

First off, I would like to thank Jennifer Record for asking me to speak here this evening about what stewardship means to me. I am humbled but honored to do so. I still get nervous about speaking publicly but will try to do my best. My name is Lisa Zakutney – I have been a parishioner at St. Francis for a little over a year now. I was formerly a parishioner at St. Thomas More. I was at St. Thomas for 20+ years and was involved in many ministries throughout those years. I have four children – all boys. The oldest two are out of college and the youngest two are students at St. Mary School. One is in middle school and the other is in high school. I am fortunate enough to work at St. Mary so I am very passionate about my catholic faith.

When I think of stewardship, I think of many things. First and foremost, I believe we are all servants to God, and we are his stewards. Stewardship to me is the ultimate calling as a Christ follower. From the time I was a little girl, I watched my father do many wonderful things in our community. I grew up in a suburb of Pittsburgh where many little towns were broken up into townships. Most townships ran by the way of volunteers rather than paid employees. My father was a volunteer fireman, and volunteer EMT for the township where we lived. Along with being a firefighter, he would also work bingo for the fire department. He would walk the neighborhood selling raffles tickets for the bingo... with me by his side. He also worked bingo at our church – and this was in addition to working a full time job as well as his side-job as an electrician. So from a very young age, I learned that to be a good citizen, you gave back to your community and church—even when you were a busy person. My mother was not so much a volunteer in that way, but she was very good at taking care of people, especially her family—and I don't just mean us. I mean family like her mother and brothers and sisters, nieces and nephews..the neighborhood kids and anyone's kids. We always had an extra person at our dinner table. All were welcome in our home. I saw parents who gave of themselves in many ways so it was ingrained in me to be a giver as well, and it started at a young age.

I try to be an example to my children by giving and volunteering at school and at church as well as in the community. We never really know how much our children watch us as well as others. You may influence others in your life more

than you really know. So by being a good steward, not only are you helping the people directly involved but you are also creating a very positive example for others.

Some may wonder exactly what talent they really have to offer to others. I have often wondered that myself. It's tough sometimes to think of what you can contribute but the best thing is to find out what you love and enjoy. I know that I love people and love to talk. Anyone that knows me can agree with that! I have used this love of people and talking to serve on the Welcome Committee at my former parish. I also knew what it was like to move far away from your home and family so I was able to understand and help people transition to a new beginning. When I joined St. Francis, I decided to become a lector trying to help me get over my fear of public speaking—and here I am. I knew being a lector involved talking, so I knew it was right up my alley! So maybe step out of your comfort zone and do something that you always wanted to do but maybe were a little fearful of. I always wanted to lector but let the fear get in the way. I still get nervous but feel so much better after because I did it—and I know it helps the church tremendously because most people share my fear of public speaking. My children have always been taught that they need to participate in one role at church. My two oldest sons, Matthew and Jacob were Altar Servers and in the later years became ushers. My two youngest sons, Rocco and Anthony, serve once or twice a month here at St Francis, as well as at school during mass. I want them to know that they need to give of themselves. I show them the way but try my best to guide them by example.

So as we are entering into our Stewardship pledges, think about what you might be able to contribute. What do you enjoy? Did you once see people in your life give of themselves? If you were fortunate enough to witness this, surely you had admiration for that. I believe that we should all strive to be the “best version of ourselves” that we can be. By being a good steward, you will definitely make that version of yourself better.

Thank you for allowing me to speak this evening. God Bless –