



Stewardship can take many forms, but ultimately it is about giving of yourself — your time and your talents — to serve the needs of others, whether it be individually or as a community. (Photos from CNS)

# Celebrating the joy of stewardship

*“As generous distributors of God’s manifold grace, put your gifts at the service of one another, each in the measure he has received” — 1 Peter 4:10*

Which parish activity have you missed most during this COVID-19 pandemic?

Since the beginning of the pandemic several Catholic newspapers from around the globe, including *The Catholic Register*, have reported about the feelings, the frustrations and the disappointments of the faithful because they were not able to attend community Mass in their parishes. The pandemic has also prevented



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some ministers from offering their service to their communities. By not participating in their parish activities, ministers have not been able to participate in stewardship as fruitfully as in the past.

Sept. 19 is this year’s Steward-

ship Sunday in the Archdiocese of Toronto, when we celebrate the call to participate in the lives of our parish communities by sharing the gifts of time, talent and treasure with others. Stewardship Sunday was instituted by Cardinal Thomas Collins a couple of years ago as an annual occurrence on the 25th Sunday in Ordinary Time.

Since the province moved into Step 3 of the re-opening plan, with more people being able to assemble together for Mass, the celebration is going to be different from last year, when Catholic churches couldn’t hold public Masses.

But even though we may be seeing more people at Mass this

year, we cannot have the parish activities such as coffee Sunday and Ministry Fair. These events are associated with the celebration of stewardship, helping us connect with each other, inspiring us to participate in stewardship and help build our communities of faith.

So, how are we going to celebrate this year’s Stewardship Sunday?

How do we make the celebration spiritually meaningful to us? Perhaps we can use the celebration to re-examine our understanding of what it means to live the stewardship way of life. Having been deprived of the opportunity of coming together in our parishes, we can reflect on the impact of the lack of our participation in stewardship on our spiritual lives.

Reflecting on the Scripture readings at Mass can be a starting point. The readings for this Sunday lead us to recognize that as members of communities of faith, we all share one goal — the stewardship way of life. Jesus identifies the authentic Christian way of life as caring for the needy among us.

Jesus teaches us, “whoever welcomes a child in His name also welcomes the one who sent me” (Mark 9: 37). As faithful disciples, we are called to “live in love as Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God” (Eph.5: 1-2).

In his Sunday message to the faithful at St. Peter’s Square on May 9, Pope Francis said loving others as Jesus loved means serving others, reaching out and helping those in need. The Pope told those in attendance that, “To love like Christ means saying ‘no’ to other loves that the world offers us: love of money ... love of vanity, power.”

According to Pope Francis, our love for others is reflected in our stewardship way of life — sharing

what we have with others. In fact, during the pandemic we have seen in our parishes that stewardship way of life is still evident.

At Our Lady of Peace, we have been inspired by how the catechists, lectors, ushers and the cleaning and disinfection team have all joyfully come together to help the community celebrate the sacraments of First Holy Communion and Confirmation. By celebrating these spiritually important moments for our children, the parish has fulfilled one of the missions entrusted to us. Many parishioners in the Archdiocese are also enthusiastically sharing what they have with this year’s ShareLife campaign. The stewardship way of life brings joy to our faith communities.

How are we going to continue to live the stewardship way of life during this pandemic?

In his homily for this year’s Stewardship Sunday, our Cardinal Collins writes, “We know who we are, not through our own planning of what we are going to do, but rather by the way in which we serve the needs of other people.” In this challenging time, it can be easy for us to have our own plan and focus on our needs. Although we have not fully returned to our parishes to participate in the liturgical, spiritual and social activities, today’s celebration reminds us of our commitment to serve.

As we look forward to coming back to our parishes in full, we can use this time to recognize the many different ways and situations in which God is calling us to share what we have with others. On this special Sunday, let us ask God to re-awaken within our hearts His Spirit of generosity so that we can live as people full of joy, hope and love.

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