



Front the Heart

A Newsletter ♦ Published by Sacred Heart Parish ♦ Main Street South, P.O. Box 686 ♦ Southbury, CT 06488

Stewardship Initiative Underway

Stewardship is a term you're going to hear frequently in the coming months as we launch our two-year Archdiocesan Parish Stewardship Initiative. The dictionary defines stewardship as "the individual's responsibility for sharing his or her time, talent and material possessions in the service of God and of the benefit of all mankind." Considering this definition, the obvious question is: Are we meeting this responsibility in our daily lives?

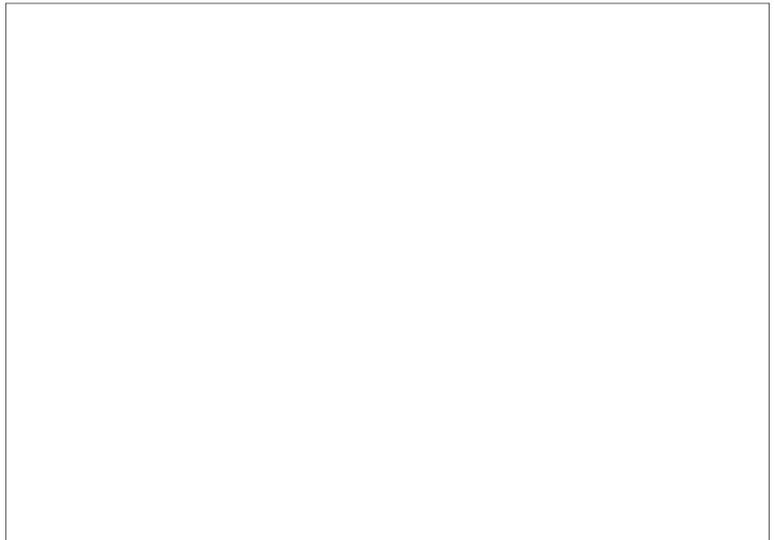
Stewardship is not a project or program that gathers a lot of attention at the outset only to fade over the horizon after an initial burst of energy. Nor is it a fund-raising campaign organized by the church as another method to improve finances. Stewardship is deeply personal and spiritual. Being a Christian steward is a lifestyle choice we make that departs from our current culture and its emphasis on materialism and acquiring wealth, and focuses instead on self.

The Christian stewardship concept holds that all we are and everything we have are gifts from God, and suggests that we have been given three gifts, which are symbolic of the three gifts presented by the Magi at Christ's birth.

The first gift is the gift of our time. In today's busy world, we just don't seem to have enough time and often, volunteering time with our church doesn't make the priority list. Be honest with yourself: is there enough time? Think about people we know who always seem to have time to volunteer. It is often the busiest people who consistently commit more time in service to their church and community. Giving of our time should be an ongoing commitment where we tithe back to God some of the time He has given us. Perhaps we need to be more aware of the "time wasters" in our lives and redirect this time to more meaningful pursuits. Instead of watching television, try donating an hour or so a week to one of the many ministries of Sacred Heart Church. Your active participation in our Parish Steward-

ship Initiative is an opportunity for all of us to take steps forward toward becoming better Christian stewards.

The second gift is the gift of our unique talents. All of us have skills and abilities that stand out and can be put to good use within our church community. As with the



The newly formed Parish Stewardship Committee met recently to map out stewardship initiative goals for Sacred Heart. Pictured from left to right: Jeanne Kaufman, Bob Loiseau, Jean Brickey, Fr. Mark Flynn, Tony Del Negro, Chairman, Dave Francke and Jim Grady. Absent from photo are: Marise Jung, Jane Santopietro, Mark Tidgwell and Nick Ioli.

giving of our time, employing our talents for the good of others is not a one-time event. Christian stewards give freely of their talents to others in need. I'm quite sure the parishioners of Sacred Heart cover the full spectrum of talents that can meaningfully benefit our parish and the community at large in numerous ways. What are you good at? What do you like to do? How can these contribute?

