

25th Sun. Ord. Time (C)
St. Athanasius and St. Francis Parishes
September 17, 18, 2016

In terms of the liturgy every once in a while a weekend occurs when there are simply too many different themes or events that claim our attention. And all of them may even seem important. Today is one of them.

- It is Catechetical Sunday, when we honor those who are our catechists this year, both in our Catholic School and in our Faith Formation program.
- We will take up a rare second collection for those recovering from flooding in Northeast Iowa and in the Baton Rouge Diocese of Louisiana.
- And we begin a couple weeks of reflection on the topic of stewardship.
- we will honor our catechists following today's homily, and the second collection will follow directly behind the regular collection today. Some of those confirmed last weekend will ask you to place your offering in a plastic bucket, much like what people use to clean up their homes after a flood.

So to the topic of stewardship. The Scriptures today are excellent for reflection on stewardship of treasure. In the First Scripture, the prophet Amos calls out the merchants for cheating and money laundering. In the gospel we have a story that challenges most everyone ... the steward makes a deal with his master's debtors so that he himself can have a decent life after he gets fired. The Master even praises him but then does chide, "I am sure you will be as smart and astute in the things of the spiritual as you have been with the things of this world probably knowing full well that many of them would not be."

Stewardship of treasure, the use of our money, is important. But I am putting that into God's hands ... where it belongs actually. Today and also next weekend, however, I want to reflect with you about stewardship of time and stewardship of talent. You may find these even more of a challenge ... it is often easier to just write a check.

During the week I was, as I most always do, reading in preparation for today. The author (John Shea) mentioned that when we make friends with people of wealth, we must always remember that money is a commodity of this world. It is not permanent; it is passing. And, we all know that money cannot protect us from death. The only legitimate use of money is as a resource, the means, to bind people together. That simple idea, started me thinking about the gift of time.

So often we claim that we have no time, and we also assume that others have no time as well. Actually we all have time ... and each day we have a new 24 hours of time. How we use the time is the critical matter.

Think of it like money ... if we use our time only for ourselves, we will never have enough time. But time used as a resource, as a way and as a means to bind ourselves to others, will have a different feel about it, and it will have a different effect all the way around. Time spent with and for others multiplies; my time shared with your time is double time. It is like so many of the stories in Scripture in which there always seemed to be enough...enough bread, enough fish, enough oil, etc. Only when we spend all our time on ourselves does it seem to run out.

(Netty Rohlfen's witness on how sharing time/talent connects us)

Today we also observe Catechetical Sunday, and we honor those who will pass on the Good News of Jesus to others in a teaching manner this year. Where do they find the time on Wednesday night it is clearly extra time. But living near the school, as I do, I see that much extra time is given also by our teachers. While they are contracted from 8:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. probably, they spend much more time beyond that.

The gift of time, and giving of your talents and gifts within the time you have, is huge. During my own 17 years of teaching, there were some who simply 'put in their time'; in one place one of the teachers was usually out the door before the majority of students had left. You understand what I mean. You see it also in nursing homes; there are those who 'put in their time' and there are those who really 'share their time and their gifts with those who are residents. Time used by sharing it with others cements relationships, our time and our talents build community.

There is no parish worth its salt without the gift of time, without the sharing of talents during the time we have. We all have 24 hours of time each day. Give some thought to your use of time this week. How and for whom do you share your time and your talents?