

Recently, I have been trying to remember my first act of being a steward. While growing up my parents always went to Mass on Sundays, and always brought the envelope along that ultimately my brother and I would fight over who got to place it in the basket. While in second grade my Parish decided to create and distribute children's envelopes. Rather it was a solution to the brotherly-sisterly argument of who was going to place dad's envelope in the basket, or just trying to instill good values (I am sure it was the latter), I would wager it worked with many of my peers. What's funny about this routine is that for all the years I contributed via envelope, I never once associated it with the phrase, "Stewardship of Treasure."

So, when did we start calling our gifts to the parish, stewardship? Was it in 1992 with the release of the Theology of Stewardship document from the USCCB or the movement coming out of the Diocese of Wichita? I don't know if I can pinpoint a date in which I started to associate my act with stewardship of treasure. In fact, I remember just associating it with being a good Catholic. I felt like I was helping.

*I felt like I was helping.* This phrase is powerful. In fact, I would assume that many people in our pews each Sunday have every intention of being helpful. Maybe they serve at the soup kitchen, or they are a part of the bereavement ministry, each volunteer hoping to just help. I like to think of my financial giving in that way. I may not have much to offer, but the little that my family can budget, is a tangible way for me to say, "I want to help."

Stewardship of treasure is appreciating the help we have received from God and in return offering that same help to others. It is an act that reflects our spiritual relationship with God and each other. Interestingly enough, when I pray, volunteer, or participate in church life out of my normal routine, I actually tend to give more. Simply. when I am establishing a stronger connection to my faith community and God, I have a larger reason to give more generously on Sunday.

It is difficult for some of us to realize the gifts around us, therefore it is harder to acknowledge and return the gifts we have received. When you add prayer and service to your stewardship practices, you will quickly be exposed to all the gifts around us. Opening our lives to sharing a moment with a fellow parishioner, to welcoming a new family who sat down in the pew behind you on Sunday, to attending a new ministry, God will make gifts present to you. Let's promote our willingness to "be of help" each Sunday by contributing our first fruits. God generously blesses all of our lives, let us pray that we can follow the same generosity.