The third gift is the gift of treasure. I know what people say: "The Church is always asking us for money. Why can't I just attend Sunday Mass without being both-

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Stewardship

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ered about money all the time?"

There is a practical answer: it takes a lot of money to run a parish, perhaps more than we realize. Admittedly, it is not easy to meet the expenses of our daily lives. Raising a family is costly. Having a good place to live is not cheap. Food prices always seem to be rising. So where will the extra money come from to give to the church? Giving back to the Lord should share a high priority in your family budget. Yes, perhaps we will have to sacrifice other things once in a while: dinner out, a movie, buying a CD. But we can make these sacrifices without neglecting the necessities of life, and as a result can make a return

Parish Ministry Fair Planned for September

The weekend of September 25 and 26 has been set aside for parishioners of Sacred Heart to learn more about the parish's various ministries. Committee members will be on hand before and after each Mass to answer questions and distribute literature.

God has blessed everyone in our faith community with some skill or talent that can be used effectively in our parish. At this ministry fair, you will find many opportunities to share those talents and gifts.

Please consider joining one or more of the ministries and becoming a "Steward of God."

Jan Bricks

to the Lord for the many gifts He has bestowed upon us.

Hopefully you have learned a little more about stewardship. "We must realize that we are all given a few short years on God's Earth to

'build up the Kingdom.' Sharing your blessings by being a better Christian Steward will make this world just a little better."

Anthony T. DeI Negro
Stewardship Initiative Chairman

Contemporary Stewardship

Stewardship is a word rarely used in our society today. What came to mind as I was thinking about this article were all the gifts, spiritual and material, that we have here at the faith community of Sacred Heart.

I thought about what St. Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 12:4-6. He said that there are different kinds of spiritual gifts but the same spirit; there are different forms of service but the same Lord; there are different workings but the same God who produces all of them in everyone.

In essence, what St. Paul is saying is that one and the same spirit produces all of these gifts, distributing to each person as He wishes. However, these gifts are not ours to keep. They are to be shared with one another to do the work of God. These gifts and talents can be used according to the needs of our church. For instance, a dentist could offer to do routine checkups for kids who otherwise could not afford them.

Carpenters, painters and general handymen could offer their services to do repair work or maintenance around

the church. We can be stewards of our church grounds with our gifts of gardening and landscaping.

Perhaps the greatest gift we can share involves the youth of our parish. Sharing our time and talents with them can be the essence of our faith community: the young people of our parish are the future, the twenty-first century generation who will continue to live in our community and worship at Sacred Heart.

Maybe this will help shed some light on what stewardship will be all about in the new millennium. We have an obligation to use our time and talents to better our lives and the lives of our neighbors. Maybe we can give God that much and share with

others what He has blessed us with.

Paula Vaghi



C r o s s w i n d s

Are You Stymied?

I like the word "stymied." I like the way it sounds when you pronounce it. I'm taken with its meaning. Webster's Dictionary defines stymied as "to present an obstacle to, or stand in the way of." These days, I find that there are many situations that cause me to become stymied.

I immediately think of a friend with an impressive position at a large corporation. He complained that his company was forever sending him to workshops and symposiums designed to help him assist his company in better meeting its goals, increasing productivity and enhancing product quality. His complaints were not about the workshops. He was excited about what he learned, but he felt intimidated when he returned because what he learned at the seminars ran counter to everything his company did. He was afraid to talk about these concepts for fear that he would be seen as an instigator. And since many of his new ideas and approaches had not always been well received in past, he simply kept quiet. He became so intimidated that after a while he didn't even pay much attention to what he heard at seminars and conferences unless it fit with what the people around him wanted to hear. He was stymied by why he was encouraged to attend these programs and then discouraged from putting their insights into practice.

Our lives are often like this. We learn a great many things. Science presents us with data, and the Internet exposes us to more infor-

mation than we could possibly hope to absorb. Our faith tells us some very essential things about how to relate to each other and what we need to do to be faithful followers of Christ in an otherwise unfaithful world. And we go off and live as if we never heard or believed a word of it.

