

Commitment in Faith – Stewardship Renewal (Homily #3)

(2 Advent, C, December 9, 2012, Cathedral)

Baruch 5:1-9; Ps 126 “The Lord has done great things for us; we are filled with joy;”
Philippians 1:4-6, 8-11; Luke 3:1-6.

A. Introduction.

The readings from the second Sunday of Advent focus on JOY! Baruch: “... **See your children gathered ... at the word of the Holy One, rejoicing that they are remembered by God.**” Yes, God remembers us always – He is with us this Advent, leading us “**in joy.**” Our Responsorial Psalm: “**The Lord has done great things for us; we are filled with joy.**” These great things for us are the many gifts and blessings we recognize and receive from our Loving Lord. St. Paul prays “**always with joy in every prayer for all of you.**” These gifts and prayers assist us in being grateful, as we “**prepare the way of the Lord**” this Advent (Gospel).

We continue our Stewardship Renewal at the Cathedral of Our Lady of Guadalupe. We just celebrated Mary’s feast day of the Immaculate Conception, and we prepare this week for our patronal feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe. Mary asks us to be grateful stewards of her Son’s many gifts. We have discussed the four pillars of Stewardship (Hospitality, Prayer, Formation, and Service). Then we reviewed the definition of Stewardship: a grateful response of a Christian disciple who recognizes and receives God’s gifts and shares these gifts in love of God and neighbor. Last week I preached about the Stewardship of Tithe/Alms, as we generously and sacrificially give into the collection basket at Holy Mass each Sunday and to the poor. Today: Commitment in Faith, which will bring us joy!

B. Commitment in Faith.

[Children in Grades 5 and 6, please pass out these blue cards to everyone. Thank you for your help!] What is a commitment? The dictionary says: “commit – to pledge or bind to a certain course or policy.”

Example 1: I was invited to a K-State versus Kansas football game a few years ago in Manhattan. What an event! The “tailgate party” was amazing, with parking costing \$1,000 for one spot for five games! That is not even the cost of the season tickets to get into the stadium! What a *bond* people have to 22 guys chasing an oblong ball around a field!

Example 2: A more profound commitment – a married couple. We celebrated a Wedding Anniversary Mass for the couples of the diocese in October, with some married over 60 years! That is a true binding, *a true commitment* in unconditional love and devotion. Joy in each other and in the Lord.

Example 3: The greatest commitment, promise, pledge, bond – our commitment to Jesus Christ and His Catholic Church. Jesus, our Savior, our Brother, our Friend, gave His life for us, to free

us from sins and bring us to heaven. We want to commit to Him. We promise to follow Jesus with our very lives. We commit our time, ability, and tithing/almsh to Jesus and His Church. There is joy in knowing we are preparing the way of the Lord for our eternal destiny.

C. Stewardship Renewal.

Just as a family remembers its love for a child by having a birthday party each year, just as a married couple renews their commitment to each other each year on their anniversary, so we re-dedicate ourselves to God in our Stewardship Renewal each year. This week, you will receive in the mail a "Ministry Guide." In it are the many ministries and organizations of the parish, time & ability forms for adults and youth, and an tithing/almshgiving form for each family. Please prayerfully discuss as a family, complete it this week in honor of Our Blessed Mother, and return next week in the collection basket. Let us re-commit ourselves to our Compassionate God.

Note that the Time & Ability Form has three columns: Interested, Continued Involvement, and Leaving Ministry. This assists our office staff and the heads of these ministries each year. You will receive a call thanking you for your commitment, and we will answer any questions you have.

Youth (ages 10-17): You are important to us! We ask that you prayerfully complete a Youth Form.

Singles and Families: With God's grace, complete the Stewardship of Tithing/Almsgiving Form, pledging a generous and sacrificial financial gift to God. Stick with it! Trust! Be not afraid! Follow Jesus!

D. Examples.

Our four pillars of Stewardship, as well as Tithing/Almsgiving, give us a focus for our Stewardship Renewal:

Hospitality: (by the choir) [4th graders – please come and help me!] Remember hospitality, which means "I love you." One area of hospitality is our choir, who generously gives of their time and ability to help our worship. Maybe you are called to sign-up for the choir. Pray about it. Children, let's say: "Thank you, Jesus. Help me be generous, and bring joy to others!"

Prayer: (by the tabernacle) [3rd graders – please come and help me!] Remember prayer, which means "I love God." We have several prayer groups to join, or you may be called to sign-up for an hour in adoration of the Blessed Sacrament each week. Ask the Lord how He is calling you to deeper prayer. Children, let's say: "Thank you, Jesus. Help me find You: the Way, the Truth, and the Life, in the Holy Eucharist!"

Formation: (by the ambo) [2nd graders – please come and help me!] Remember formation, which means "I love our Catholic Faith." We have many groups learning about our faith – groups for adults, for youth, for children, and for families. Children, let's say: "Thank you, Jesus. Lead me to a deeper faith, this Year of Faith, through your Word and your Church."

Service: (by the large crucifix) [1st graders – please come and help me!] Remember service, which means “I love our neighbor.” There are dozens of groups that assist our community of faith, and the wider community. How is the Lord calling you to serve with others? Children, let’s say: “Thank you, Jesus. Help me to build up community.”

Finally, **Tithing/Almsgiving:** (by large collection basket in front) [Kindergarten – please come and help me!] The Lord gives us the gift of our income. Let us generously and sacrificially return a portion to God and His Church and to the poor. Let us be faithful. Let us put God first. Children, let’s say: “Thank you, Jesus. Help me give to you!”

E. Conclusion.

During this Advent season, let us rejoice in our gifts and blessings from the Lord – “**we are filled with joy!**” Let us be grateful stewards, as we live out our Christian Discipleship. Let us recognize and receive the bountiful gifts of God. Let us share these gifts in love of God, neighbor, and self. Let us renew this Stewardship commitment to our Gentle Jesus, who loves us more than we can ask or imagine!

[notecard for the faithful, next page:]

Commitment in Faith

- Our **Stewardship Renewal** is our yearly re-commitment to a grateful sharing of God's gifts.
- This grateful sharing is generous and sacrificial.
- Our gifts of time, ability, and tithes/offerings are shared.
- We share our gifts through hospitality, prayer, formation, and service (the four pillars).
- We share our gifts because we love God, our neighbor, and ourselves.
- Please prayerfully complete the two **Stewardship Renewal forms** of time/ability and tithes/offerings, and return them to the parish.

- “I am grateful to Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me, because he judged me faithful and appointed me to his service ... ” (1 Timothy 1:12).
- Jesus said: “Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none; and whoever has food must do likewise” (Luke 3:11).
- St. Paul writes: “For I am longing to see you so that I may share with you some spiritual gift to strengthen you – or rather so that we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine” (Romans 1:11-12).
- “As each one has received a gift, use it to serve one another as good stewards of God's varied grace” (1 Peter 4:10).
- **Stewardship** is the grateful response of a Christian disciple who recognizes and receives God's gifts and shares these gifts in love of God and neighbor.