

# Stewardship

**D**uring the summer, we might be tempted to let our participation in parish life slip just a little. I hope that we can all resist that temptation. We should be about the ordinary business of the Christian, growing in the knowledge and love of the Lord, sharing our lives with one another, sharing our faith with those who have no faith, and reaching out to the poor and needy who are God's special friends. That's a pretty large order, I have to admit, but I'd like to make three simple suggestions about ways you can be about God's business this summer:

**✚ First, we can continue in the habit of faithful attendance at worship, and you can invite some of your friends and neighbors to come with you.**

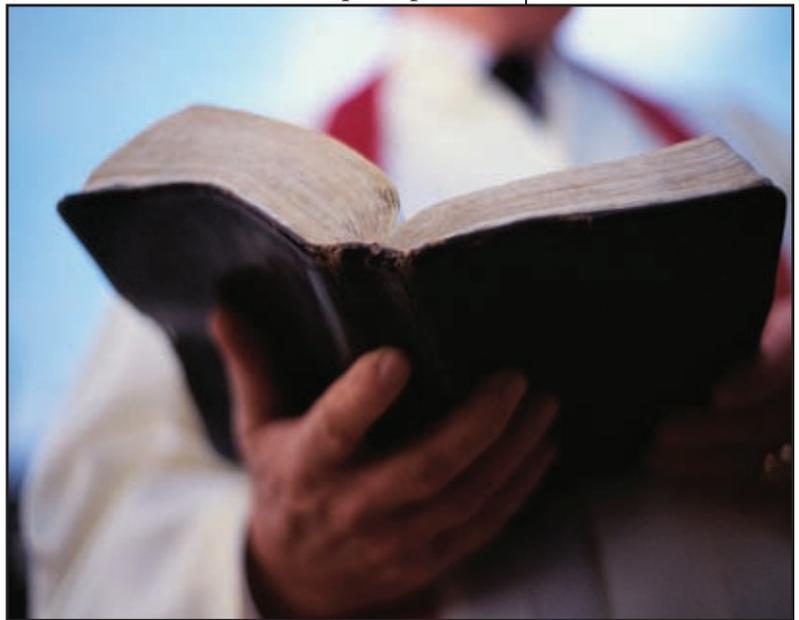
I suspect that each of you has a friend who takes a vacation from worshipping God. Help that friend to see that God hasn't gone on vacation; invite him or her to worship with you some Sunday.

**✚ Second, we can use some of our summer leisure time for Christian study.**

There are probably a large number of good books in your local library, and not all of them are heavy reading. Many of them are simply the stories of ordinary Christians like you and me. You might also want to consider getting together with a few others to study part of the Bible.

**✚ Third, we use the summer as a time to try out new ways to serve others.**

I suspect that there are many of us who have skills which we've never used in Christian service, perhaps be-



cause we fear that we wouldn't really do a good enough job to please people or that we might get stuck in a particular form of ministry forever. What better time than the summer to try out a new form of ministry as an adventure in faith. If you have an idea about some form of ministry you'd like to take on for a while this summer, share your idea with others. Whether it's singing in the choir, reading lessons on Sundays, visiting the sick or the elderly, or any other form of ministry, try it out this summer.



*Stewardship and Evangelization go hand in hand, for stewardship is a sharing of the good news. Our response in time, talent and treasure is a continuing announcement that echoes the good news proclaimed by angels long ago.*



## They'll Wait for Me!

**S**ome years ago, my church put on a Passion play. It was much more ambitious than our usual Easter programs. Almost every member of the congregation was involved in one way or another. I volunteered to help with the refreshments. I'd anticipated pouring punch, serving cookies, and so forth. However, I was soon confronted with our church's ancient (and huge) coffee maker. I had no idea how to work it. Directions were nowhere to be found. The ladies who normally used it were all cast members, and couldn't help me, worried that they might miss their entrance.

So I stood there, terrified that I was going to have to explain why there was no coffee. Then, a man cheerfully asked if he could help. He managed to figure out how to operate it. I was grateful, but worried. Seeing his costume, I knew he

must be in the cast. I thanked him, but remembering what the others had said, I asked, "Aren't you worried you'll miss your entrance?"

"Oh, they'll wait for me," he said calmly, and strode off. They did. Later, I discovered he had the part of Jesus.

Yes, people in a play will wait for an actor portraying Christ. But how often do we wait upon Jesus, performing the good works that he commands? Reaching out to the community, whether with a Passion play, a food pantry, a school supplies drive, or simply inviting a new neighbor to church, is something we shouldn't wait to do. 



