch day by day she started to offer help to parishioners that were at home with family, elderly people or ill, and slowly she got known in the parish and her gifts became her and their Joy. Then a group of helpers arose who helped to pay for her materials, etc. and a little idea became an important part of parish life and led to a visiting group. Another person cooked meals, another was good with decorating, and another helped families under stress.

Today there are many people in the world and our local communities that are suffering privation and poverty. Food Banks and Refugees and displaced persons abound and different ways of providing for the needs of others have arisen. Do not stand back and say that 'I could not ever do that' because you do not know unless you try. Even if you concluded that this or that is not possible for you, there are always ways of getting involved, not least of all by prayer. But think carefully what you can do that may be of service to someone. St. Paul makes quite a list of the various ways in which we serve and encourages us to do so. Today we see many who as a result of a personal tragedy volunteer help so that others may not suffer in the same way. Recently we saw three very brave fathers walk around the country to raise awareness of mental health issues in young people. Their daughters had committed suicide. They even put their grief to good use..!

Have you such a skill? Think that you are being called to share this with others? Are you a good steward of the treasure that has been given to you? There are three things to consider when thinking about stewardship: Time, talents and treasure. Where our treasure is there should our heart be. Our time should be at the disposal of God and others and what talents (gifts or skill) we have to share.

Am I a good servant a good steward? If not then why not? Remember that nothing is impossible for God!

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So as you ponder a new year ask yourself what can I do to improve things for someone, even one person... What could I offer my local community and church? How can I make a contribution to someone's day. Maybe even do something that has not been done before but is needed. Do not say 'I cannot' because with God's help you surely can.

**New Year Blessings to all... together we can build a better future.**

Halina Holman

### Pope Francis

"Love and charity, are service, helping others, serving others. There are many people who spend their lives in this way, in the service of others. ... When you forget yourself and think of others, this is love! And with the washing of the feet the Lord teaches us to be servants, and above all, servants as He was a servant to us, for every one of us."

2016

### The Joy of Generosity



PRAYERS PRESENCE GIFTS SERVICE WITNESS

*Jesus has no body now but yours.*

*No hands, no feet on earth but yours.*

*He looks at the world using your eyes.*

*Yours are His only feet, so walk to do good.*

*He uses your hands to bless the world.*

*St. Teresa of Avila*

### Feast Days in January

**1<sup>st</sup> Mary, Mother of God New Year's Day**

**2<sup>nd</sup> Ss. Basil the Great & Gregory Nazianen**

**3<sup>rd</sup> The Most Holy Name of Jesus**

**4<sup>th</sup> St. Elizabeth Seton, 5<sup>th</sup> St. John Neumann**

**6<sup>th</sup> The Epiphany of the Lord**

**8<sup>th</sup> The Baptism of the Lord**

**12<sup>th</sup> St. Aelred of Rievaulx**

**15<sup>th</sup> Second Sunday in Ordinary Time (Year A)**

**17<sup>th</sup> St. Anthony of the Desert**

**18<sup>th</sup> Week of Prayer for Christian Unity**

**21<sup>st</sup> St. Agnes**

**22<sup>nd</sup> Third Sunday in Ordinary Time**

**24<sup>th</sup> St. Francis de Sales**

**25<sup>th</sup> The Conversion of St. Paul**

**26<sup>th</sup> Ss. Timothy & Titus**

**27<sup>th</sup> St. Angela Merici**

**28<sup>th</sup> St. Thomas Aquinas**

**29<sup>th</sup> Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time**

**31<sup>st</sup> St. John Bosco**

*Grateful thanks to all who have contributed to the work of The Host Apostolate in 2022. Keep it up!*