As a priest, I often find myself stymied by God's people and have a problem coming to grips with what they believe faith is really about. Faith is a gift just as life itself is a gift. We know that we need to grow and develop to live successfully and commit ourselves to a process that never really ends, and that we can't exempt ourselves from our lives for a day or a few weeks and enter into a brief retirement. Faith is just the same. We can't say we believe for the 55 minutes we spend at Mass on Sunday and not put that faith into practice for the other six days. We need to keep in mind that Jesus did not spend much time teaching us what to do in church. Instead, He taught us how to live once we leave it.

Is our experience of church like that of my stymied friend who learned one thing and went back to the office to do another? Are we increasingly intimidated by the prevailing sentiments of the society in which we live—a society that is so counter-cultural to what faith presents—that we are apathetic to what we see and hear? Do we find ourselves doing little or nothing to incorporate faith into daily life? If we are to put faith into action rather than simply into a time slot in our lives, then we must realize one thing: Jesus tells us more about matters of public morality than

He does about so-called private morality. He speaks about a commitment of our lives that centers on forgiveness, focuses on nonviolence, and looks at justice in terms of how every human being is treated. In short, Jesus tells us what our job is: to take care of one another. This is our most important job after we leave Mass, and is a commitment that goes beyond our 9-to-5 jobs.

I guess there will always be situations that will leave each of us a little stymied. But for us men and women of faith, we can never allow ourselves to be intimidated. What we are told in private we need to proclaim from the rooftops. There should be nothing private or anonymous about this faith called Christianity. We have been gifted with lives of talent and ability, and with faith. Christ prompts us to share our gifts. Maybe we need to commit ourselves anew to sharing life, enhancing life, healing the life of someone else, and in doing so, to know that we are really living the gift of His stewards.



Spotlight on Youth

Young Parishioner Has Accomplished Much

This fall, Sacred Heart will bear a sad but proud farewell to one of its most accomplished and talented young parishioners, Joseph Ackley. Joseph, who graduated from Pomperaug High School this past June as the class's valedictorian, will soon leave Southbury to attend Dartmouth College in Hanover, New Hampshire.

It is no surprise that Dartmouth (and several other colleges) wanted Joseph to join their student body. His accomplishments are many, and they reflect a wide variety of interests. Academically, Joseph has always excelled (he was also valedictorian of his Memorial Middle School class) and has always taken his studies seriously. "I never had to tell him twice to do his homework," said his mother, Mary Korsu, who has worked at the parish rectory for the past 10 years. "In fact, I often had to tell him to lay off the books for a little while."

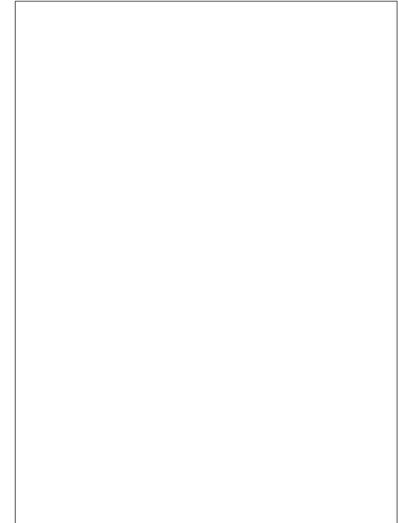
Joseph's studies and academic talent merited him many Pomperaug High School awards. In his junior year, he was awarded the Harvard Book Prize (for overall achievement), the Bausch & Lomb Award for Science, the Xerox Award for Humanities and the Alliance Francais (for being the top overall French student). As a senior, in addition to being named valedictorian Joseph earned the McCarthy Prize in Chemistry and Graduate Awards in Excellence for French, English, Mathematics and Social Studies.

