

Stewardship, Fear and Faith

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Two weeks ago we commemorated 110 years of parish life here at St. Anne. Truly we had much to celebrate. For 110 years this Catholic community has gathered to celebrate their faith and to reach out in love and service to carry on the ministry of Jesus. And today we carry on that very mission with a profound hope that St. Anne will continue to be the light on the hill for many generations to come. It seems that is how our lives go.

We live in an ever-moving present moment that has been formed by our past and moves towards the hopes for our future. As we cannot change the past and the future is yet to come, we can only embrace the power and potential of the present moment. I think this is why when Moses asks God what name to tell the people—God does not say “I was;” God does not say “I will be.” God says “I am!” God is most present in every moment of our lives. We are at our best when we embrace the loving presence of God and act in accordance with God’s will for us.

Sometimes this is not an easy choice. This past week you received a letter from Ron Ryan, our Pastoral Coordinator, asking you to make a financial pledge to support the ministerial efforts of St. Anne Parish for 2019. So, you got the letter in the *past* and the pledge is for the *future*. The question is, what are you going to do right *now*?

Obviously my hope is that you will make a Stewardship of Treasure commitment to support the mission of our parish. I have seen clearly in the past year with you how St. Anne powerfully lives out the message of today’s Gospel—to love God and neighbor. But we can only do this with all our heart, all our soul, all our mind, and all our strength if all of us do our part. If we all do our part in sharing our financial blessings, we can continue the awesome ministry that we offer: our wonderful liturgies; our fantastic school that not only forms our students academically, but forms them to be bright lights in a world that can be so dark; the many opportunities to grow in faith as well as learn the truths of our Catholic religion; the tremendous outreach to the poor and vulnerable through Martha’s Workers, St. Vincent de Paul, our Dinner with Our Homeless Neighbors; the many community-building activities we offer throughout the year; and so much more.

While we do so many great things as a parish, God always calls us to do more. This past week I was posting a page on our website that Ron had sent me about our Confirmation program. In searching for the best place to post it I clicked on “Faith Formation for Teens”... and I got, “Page Not Found.” Clearly a sign that we have more work to do!

As I said earlier, in every moment we have the opportunity to take the blessings we have received, embrace the loving presence of God, and make choices for a better future. Yet, these choices are especially difficult when it comes to money. I think this can happen when we fail to recognize the blessings of our faith but rather listen to the messages of fear that are so prominent in our world today.

Again, the question is what will you do right now—make a choice based on fear or based on faith. If you have already responded to Ron’s invitation, I thank you. If not, I invite you right now to pick up and fill out a Stewardship of Treasure commitment card that you can find at your seats. Let me share a couple of stories from my life that both shape and empower my own faith. I remember many years ago, when I first got married. I was working part-time at a church in Renton and working towards my master’s degree at Seattle U. My wife was working in insurance. Money was tight. We were coming

back from a trip on a Sunday night and were talking about just how tight our money situation was. We would need to be very careful until our next paycheck arrived. When we got home I found an unexpected insurance check in the mail that more than covered the money we would need. In the light of faith, fear, as always, is foolish. More recently, 15 months ago, when I lost my job after 36 years of ministry, I had faith that I would be ok. As such, when Ron offered me a part-time job here at St. Anne that involved a 40% reduction in salary and the need to move to Queen Anne, I said "Yes." So, of course, the proceeds from the sale of a house shortly thereafter helped to offset the money I would be losing every month.

Fear does not get us to where God wants us to be. I ask that you take a step of faith and increase the percentage of your financial blessings that you give to our Church. You have the card in front of you right now. Take the time to fill it out and put it in the offertory basket. If you need more time for prayer before deciding, you can take a card home and bring it back next week or go to our website and make your pledge there. The important thing is that you don't believe the message of fear but act in faith with all your heart and soul and mind and strength. I promise this will bring amazing blessings in your life. Besides, how cool is it that when someone asks you if you are following God's will and acting in faith, you can respond with the very name of God, "I am"!

