

25th Sunday in Ordinary Time – B – Stewardship

Most people in the U.S. don't think of themselves as having servants. That's because we tend to think of servants as people we hire directly, and we forget that a lot of people are serving us in the "service" industries we use every day.

But from what we've heard for the past couple of weeks, Jesus thought about servants a lot and considered himself to be one.

"If anyone wishes to be first, he shall be the last of all and the servant of all." That's a one-sentence description of how Jesus went about his life.

As I mentioned at the end of Mass last week we are in the process of reflecting on our calling as a parish community to be good stewards of the gifts we have been given and on where God is calling us to in the coming year. Stewardship and servanthood are basically the same thing. A steward serves the needs of that which he or she has been given responsibility for.

I believe that we have exercised good stewardship in these past 12 months and have been able to accomplish good work that has the aroma of the kingdom of God. I also believe that God is not done with us and is calling us to continue in our role as servants, stewards of the great resource that is St. Benedict Parish.

I want to acknowledge first of all the great commitment I see being put forth on a regular basis by so many of you. The soup kitchen, for example, is such a

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significant undertaking that it's only with the grace of God and the ongoing commitment of our volunteers and the support of our parishioners and others committed to the cause that we are able to keep it going.

The number of hungry people being served just keeps going up. In the most recent 3-month period more than 10,000 meals were served. And yet, we have managed to provide wholesome meals in a welcoming environment that speaks highly of our dedication to serving others according to the spirit of Jesus.

Handing on the faith to our young people is another area that is in good hands, with highly qualified staff and catechists committed to those they teach and to their own ongoing formation. Religious ed. is lively, engaging, and focused on the message of God's love and care for us and his call to be of service to others.

We have been able to expand this ministry in the middle-school grades to include service projects, retreat opportunities and social activities. These are things that work when it comes to keeping our young people engaged in the life of faith.

As you know, this past year we have made a concerted effort to expand our catechetical and faith-building offerings for young adults who are at a critical point in their lives when it comes to figuring out how they will embody the proclamation of God's good news among their peers and in their work life and home life. This area is expanding rapidly and will benefit from additional resources.

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An important element our parish's outreach is contained in our music ministry, which has undergone significant changes just recently, but continues to strive to provide the sort of environment for worship that keeps us coming back and is inviting for those who visit us looking for a parish home. Developing expertise in this area is an ongoing value.

The parish council and the various committees of our parish all function to a high degree and generate much of the programming that supports the community-building that is one of the core elements of a vibrant faith community. They do so while keeping a close eye on the financial costs involved.

One area that I've had a lot of requests about is that we would provide babysitting for Mass and the various activities that take place at St. Ben's. A fair number of people would like to be more involved in our community but what to do with the children becomes a sticking point. If we had additional resources, this would be one of the first places I would see us investing them.

One of the things that our presence in downtown brings is that St. Ben's is highly visible to the entire Wabash Valley. Every time you watch the weather chances are you'll see our church from the weather cam. So many people who come to our parish festival mention that they've seen our church but have never been inside. Of course, when they do come in, they are suitably impressed.

We get good coverage from the media when we

25th Sunday in Ordinary Time – B – Stewardship

celebrate Christmas and Easter and Ash Wednesday and our parish picnic. Most recently the program on immigration put on in Hellmann Hall was covered both on TV and in the paper.

In all these ways, we are building up God's Kingdom in our community of Terre Haute. Let's Do more! God's work is Never done! Until the Needy are Clothed and the Hungry are Fed, People find an Church Home and the Gospel is spread to the ends of the Earth – We will need resources.

This week you will be receiving a special brochure in the mail along with a Commitment Card to renew your financial commitment to support our important ministries here at St. Ben's. Next weekend will be our Commitment Sunday where we will hear from a few of our faithful parishioners witnessing how we as a parish are continuing to serve those in need in our community.

Your financial sacrifice does so much good—we care for those in need, we educate our young and adults in the faith, we administer the sacraments to all faithful parishioners, and celebrate the sacraments and the Mass together in our spiritual home.

I look forward to seeing you next week for our Commitment Weekend. There is a lot of truth in our stewardship theme “Grace Filled Living, Prayer Filled Giving.” The two go together in the life committed to being thankful for all God has done for us.