



Fisch-ing Lines

by Deacon Howard Fischer

My last two columns have been devoted to the topic of stewardship for the Kingdom. I would like to wrap up this discussion by revisiting the “time” and “talent” dimensions. As I have mentioned previously, time and talent are as integral to the mindset of grateful stewardship as the much-discussed “treasure” dimension.

If there is anything that we hold onto as tightly as we grasp our material wealth in this day and age, it might be our time. We always seem to be time-starved. We’re running here and there, running from an extra-curricular activity to a sporting event to the grocery store and back. Many parents feel like they spend their waking hours being chauffeurs for their children. Our careers seem to constantly encroach on our personal lives. Almost every ministry in our parish is understaffed. And if they aren’t desperately understaffed, they are limited in how much they can do by the number of people volunteering their time to participate.

Stewardship calls us to examine how we spend that most precious gift, time. Where are our priorities? Do we spend sufficient time and make it a priority in our schedules to assist with building the Kingdom of God at home, in our parish, in our community? Do we regularly spend time in prayer? When was the last time you read a book to enhance your spiritual life or attended an offering of our Adult Faith Formation ministry? Are you substantially engaged in any of the scores of ministries offered at St. Mary?

We need to plan our lives around our faith activities and not simply fit our faith into the gaps when there’s nothing else to do. No more missing Mass because soccer practice or extra sleep gets in the way. No more leaving a work of charity for someone else to take care of. As Matthew Kelly points out, too often we never get around to doing the *important* things of life because we are too busy doing the “urgent.” A mindset and lifestyle of stewardship calls us to re-shuffle things so that how we are spending our time actually aligns with our values.

Working hand-in-hand with stewardship of time is stewardship of talent. Too often we equate talent with some monumental ability like Michelangelo's artistry or Tom Hanks' acting. But the truth is that each one of us has been given a number of talents which are meant not just for our own benefit but also for the benefit of others and to build up of God's Kingdom. The fact that our unique sets of God-given abilities are not played out on a worldwide media stage does not mean that they are any less valuable. Our personal talents can have a more substantial impact on the course of another person's life than watching an actor's latest flick. *If we put those talents to work!*

Too often we squander our talents out of fear or lethargy or selfishness. To the extent that you and I do not fully apply the gifts God has loaned us for the sake of his Kingdom, we are like the servant in the Gospel story who buried his talent in the ground (Matthew 25:14-30, which we will hear next Sunday). To the extent that we bury rather than apply what God has given us, the end won't be any better for us than it was for that servant.

My purpose isn't to guilt or judge, but to make us reflect. We need to look within ourselves as individuals and as a community so that we become better disciples and a better Church. What more can you do? What do you need to do better? Or stop doing? As I ask myself these same questions, I see some changes I need to make.

Stewardship calls us to devote choice, substantial portions of our time, talent and treasure to the mission of the Gospel out of gratitude for our many blessings. In the end, this mission is the only thing that matters. The quantity and quality of our efforts will be the sole yardstick by which we will be judged. Small scraps that come from our surplus just don't cut it. May you and I be good, faithful and productive stewards of all the abundance that God has given us. If you wish to contact me, please leave a note in the Parish Office or send an email to deaconhwf99@yahoo.com.