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Stewardship Way of Life: A Gift of Our Time

Growing up in Scarborough, my faith came alive when I began altar serving at Mass. Before this time, faith was essentially going to Mass, going to a Catholic school and praying at home in a mechanical way. After I became an altar server, faith became a relationship with Jesus Christ. Don't get me wrong, going to Mass, going to Catholic school and praying at home were important foundations for which I am ever grateful to my parents. But they were just that, foundations. As Catholics, we are not to be living in the parking garage of the apartment, our goal is to live in the Penthouse. Altar serving for me were the stairs (certainly not the elevator or escalator) to get to the Penthouse.

My experience of being generous with God's gift of time and talent in being an altar server growing up slowly developed into a gift of self and that gift of self made me attentive and responsive to God's calling to the priesthood. In reflecting on this experience, it has me certain that stewardship is not a program, it is a way of life. It is the response of a disciple to live for the other as Christ taught us in His teachings and in the example of His life being offered freely on the cross for our salvation.

When we think of stewardship, we automatically think of finances. But the stewardship way of life is more than just finances and "holy fundraising", it is living as Christ intended, for the other, both God and our neighbour, in love. We do this by sharing our time and talent, as well as our treasure. In one resource that I have been reading on Stewardship, *Living Life as God Intended* explains that stewards "approach, their Saviour, their pastor, and their neighbour with their hands full." When we live our life as God intended, for the other, we are no longer making our decisions around self-interest but around self-gift.

So, when I talk about generosity, I don't just mean money. I also mean offering the gift of time and talent. When I was growing up and became an altar server, I had no money to offer. What I did offer was my time and talent as an altar server - now looking back, a gift of self. A good "assignment" for you this week would be to look at how you are spending your time. We all have 24 hours or 1440 minutes or 86,400 seconds a day. How am I spending that time? Put that into a month, say with 31 days, like October. That is 744 hours a month. Okay, say you are spending 7 hours a day sleeping (healthy and advisable), that's 527 hours awake a month. How are you spending that time?

How should you be spending that time? Being intentional about "Setting aside periods of time for family prayer, for the reading of Scripture, for visits to the Blessed Sacrament, and for attendance at Mass during the week whenever this is possible." (PS: Outside of COVID dispensations, attending Mass on Sunday is assumed here.) I am not saying give up extracurriculars and other things, I am saying, we should be prioritizing our relationship with God, with our family and with others over ourselves (in that order).

If we put time in its proper context, eternity, then there is no need to be stingy in how we spend our time now, for God and for our neighbour.

Father Michael Simoes