

Stewardship Talk

Good morning. Today I have been given the charge of speaking to you about stewardship. Specifically, what stewardship means to me and hopefully inspire you to make a commitment of sharing your time, talent and/or treasure with our church family.

As always, when I think about stewardship, I am reminded the Old Testament..the story of Samuel.

Then the Lord called Samuel.

Samuel answered, "Here I am." And he ran to Eli and said, "Here I am; you called me."

But Eli said, "I did not call; go back and lie down." So he went and lay down.

Again the Lord called, "Samuel!" And Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, "Here I am; you called me."

"My son," Eli said, "I did not call; go back and lie down."

Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord: The word of the Lord had not yet been revealed to him.

A third time the Lord called, "Samuel!" And Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, "Here I am; you called me."

Then Eli realized that the Lord was calling the boy. So Eli told Samuel, "Go and lie down, and if he calls you, say, 'Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.'" So Samuel went and lay down in his place.

The Lord came and stood there, calling as at the other times, "Samuel! Samuel!"

Then Samuel said, "Speak, for your servant is listening."

- 1 Samuel 3

My stewardship journey started much like Samuel's.

I am a cradle Catholic. Attended Catholic elementary and high school in Louisville, KY and was, what I thought immersed in my catholic faith. Upon high school graduation in 1991, I left the big city and came to Western KY...GO RACERS! While attending Murray State, I rarely attended mass, forgot what holy days of obligations were and became a Christmas and Easter mass participant. Don't get me wrong, I spoke to God daily, I just thought I could have God without Church... You know, having God on MY terms.

Samuel, Samuel..I am called but mistake the summons.

Fast forward 10 years. October 4, 2001. I am blessed with the gift of my first born, Conor.

My family is actively participating in the Methodist church down the road from our house. I am the children's minister. I have my own business and am a very busy member of our community.

Samuel, Samuel..I am called but again mistake the summons.

January 4, 2006, precious Izzy is born.

Still, a family who attends church on Sunday at the Methodist church, serving on community committees and boards, guiding a staff of 24 teachers and still...

Samuel, Samuel..I am called but mistake the summons.

The call, however, is getting stronger...louder, like a yearning. Over the previous 15 years I had attended mass on occasion. I was hearing the call, I just wasn't listening.

One Sunday night in August 2009 I attended Mass here at SFDS. I had been invited by the Vanatters. Mark Vanatter had said the priest, Father Brian, was a young guy who wasn't boring and the music was pretty good! I attended alone. The hymn was "Here I Am Lord"... I was filled with a peace, my skin tingled, I was filled with such emotion that quiet tears began to fall.

FINALLY... I was able to listen.

Romans 8:28 says "all things work for good for those who love God". and 1Peter 4:10 "As each one has received a gift, use it to serve one another as good stewards of God's varied grace".

I signed my children up for Faith Formation. Since it was a 45 minute drive from the house to St. Mary's I stayed and volunteered with the preschool class. Since that time, 8 years ago, I have taught 6th grade for two years and 8th grade for 5 years. As a catechist I have learned so much about my catholic faith. The blessings that come from teaching children are immeasurable. As I teacher I have grown, and continue to grow in a more rich understanding of our catholic faith. Through teaching and learning with my children we grow as a family. Daily, the children say their Hail Mary, Our Father and S Michael prayers to start the day. Izzy still prays the most precious Guardian Angel prayer taught to her by her first grade catechists Mrs Christa and Mrs Kathy "Angel of God my guardian dear, to whom God's love commits me here, Ever this day be at my side to light an guard and rule and guide Amen.

Each year we receive the white stewardship paper, I carefully read it and think well..not sure I have time for that...or that..or I'm not good at that... THAT VOICE...that calling was there AGAIN!!! Remember, the Spirit shows us the way and stewardship is part of that journey.

So, I checked the lector box. It is amazing, the feeling I get when preparing to Lector. I imagine being a disciple standing outside Damascus, that we are in Corinth, and I am reading St. Pauls words at that time to my brothers and sisters! The blessings that come from sharing God's word, a more intimate understanding, and making it a true part of my

daily life. St Francis said, "Lord make me an instrument of thy peace"...use my voice to share your Word.

The white paper came yet another year and his time I added my son Conor, at his request, as server, lector and Eucharistic minister. I added Izzy as server and lector, and Dave as usher. I have had the amazing opportunity to be the Sacristan. As Sacristan, you prepare the table before mass starts. I will often bring my children to assist and as Izzy says, "I get to set the table for God, Like Martha, when Jesus came to visit." The blessings that come from preparing the Lord's Table, from including your family in being a contributing member of your faith family are immeasurable. To lead by example, our family can feel the importance of daily living out our faith.

THE CALL again... Eucharistic minister. This call I had no idea the profound impact it would have on my faith journey. To receive the Precious Body and Blood of Christ is deeply moving. To present the Blessed Body and Blood to another...well...there are NO words. Conor too serves as a eucharistic minister. He will tell you that being a Eucharistic minister is his most favorite ministry at SFDS.

From holding the door as ushers to welcome our church family into God's house, to setting up the table where we will all gather to be with Jesus, to preparing chicken casserole for the annual quilt show to simply keeping our church family at the top of our prayer lists, there are numerous ways that we can serve each other.

This year that white paper will come around again.

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops reminds us "Being a Christian steward means more. As Christian stewards we receive God's gifts gratefully, cultivate them responsibly, share them lovingly in justice with others, and return them with increase to the Lord."

Pope Francis so beautifully told the 3 million pilgrims who came to hear him speak at World Youth Day "Jesus is calling you to be a disciple with a mission! Today in the light of the word of God that we have heard, what is the Lord saying to us? Three simple ideas: Go, do not be afraid, and serve."

Matthew 28, Jesus says "Be not afraid, I am with you always."

Each mass ends with a GREAT COMMISSION: "Go in Peace to Love and Serve our Lord". How will you live out those words this week?

"Samuel...Samuel..." God is calling you... this time when you get that white stewardship paper I encourage you to say to God... "Here I am Lord, Speak, your servant is listening."