

ORDINARY SUNDAY XV “A”
SEPTEMBER 20/21, 2014
(Stewardship of Treasure Commitment)

Presently, I am reading Father Ronald Rolheiser’s book, *Sacred Fire. A Vision For A Deeper Human and Christian Maturity*. (Father Rolheiser’s weekly column is featured in our archdiocesan newspaper *The Witness*.) In Father Rolheiser’s discussion of the traditional “seven deadly sins” as roadblocks on the journey to full human and Christian maturity he reflects on the sin of “envy and jealousy”. Doing so, he relates it to today’s gospel parable of the owner of the vineyard, his workers, and their wages.

As Father Rolheiser discusses it, the gospel parable reveals how the envy and jealousy demonstrated by the workers serve as a warning to us in terms of human and divine relationships, and specifically for our parish today, to living a spirituality and practice of stewardship.

At the end of the parable the workers hired earlier in the day become engulfed in envy and jealousy at the wage paid to those hired “in the last hour.” Rather than focus on what they already possess (their wage), all they focus on is what others have in relation to them, becoming, as the saying goes, “green with envy.”

Much of our economic, political and social life as a culture is focused on highlighting differences between myself and someone else--“Look what they have and I don’t.” Our sense of self-worth is tied up in possessions (or lack) of them—the type of house, car, clothes, vacations or organizations we belong to. Advertising is built on the premise of highlighting these distinctions with the promising illusion that if we own or possess this or that, we will find the happiness and fulfillment we’ve been seeking. Thus, we tend to selfishly cling to, and guard, our material, physical, psychological and spiritual possessions, even as we are on the watch for what someone else has.

A spirituality of stewardship recognizes, first of all, that each of us has been gifted by God with particular entrusted to us for wise and prudent management based on our inherent abilities. Secondly, a spirituality of stewardship celebrates the rich diversity of gifts and

talents found in a community rather than competitiveness. Thirdly, a spirituality of stewardship recognizes that all that we are and have, are ours not by right, but as gift, as in the parable, from the hand of another, from God. Finally, a spirituality of stewardship is expressed in a practice of like-minded generosity in sharing one's gifts of "time, talent and financial treasure."

I'd like to share with you briefly, how I have, and continue to, try to live a spirituality and practice of stewardship in my life as I invite all of us to make our annual commitment of financial treasure to the mission of the parish.

Growing up, I didn't have financial wealth at my disposal. Living near the parish church I did have time and talent to share. This was exercised initially in being an altar server. Since I lived a city block from the parish church, I was often called on to serve daily Mass, but also wedding and funeral Masses, sacrificing time I could have spent playing with friends or just "vegging." Later on, I was asked to join the little choir that sang the Latin High Masses celebrated on the occasion of a wedding or funeral. Later on I served as a reader and extraordinary minister of Holy Communion. Looking back, this service to the church played an important role in guiding my vocation to the priesthood.

Over the years of priesthood I have tried to practice tithing in terms of a sharing of my financial treasure. Presently, I tithe through electronic giving to our parish. And while I sometimes wonder if I can "afford it" I find that my basic needs are met. God provides a way.

What is right for you in terms of "time, talent, treasure"? I cannot answer or tell you that. On the brochure you received is a wage table and a corresponding tithe amount. Unlike sermons I heard, and have been encouraged at times to give, I will not "shame" anyone into giving. God does not shame us into giving but to a like-minded attitude and practice of generosity. Nor does God compare our gift with someone else's. But God does expect us to use and invest our gifts well as the laborers in his vineyard.