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Planned Giving News



Office of Stewardship Development

November 2009

Dear Greg,

At this time of year, with the Thanksgiving holiday just around the corner, it is customary for us to give thanks to God for all the gifts and blessings we have received this past year. I have included an article below that shares a reflection on a Gospel passage used at Mass recently. *We Dare Not Take God's Gifts for Granted* is about Bartimaeus' encounter with Jesus and Bartimaeus receiving the gift of sight. As you know, the story doesn't end there. Bartimaeus' gratitude turned him into a disciple of Jesus. How can our gratitude for the gifts we've received turn us into better disciples of Jesus? I hope you enjoy the article.

Instead of *Bulletin Blurbs* this month, I am asking that you use this year's year-end giving flyer. I know that many of you faithfully read your email. Others, however, have not perfected this skill. I realize that it's sometimes hard to separate the wheat (email) from the chaff (email). That being said, your parish will also be receiving one or more copies of the year-end giving flyer via snail mail (USPS). I am sending copies of this flyer to pastors and also to parish secretaries. The flyer can be used as is or you are welcome to modify it by putting your parish or organization name on the front as part of the title or on the back at the bottom. In the past, some parishes have reproduced the flyer and placed copies in the Narthex or back of church. Others have copied and hand inserted them into the weekly bulletin. A few have even distributed the flyer as a page (front and back) in their weekly bulletin by inserting the PDF of the flyer into the file they send to the bulletin company. Whichever method you might choose, I encourage you to use it between now and Christmas to encourage year-end gift giving to your parish or organization.

May God continue to bless you abundantly as we soon enter Advent.

God bless,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Greg Urban". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Greg Urban

We Dare Not Take God's Gifts for Granted

In the Gospel According to Mark (*Mk 10:46-52*), Jesus says to Bartimaeus, a blind man, "What do you

want me to do for you?" Bartimaeus answers, "Master, I want to see."

Sight, like everything else we possess, is a gift from God. We don't earn it or deserve it. We receive it. Most of us receive the gift of sight at the same time we receive the gift of life. It's like the premium package that comes with a new car: automatic transmission, power steering, brakes and door locks, an audio system with CD changer and more. The package most of us were born with included the gifts of sight and hearing and speech -- and many other natural gifts that we take for granted every day.

Bartimaeus didn't receive the gift of sight when he was born. As a result of that birth defect, and whatever other personal troubles he experienced growing up, his lot in life was to sit by the roadside begging. Then he encountered Jesus. Mark's Gospel says that he heard that it was Jesus. There was nothing wrong with his hearing. In fact, like many sightless people, he probably had especially good hearing. So he cried out, "Jesus, son of David have pity on me."

The people around him told him to be quiet. But he kept calling out all the more, "Son of David, have pity on me." Until Jesus heard him and told the disciples to "Call him." So they called the blind man, saying to him, "Take courage; get up; Jesus is calling you." At which point the blind man jumped up, threw off his coat and ran to Jesus.

"What do you want me to do?" Jesus says. I want the gift of sight, Bartimaeus answers. "Go your way; your faith has saved you," Jesus tells him. Immediately he received his sight and followed him on the way.

No more roadside begging for Bartimaeus. He followed Jesus on the way. That means he became a disciple, a follower of Jesus, and "the way" is the disciple's path, the way of the Cross, the road that all of us who seek to follow Jesus must take -- each in our own way.

When Bartimaeus received the gift of sight and decided to follow Jesus "on the way," he became a Christian steward -- one who receives God's gifts gratefully, cherishes and tends them in a responsible and accountable manner, shares them generously with others and returns them to the Lord with increase. These are the characteristics of a Christian steward that are described in the American bishops' pastoral letter, *Stewardship: A Disciple's Response*.

What does the experience of Bartimaeus teach us today? If we have received a gift from God - or many, many gifts from God - it's our responsibility to say thank you. And to take good care of our gifts. And to share them generously with other people.

The story of Bartimaeus also reminds us that the Church is a gift that no one "deserves" or "earned" or is "entitled to." We received this Church from God and from all the people who worked so hard during the past 2000 years to build up the Body of Christ and to establish and sustain our local Churches with all their parishes, schools and Catholic institutions (and including all the wonderful facilities, staffs and ministries) that are now available to people throughout the world.

Catholics are generous people. Many participate actively in the ministries and community life of our Church. Many serve the needs of others within their parishes and far beyond individual parish and diocesan boundaries. Many support their diocese's annual appeal and the collections that support the Church's work nationally and internationally. And a growing number of adults, youth and children in various regions of the world now see themselves as faithful stewards of the gifts God has given us.

The story of Bartimaeus reminds us that we dare not take any of God's gifts for granted. If we want our parishes to be vibrant communities of faith, we must participate in our Church's mission. If we want our children and youth to receive an outstanding Catholic education, we must support our parish formation programs and our schools. If we want good pastors and beautiful liturgy and the kind of ministries that can only be found in a dynamic community of faith, we must pray for vocations and encourage talented young people to respond generously to God's call. Above all, we must continue to be good and faithful stewards of all God's gifts (spiritual and material).

All it takes to be a good steward is the same courage that Bartimaeus showed when he threw off his

coat and ran blindly to Jesus. And when the Lord asks us, "What do you want me to do for you," our response should be: Help us to see how blessed we are! Then Jesus will say to each of us: Go your way; your faith has saved you. Then it will be our turn to follow Jesus on the way.

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Year-End Giving Flyer

Please use the flyer found at the links below in place of Bulletin Blurbs this month!

Download a [PDF version](#) for use as-is.

Download a [MS Word version](#) to modify before use.

Gifts of Appreciated Securities

The stock market (S&P 500) has increased a great deal (over 30%) in the past several calendar quarters. While many have still not recovered their losses from the great fall, others who had the foresight to invest at or near the bottom may have substantial gains in their portfolios.

A way that enables someone to give more than they might otherwise would be for them to consider a donation of appreciated securities. Appreciated securities, if sold, are normally subject to capital gains tax. If they are transferred or "gifted" to charity, they are not subject to this tax. The Robert Sharpe Group has created a website to help promote gifts of appreciated securities to charity. It explains and shows by example the tax consequences of different gift types. I encourage you to take a look! [Visit the Planning Perspectives Website.](#)

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