

Planned Giving News



Office of Stewardship Development

Fall 2010

Dear Reader,

The experts tell us that the recession in the United States ended in June of 2009. For many, these are just words as unemployment and underemployment remain serious domestic issues. As I have traveled and met with parish financial leadership in our Diocese, I am regularly reminded of the suffering and desperate situations of many of their parishioners. Many have depleted their savings and are about to lose their homes, others are just making ends meet with the help of unemployment checks. The fact is, even though the economy manages to plug along, companies are not hiring new employees. I have met people who have been unemployed now for well over a year. Let us continue to keep these people in our prayers and pray that as the economy improves these people will be able to find suitable employment to provide for themselves and their families.

On a more positive note, we are blessed that those who do have jobs are contributing more to help their parishes and the Diocese. We are experiencing a smaller number of donors who are giving more. Our parishioners are practicing good stewardship and have responded to the needs of their parishes and the Diocese. For this we are thankful.

I have included below for your reflection an article written by Dan Conway. This article was originally distributed in October 2008, but it certainly has relevance today as we enter into another election season. In the article Dan addresses the questions "How do we make responsible choices in an election year? How do we exercise the precious gift of freedom wisely and responsibly - as good stewards of all God's abundant blessings?" For us, much thought must be given to how we share this information with our parishioners, encouraging them to vote using an informed conscience, while at the same time being vigilant not to tell or recommend or even infer to them who or what party they should vote for.

Lastly, I have again included several announcements that I encourage you to have placed into your weekly parish bulletins. Reminding your parishioners to remember the parish in their estate plan will plant the seeds that will yield a bountiful harvest over time. If you haven't held an Estate Planning (Will) Seminar at your parish within the last two years, I encourage you to consider doing so. Call me for details and to set a date.

God bless,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Greg Urban".

Deacon Greg Urban

Bulletin Blurbs

- **Estate planning is the way to continue your life's work.** It is vital that you invest some time to insure that your life's efforts will continue in the hands of the causes and people who will most treasure your gifts. Your attorney in consultation with your accountant can prepare a proper will and make other arrangements for the easy, inexpensive transfer of your estate.
- **Did you know...** That gifts of appreciated assets (like stocks) make a wonderful gift to your parish or school? You pay no capital gains tax when you transfer the stock and you receive an income tax deduction for its full market value. For information on the best way to transfer stock or a mutual fund to your parish, please contact your pastor or the Diocesan Planned Giving Office at 815-399-4300.
- **Imagine a gift that gives forever.** That's exactly what your planned gift to *The Catholic Foundation* for our parish endowment can do. What you give today will strengthen our community by providing perpetual financial support.

The Art of Making Decisions in an Election Year

(Reprinted from October 2008)

Responsible stewardship means making choices: How we develop, use and share the gifts God has given us. How we spend our time, exercise our talents, earn-save-spend our money. Stewardship requires that we discern God's will for our development and use of all His gifts - material and spiritual. It also means that we have to make decisions in circumstances that are not always clear. God gave us the gift of freedom. We are called to use this gift maturely, knowing we will be held accountable for our decisions.

How do we make responsible choices in an election year? How do we exercise the precious gift of freedom wisely and responsibly - as good stewards of all God's abundant blessings? Our choices make a difference. Who and what we vote for matters. This is the first step in responsible decision-making. We have a right, and a responsibility, to participate in the decision-making process. When we forfeit this right, our humanity is diminished and society suffers. When we fail to choose, even among imperfect options, we abandon our freedom to the decrees of Fate. Justice is impaired, and freedom loses something of its luster.

The great German Catholic philosopher Josef Pieper, in his book, *The Four Cardinal Virtues*, points out that prudence (the art of making the right decisions) is "the mold and mother of all virtues, the circumspect and resolute shaping power of our minds which transforms knowledge of reality into realization of the good." This means that all other virtues - including justice, courage and temperance - exist only because of prudence, "the precondition of all that is ethically good." In other words, unless we make good decisions, justice cannot be done, courage is impossible and everything is intemperate (out of balance).

But how do we make right decisions? The key to right decision-making is recognizing what is real, discerning the truth and separating substance from "spin." According to Pieper, "If you do not know how it is with things, how they stand, you are practically unable to choose what is ethically good. The mere 'good intention' to be just, for instance, does not suffice at all." Truth is essential to right decision-making.

The first step is to be informed - about the issues, about the candidates' positions, and about the likely consequences of actions proposed by political parties and their nominees.

Decision-making in an election year would be a lot easier if everyone told the truth... If there were no spin doctors or attack ads... If candidates and political parties communicated clearly and unambiguously where they stand on things... And if all the issues were completely "black or white." Making decisions based on campaign slogans, media images and sound bites is irresponsible. It also is not good stewardship of the responsibilities we have as citizens in a free society.

The second step in responsible decision-making is to make sure we have an informed conscience. Catholics who truly understand the teaching of our Church, and who strive to integrate these principles into their daily lives, are called upon to make difficult, often unpopular, decisions based on fundamental moral principles. To be good stewards of our civic responsibilities, we need principled thinking, sound moral judgment, and an authentic understanding of who we are as a nation governed by the rule of law and dedicated to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness!

Every Catholic voter should read the U.S. bishops' 2007 publication, [Faithful Citizenship](#). In this very helpful guide to election year decision-making, the bishops outline the rights and responsibilities of "faithful citizens" who seek to make right decisions. A clear understanding of Catholic teaching on issues of morality and social justice is needed to make responsible decisions. The challenge that all of us face, especially in an election year, is to reconcile what we believe as individuals with the common good. If there is a genuine conflict between our individual consciences and the authentic teaching of the Church, it is our responsibility to seek reconciliation - through careful thinking, prayerful examination of conscience and the willingness to make tough decisions.

We hope that in this election year, as always, faithful citizens throughout the United States will use all their God-given gifts and talents to wrestle with the vitally important issues facing our nation, and the world at large, and make decisions that are wise, faithful to our Constitution and clearly beneficial to the common good. May Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception, the patroness of our nation, intercede for us during this time of national discernment and inspire us by her faithful witness to the truth.

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