Joseph, however, is more than mere academics. His first criteria

for choosing a college was its commitment to the personal growth of its student body. The college's academic program was his second priority. Indeed, Joseph's well-roundedness is best reflected in his many other achievements. He is an accomplished French horn player, having played with Pomperaug High School's Concert Band and the elite Norwalk Youth Symphony. He was also an All-State vocalist and a member of Pomperaug's chorus and Select Singers group. Joseph is also a talented pianist, an interest that he pursues on his own time.

Since second grade, Joseph has been a member of the Boy Scouts, an organization that his father initially got him interested in joining. Recently Joseph attained the rank of Eagle Scout, which he calls his proudest accomplishment. "It means a lot to me to become an Eagle Scout," said Joseph. "It was one of the hardest tasks that I have ever had to fulfill—much harder than anything that I have ever had to do academically."

Joseph has also been an active member of this Sacred Heart parish community. He was baptized at an Easter Vigil mass in 1981, and received his first communion and confirmation at Sacred Heart as well. Joseph has been an altar server since second grade and a reader since tenth grade. Also in tenth grade, Joseph joined the Communications Committee, writing articles for *From The Heart*. "I am so glad that Joseph has grown up in Sacred Heart's faith community," said Mary. "This, combined with his family upbringing, has given him a solid foundation from which to set forth on his new venture. He is a



student who doesn't compromise his convictions or his faith. Joseph knows what he thinks and what he feels—and he is not swayed from that. This will become increasingly important as he is exposed to many aspects of the college environment."

Despite his many awards and accomplishments, Joseph remains humble about his talents and gifts. "I'm the cheerleader, the one making all the noise," said Mary. "He just lives his life very unassumingly, and I don't think that he realizes the full impact of what he's done." Joseph's own statements reflect this humility, and he gives much of the credit for his accomplishments to his parents. "My parents have enabled me to do all of this. They have always been very supportive of me, and I can never thank them enough for that."

"Can it get any better?" Mary says proudly of her son. "It's just been one good thing after another.

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A Journey in Faith to Stewardship

They are happy whose life is blameless; who follow God's law!
They are happy who do His will, seeking Him with their hearts.

(1 John 5:3)

My journey of faith has been characterized by the slow but growing awareness of my personal responsibility in being a Christian. As an adolescent, my family hustled me almost per force to weekly Mass. In college, though, I fell in love with Christ and entered the religious life, where I am told I was perceived as living the Rule perfectly and happily and fully.

Then, I suffered a loss of faith and absented myself from the Church—a dry and sterile time.

Painful circumstances forced me to look to God. Initially, personal prayer, the daily chanting of the Liturgy of the Hours and daily Mass nurtured my personal relationship with our Lord Jesus.

Another change took place. As Christ did, I realized that providing

caring and loving assistance was indeed the true road of faith. As a Christian I had the joy of discovering stewardship.

To me stewardship is the sharing of God's love for me with others: my time, my talents, my energy, my money.

Jean M. Harder

For Women Only

Men are allowed to read this article—no penalty—but they must skip attendance at an upcoming Sacred Heart program, no matter how good it sounds. (A clerical collar may get you admittance if it has the support of Holy Orders.) No revolution is being hatched, just a grace-filled activity for women only.

The meeting's agenda presumes open hearts, open minds and open discussion, guided by the moderator to ways of sensible action. That women have special needs is a well-known fact. Take that fact and find an agenda to address it and you have a winning program: Sacred Heart's Women Only weekly fellowship. The group's program wraps around prayer, a Bible passage germane to the meeting's weekly theme and participation by all. Involvement is complete: each facet of a subject is openly discussed in turn by all the attendees.

The idea was introduced to Sacred Heart by Lynn Tidgwell. After attending a similar program, she was inspired to plan for one at our parish. With

the assistance of three like-minded companions, Laura Marchionna, Kathleen Oemcke and Vicki Walsh, the first program, on self-esteem, was launched. Ten women attended the first session two years ago.

It caught on! Some of the themes that followed: Celebrating Life, Women of the Old Testament, Lord, I Want to Know You, Train a Mom, Walk and Not Grow Weary. The day session has had 100 participants; the evening session runs roughly half that number. Day care is provided for the morning meeting: three volunteers care for the children so their moms may have an hour and a half for uninterrupted participation.

