

Good Morning – my name is Brenden Grant, and I have been a member of St. Francis de Sales for over 35 years. Over the next 30 minutes, I want to explain the importance of stewardship in our parish – **just kidding** – there is no reason to start running for the doors. I just want to take a few minutes of your time and provide some examples of how giving back to God has enriched my life.

Over the years, my prayer and spiritual life has morphed into many different forms. As a kid, I just sort of went through the motions at mass, because I didn't really pay attention to the words being said and my parents made me come. As I started getting older and with continued influence from my parents, I started to see the importance of a true relationship with God and the power of prayer in both good and bad situations. I know that even if we don't feel close to God, he is always there to guide us down the right path. If something bad happens, we are quick to blame Him and not understand why things had to happen that way, but over time we will find that God has a plan for each of us.

I saw that first hand when my dad passed away when I was 20 yrs. old. In that moment, I was angry at God for taking my dad away from me, sad that he wouldn't be there for me and I felt completely broken...in my mind I had to come to the realization that my dad wouldn't be there for the many milestones in my life – graduating from college, being at my wedding and seeing my children. I became selfish in that instant – worrying only about myself and drawing away from God and the church – not seeing the bigger picture. My parents instilled values of focus, hard work, family and faith and I lost that focus, which in turn made me lose the rest.

Over time, I started to realize that wasn't the best way to live my life and to look at the blessings and positive influences provided to me by God. I began to pray for guidance and strength to not live in the negative. Through the power of prayer, I gained confidence in myself and my abilities from all the lessons my parents taught me growing up and remembered that trusting in God, He will provide everything I need. From that point on I began to live by two guiding factors – *Everything happens for a reason* and *whatever hurts you makes you stronger*. With renewed focus, I graduated from college, was able to find a good job, and eventually met my beautiful wife (of 14 years this year), have a great new extended family and an awesome daughter – all of which are truly blessings from God.

With all of these blessings and living those values, I knew I had to give back to glorify God. I have been involved in multiple charitable organizations, served the Church in different capacities (High School youth group Core Team member, Usher, Eucharistic Minister, Parish Council member and now Chairman of the Parish Council).

My goal as chairman is to make this church better than before. To achieve this goal, I need your help. We have all been a part of the transformation of this church building over the years and we are in the final stage of the Capital Campaign, but the building is only one aspect. The building doesn't make the church, the people inside do. To keep this church growing and vibrant we need to be **active** members. I am asking each of you to prayerfully consider picking up a ministry to serve God and support your parish family. If you love talking to people and know how to open a door, consider becoming an usher; to truly become closer to Jesus in the Eucharist, consider becoming a Eucharistic Minister or let your voice be heard with others by singing in the choir.

In closing, I will leave you with this quote from Peter:

"As each one has received a gift, use it to serve one another as good stewards of God's varied grace."

THANK YOU!