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Planned Giving News



Office of Stewardship Development

May 2010

Dear Reader,

Having just celebrated Pentecost, the Easter Season has come to an end for this year and we're back to Ordinary Time. With that, summer is just around the corner! I hope all of you find time for a short respite to recharge your batteries before programs start again in the fall. As we all know, the summer goes by all too quickly!

I was privileged to be able to participate in the ordination ceremony at the Cathedral of St. Peter last Saturday, May 22. Please join me in congratulating and welcoming our new priests and permanent deacons who will be serving the people of our Diocese in a special way. We are blessed to have these men who have worked and studied hard join us in these sacred ministries.

Below are several announcements that I encourage you to place into your weekly parish bulletins. Planting seeds in your parishioner's minds of remembering the parish in their estate plan WILL yield fruit in the long-term. I am convinced parishes that regularly conduct Will Seminars will reap a bountiful harvest. If you haven't sponsored a Will Seminar at your parish within the last two years, I encourage you to seriously consider doing so.

Finally, I have included below an article for reflection. In *Caritas in Veritate*, Pope Benedict offers a new insight: one of the many gifts God bestows is *influence* born of experience and relationships. And to those who have been given much influence in the world of politics, economics, social services, the arts or religion, much is expected in return. *How do we exercise this influence?*

God bless,

Deacon Greg Urban

Bulletin Blurbs

- **You Can Make a Significant Gift to...**
- *Your Parish*

- A Diocesan School
- Any Diocesan Ministry or Program

THAT WILL COST YOU NOTHING DURING YOUR LIFETIME!

Consider including your Parish or a Diocesan Program as a beneficiary in your will.

- As Christian stewards, we share the responsibility of making our schools true communities of faith and vibrant sources of service to our Diocese. That includes providing financial support for today's needs and building a firm financial foundation for tomorrow. Planned Giving helps us preserve our Catholic heritage and honor the people that walk the hallways in the places of our past and also presents the opportunity to leave a legacy to future generations for years to come. Simply by naming a Catholic school or tuition assistance in your will, living trust or other testamentary arrangement or by establishing an endowment fund in the Catholic Foundation, you leave a legacy in the Catholic Diocese of Rockford.
- *Have you named your Parish, the Diocese or a Diocesan Program as a beneficiary in your will?* If so, our bishop has created the Perpetual Light Society to honor you! If you would like to join the Society, please contact the Planned Giving Office at 815-399-4300 and request an application. It's that simple.

Reflecting on God's Gifts With Gratitude and Joy

"Here lies the fundamental challenge that we face: to show the Church's capacity to promote and form disciples and missionaries who respond to the calling received and to communicate everywhere, in an outpouring of gratitude and joy, the gift of the encounter with Jesus Christ. We have no other treasure but that. We have no other happiness, no other priority, but to be instruments of the Spirit of God, as Church, so that Jesus Christ may be known, followed, loved, adored, announced, and communicated to all, despite difficulties and resistances. This is the best service - his service! - that the Church has to offer people and nations." (Concluding document, Fifth General Conference of the Latin American and Caribbean Episcopal Conferences, Aparecida, Brazil, 2007, #14)

Bishop Jaime Soto quotes this powerful passage from the 2007 Aparecida Conference as he begins his vision statement for the Diocese of Sacramento. "We have always been a missionary people called to proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom of God." He continues, "Our diocese's mission statement affirms this -- challenging us to be disciples who spread the Gospel by our prayer, our personal witness, our sacramental life, and all the ministries provided by our parishes, schools and other diocesan services."

What a powerful vision -- to be disciples and missionaries who respond to the encounter with our Lord Jesus Christ with gratitude and joy!

Many of us first read words like these in the U.S. bishops' pastoral letter, *Stewardship: A Disciple's Response*. Here the connection between discipleship and stewardship was clearly made: The encounter with Jesus compels us to follow him. And in following him, we learn to be grateful, accountable, generous and willing to give back to the Lord with increase. We learn to serve him with gratitude and joy -- not counting the cost to ourselves.

Bishop Soto continues with a brief, but powerful, summary of his vision for the diocese he has been called to serve: "As we give thanks to God for the gifts he continues to give our local Church, we are called to meet head-on the challenges and opportunities of our time. This is my vision for the Diocese of Sacramento: *We will be faithful disciples, and zealous missionaries, who bring to the world the sacramental gifts of the Kingdom of God through our prayer, teaching, and works for charity and justice.*"

Can there be a more compelling summary of what it means to be faithful disciples, zealous missionaries and responsible stewards of the Church's mission?

Pope Benedict XVI explores similar themes in his most recent encyclical, *Caritas in Veritate* (Charity in Truth). The Holy Father views all development (personal, economic, social, political, technological) from the perspective of stewardship of God's gifts to us. The material we have to work with - including our intellectual and spiritual gifts - has been given to us in freedom and truth by a loving God who wants us to grow to our full potential as individuals and as brothers and sisters in the one family of God.

Without God, we cannot achieve the progress that is our human vocation. Without God, our vision narrows and we forget who we are and what the goal is (to build the City of God). Without God, we forget that all is gift, and we begin to think that we are owners, instead of stewards, masters of the universe, instead of servants of the one Lord who has called us to nurture and develop his gifts wisely and well for the good of all.

In *Caritas in Veritate*, Pope Benedict offers a new insight: one of the many gifts God bestows is *influence* born of experience and relationships. And to those who have been given much influence in the world of politics, economics, social services, the arts or religion, much is expected in return. As stewards, we will be held accountable for using our personal and professional relationships (our influence) for the betterment of humanity and not merely for personal gain.

Interestingly, while the pope offers the new insight that *influence* is a gift to be developed and used for the good of all, he also warns us that "in promoting development, the Christian faith does not rely on privilege or positions of power or even on the merits of Christians... but only on Christ." Influence is to be exercised with humility and with the awareness that everything we possess (and everything we are) has been given to us by a loving God who will hold us accountable for the development and generous sharing of all his gifts.

We are called to be faithful disciples, zealous missionaries and responsible stewards of "the sacramental gifts of the Kingdom of God" and of all the gifts and blessing we receive on a daily basis from the loving God who created and sustains us all. The Lord calls us to know him, follow him, adore him and proclaim him to the whole world, despite all the difficulties and resistance we experience. Let us respond to this call generously out of gratitude and joy.

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