Consult the bulletin for the next session. Marriage will be the topic in January—a great topic for the millennium. Whether you're in it, out of it, planning for it or dreaming about it, come discuss it at the next meeting. Remember: you have the qualification for attendance—the right gene!



Young Parishioner

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Joseph has a very good future ahead of him, and we hope that God continues to bless him." For Joseph, with his intellect, many talents, willingness to work hard and his faith in God, combined with the continued encouragement of his parents and the prayers of his Sacred Heart family, the future seems very bright indeed.

Shellie Reck

Sheila MacDonald

A Family of Faith

Lynn Tidgwell and her husband Mark have lived in Southbury for 11 years, and have raised four children: Dan (15), Tom (14), Conor (10), and Kelleigh (9). Their faith is an essential part of their family life.

Lynn began teaching religious education when Dan was in kindergarten. She continues to love this ministry, now teaching ninth graders, and would like to continue sharing her faith with Sacred Heart's youth even after they are confirmed.

Lynn's teaching ministry eventually helped her realize that faith sharing might take a less traditional forum. About two years ago, Lynn founded Women Only, a weekly fellowship gathering of about 65 women who meet to pray, share and encourage one another in their faith journey, primarily through applying Scriptures to everyday situations.

Lynn was also elected to the Sacred Heart Parish Council. Now in the second year of her three-year term, Lynn's primary interest has been Youth Social Activities. Her experience on the council to date has been an enjoyable one, she reports, working with a dynamic and diverse group of parishioners.

Most recently, Lynn was asked by Father Flynn to become a Eucharistic Minister. Initially greatly humbled by the honor, her preparation for the role has led her to a deeper understanding of the Body and Blood of Christ. She now sees this ministry as a "gift to give out Christ to others,"

and she soon hopes to minister to the homebound as well.

Lynn's faith and active participation in many ministries makes for a busy schedule when coupled with raising four children. But she has found that the blessings far outweigh

the sacrifices. She has found a "joy in serving God by serving others," she says. "God has asked me to do many things and I wouldn't dare say no to Him," she notes. "However, once you say yes, God takes over and makes it work. I am just an instrument in His hands." She also notes that striking a balance is no easy matter. "You must know your limits," says Lynn, adding that "my first ministry is my family."

It must be working for the Tidgwells, since serving God and others is beginning to rub off on the rest of the family. Dan has been a reader for about three years and Conor is training to be an Altar Server. Lynn's husband Mark has recently been asked by Father Flynn to join the Stewardship Committee and is eager to get started.

The Tidgwells are a fine example of a Catholic family living and sharing their faith as they experience the joys and tribulations of life. As Lynn says, "we should use our gifts for the good of others." How to find the time? "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and all else falls into place," she notes. And who could argue with their success?

Rich Stephens



The Tidgwells: pictured front is Kelleigh, middle Lynn, Conor and Helen (Mark's mother) and rear Mark, Tom and Dan.

Preparing for a Concert

As I reflect on the Music Ministry's preparation and recent performance of Haydn's *Creation*, I realize that the work actually began a long time ago: January 1998, when I took the time to relearn all the vocal parts and familiarize myself with the orchestration. After those preparations, I began to go over the concepts for the orchestration of the anthems and the rehearsal for the choral parts with the performers.

As the choir learned the compositions, many other details had to be taken care of: contacting the musicians, choosing soloists, printing tickets and programs and, of course, planning a reception and celebration dinner after the concert.

With the help and stewardship of a group of dedicated individuals, the entire process, although tiring, was completed, and the concert was held. I dare say I never heard a church choir sound so magnificent.

The Youth Chorale, the Adult Choir and the musicians from the Waterbury Symphony worked together for two rehearsals. In rehearsals, the groups must come together to achieve a musical and emotional sound. This is where a conductor really has to work. He or she must communicate technical musical ideas to the orchestra, refine

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Concert

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and blend the voices, and then add the musical finesse to create a seemingly effortless program.

