

ST. JOHN OF GOD CHURCH  
A CATHOLIC PARISH COMMUNITY  
SAN FRANCISCO, CA

## Thoughts on Stewardship

Over the 40 plus years of this parish there has been very little regular talk about money. Yes, we have had some big fundraisers for big projects, but other than that we have always quietly relied on your generosity for our daily needs. However, the last six months have shown us that it has become necessary to remind ourselves again about our responsibility to exercise good stewardship not only at home, but also when it comes to our parish, to the place where we come together to be nourished and enriched in the spirit.

There have been times when we have been faced with an urgent expense and some very generous people have written checks to cover these unexpected costs. But this is a community for all of us and we all have an obligation to support it as best we can, just as we all support the households we live in

God has given each of us many talents, many gifts. But these talents and gifts will only be of value if they are shared with others. Otherwise we are like the servant who buried his treasure instead of making it work for the good of others. There are many references in the scriptures that have to do with giving. Jesus taught us in many parables about the value of that which is given to us and St. Paul continued the message in his letters to the new Christian communities. In his 2nd letter to the Corinthians he writes: "Each one should give what he has decided in his own mind, not grudgingly or because he is made to, for *"God loves a cheerful giver"*.

Every three month we publish a report in the bulletin to keep you informed of the financial state of the parish. I do hope you have taken a moment to look at it. You will have noticed that during the last several years we have done very well, thanks to your generosity. As a matter of fact, during the last 30 years during which I have been the bookkeeper here, we were always able to pay our bills on time and never had to resort to asking the archdiocese for help. Some years were leaner than others, but with a gentle reminder you always came through with an increase in your contributions.

To illustrate our present situation I would like to give you just a couple of examples:

At this time our regular weekend offertory collections do not cover the cost of our monthly payroll (including health insurance)...

The annual raffle (coming up soon) usually raising about \$20 - \$25 thousand.

The cost of our liability insurance alone amounts to \$18 -\$19 thousand a year.

In the most recent six or seven years, we began to experience a stronger financial footing with an increase in the number of baptisms and weddings and with that, the donations offered for these sacramental services. Project Open Hand was paying us \$1,000 a month in rent for the use of our hall to coordinate the Senior Lunch Program.

The situation has now changed, back, at best, to just getting by. Weddings, baptisms, and quinzenceras have dropped off drastically. Project Open Hand no longer has the funds to pay us for the use of the hall but as a matter of hospitality, we have continued to make this space available to them.

As a result, since July 1st (the beginning of our fiscal year) we have had to withdraw \$30,000 from our savings – almost 30% of our total.

Few of us here have not been touched by the downturn in our economy and we are very much aware that it may be hard for some of you to contribute in the way you would like. We are tightening our belts as well. The archdiocese did not approve a salary increase for priest this year. We, too, have put some maintenance and repair and some items on our wish list on hold. However, it remains true that we rely on the regular weekend collections to pay the day to day bills.

When you plan your own budget, remember to include your contribution to the church on a regular basis. It is not the amount that counts so much, but it is the fact that you remember that you have a responsibility to participate in this way in the life of the parish that you love. Many of you already have gotten into the habit of writing a check once a month at the same time that you pay your other bills. If you don't, please consider doing it.

Stewardship is not only about our money but also about the way we live. There are many ways of showing your support through volunteering your time and talents as well helping with the financial health of the parish. We ask you each to give some consideration to what you can do.

I would like to remind you of a story you heard here not too long ago about the little sparrow who was lying on his back in the middle of the road, his feet pointing up to the sky. A horseman came by and asked him what on earth he was doing and he answered "I heard the sky was falling today so I am trying to hold it up!" The horseman laughed and said "How can you possibly hold up the sky with your puny little legs?" "One does what one can", the sparrow replied.

That's all we ask - and together we will keep St. John of God the wonderful place that it has been for so many for so long.

Dorle Gross

On behalf of the SJOG Finance Committee and Parish Council

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