*The stewardship of service is at least as important as checkbook stewardship, but sometimes it is easier to write a check than to take the trouble to explore what you can do for your church and community with your "hidden assets" ... your skills and talents.*

## What's In Your Hand

*What's in your hand that God can use  
To bring him glory and praise?  
When you offer it to the Lord  
He'll use it in special ways.*

*Moses offered a shepherd's staff  
God used to part the sea,  
And when he struck the desert rock,  
Water poured out freely.*

*Your hand may hold an instrument  
That you can play and sing  
A song of praise and worship  
To glorify the King.*

*Or in your hand may rest a pen  
That you can use to write  
Words of great encouragement  
To bring a friend God's light.*

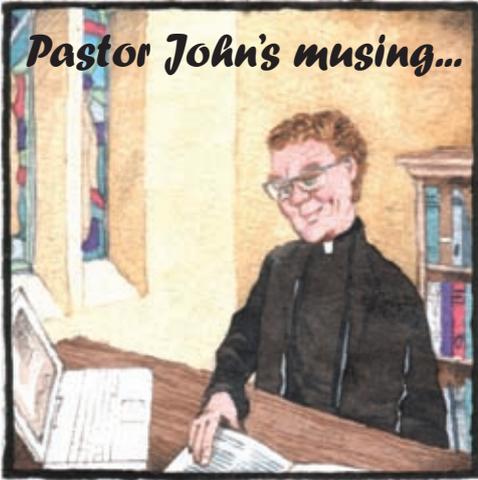
*Maybe you hold a piece of bread,  
A cup of water, too.  
When they're offered to one in need,  
God will bless through you.*

*Though you may look down at your  
hands  
And nothing is found there,  
When you lift them to the Lord,  
He'll hear and answer prayer.*

*You may think my gift's too small,  
But it matters not the size.  
When God looks at your open hand,  
Your gift he multiplies.*



## Pastor John's musing...



The Greek writer, Nikos Kazantzakis, once told the story of an old monk who lived on one of the islands off of Greece. One day a young man who was rock climbing on the island came across the monk and began conversing with him.

When the young man felt better acquainted, he asked the monk if he still wrestled with the devil. "Oh no," the devout old fellow said, "not anymore. I have grown old and the devil has grown old with me. He no longer has my strength. Now I wrestle with God. "With God?" the young man queried, "you wrestle with God? Well, let me ask: Do you hope to win?"

The answer the monk gave is worthy of remembering. "Win?" he asked, "Do I hope to win? Heavens no, I hope to lose!"

If that seems puzzling, think more about it. And think about Jesus' statement to the effect that to lose to Him was in fact to win. Christ's precise words were: "He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for my sake will find it." (Matthew 10:39)

Upon consideration, it all makes perfect sense. To whom do we owe our existence anyway? To whom are we therefore ultimately obligated? Whose providential care ministers to us every

second of our lives? And who will provide for us when our earth journey is over?

The grateful and wise person will say something like- "All that I am and all that I have of any consequence comes from God. Therefore I offer my life to God. Willingly, I lose my life to God. For God alone knows how to best use my life and whatever has come with it: my brain—power, my talent, my strength, my time allotted, and the resources God has allowed me to have for the days, whether few or many, I will have here on earth. So be it." 



*As part of their total stewardship, Christians are concerned about the dedication of their talents. They regard personal abilities to work and to lead as another evidence of God's loving care.*

*In a spirit of consecration, they desire to have those talents utilized in business, in the home, in church, in such a manner that they will make a contribution to the Kingdom of God on earth. These priorities are important to them, including during the summer months.*



**How often do we wait upon Jesus,  
performing the good works that he commands?**

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### **How Much is Enough?**

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**T**eacher, what good thing must I do to get eternal life?"

"Go sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me."

"When the young man heard this, he went away sad, because he had great wealth."

This Bible story teaches that we all worship something, and it becomes our everything. The rich man went away sad because he worshipped money. He held on so tight that he missed out on an adventure with Christ. He was so close, yet so far.

When we give freely of our money to the stewardship of our local church, we not only help build the Kingdom of God, we also affirm that God has first place in our hearts. The Bible says, "Whoever loves money never has enough" (Ecclesiastes 5:10). It's o.k. to

enjoy God's blessings. But one of the reasons God gives us gifts is so we can share with others and help bless those in need. We can hang on tightly and walk away sad, or surrender everything over to his Lordship and ultimately become co-workers with Christ in the building of his Kingdom, right here and now. 



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