I generally tape the first rehearsal so I can "hear" the entire effect and then make any changes for the next rehearsal. In a final rehearsal, I often walk away from the stage to get the "audience sound," or to hear what the audience will hear. When I return, I make comments and adjustments and we continue with the rehearsal.

The day of the concert, tension and energy are running high. That

energy is captured and harnessed into a final concert product. In the case of Haydn's *Creation*, the product resulted in two standing ovations. I think it's safe to say that all the hard work paid off.

Cantate Domini.

John Dulina IV

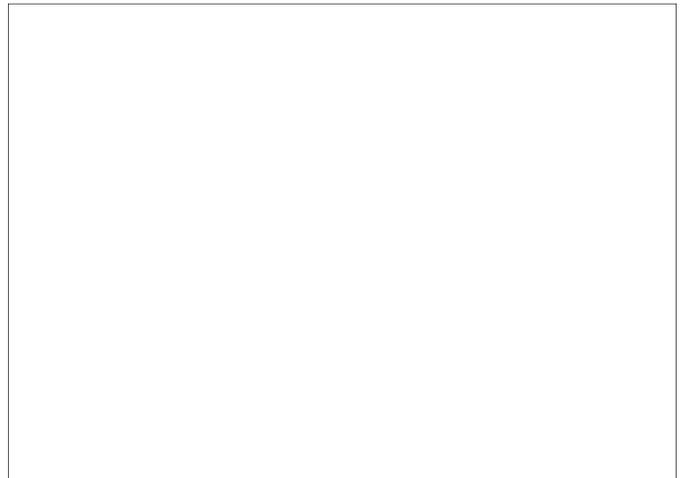


Photo by Tracy Studio

Ask Father Flynn

Q *Can the Church refuse Sacraments?*

A Every so often, someone will approach the Church desiring to receive one of the sacraments, such as baptism or marriage. They equate their desire to receive that sacrament with what they also consider their undeniable right to take part in it. What most people fail to consider is that certain canonical requirements or dispositions must be in place and certain diocesan prescriptions must be met. For instance, an individual must be a registered and participating member of the parish, and in the case of marriage, he or she must produce records to assure that no obstacles to the validity of the sacrament exist.

There are times when a person is refused the opportunity to receive a sacrament, but in most cases this denial is rare. At other times, a sacrament cannot be conferred in accordance with the individual's plans. Occasionally, a sacrament is deferred rather than denied. In the recent past the Church has chosen to safeguard the nature of the sacrament by first making sure that individuals understand what the Church teaches in regard to

their faith. Often baptisms are delayed when unregistered or new parishioners approach the church. Marriage preparations must be fulfilled, and nuptial masses can be denied to couples who live together before getting married. Additionally, although individuals might desire to have a sacrament conferred in another parish for personal, sentimental, or convenience purposes, this is never allowed without permission from the pastor of the parish in which the individuals are registered.

Many people seem to think that they should be able to do what they want to do and how they want to do it. Unfortunately, this is not the case. Someone recently told me that I needed to "loosen up and get with it," to get with the times and accept things as society accepts them. As a priest, I am bound to uphold the prescriptions presented in canon law and by the Archbishop of our diocese. Unfortunately, there are times when denial or even deferment is seen as rejection. What is really sad is that in most cases, rejection occurred even before the inquiry was made, by the very individuals who were making, or in some cases demanding, the sacrament.

If you have a question about your faith, send it to the Communications Committee in care of the rectory and watch for the answer in a future newsletter.

Parish Council

Parish Council Members for 1999-2000 (left to right): Lynn Hill, Gary Napoli, Lina Savard, Paul LeMay, Meg Walsh, Secretary, Tom McGrane, Marge Griffin, Chairperson, Jim Grady and Emie Swanberg. Absent from photo: Gino Albertario, Gail Mikolsky and Lynn Tidwell.



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