

**Joyce Racine St. Jude Church Fort Wayne, In
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God created us in His image and likeness and gave us stewardship which is different than ownership, over all He gives us. In love and thanksgiving, we give back to God.

There's a story of a pastor who plotted his stewardship talk: He gave a friend \$100 and told him "when I call for the people to give generously, I want you to come running up the aisle waving that money and give it to me." Right on cue, the man ran up the aisle and gave the money. The pastor asked him "Wasn't that easy?" The man replied "Well, of course it was, you gave it to me in the first place." The pastor responded: "and so it is with God. God gives us everything – even our life itself."

The United States Bishops' Pastoral Letter on Stewardship describes a good steward as a sacrificial giver, a person who

- accepts God's gifts gratefully
- nurtures them responsibly
- shares them in justice and love and
- returns them to God with increase

Sacrificial giving is based on the reality that all that we are, everything we have is a gift from God. God owns it all, and is counting on you and me to continue Jesus' work. You and I are the arms, the legs, the heart and the face of Jesus in our world today.

Sacrificial Giving is a way of life built on 4 principles:

1. Our giving is a sacrifice. Did you know the word sacrifice means, "*to make holy*"?
2. We plan our giving, giving to God and to others a percentage of all our income.
3. We give on a regular basis. Gift-wrapping our offering to our parish in our weekly envelope.
4. We don't give God our leftovers! We give to God right off the top, before we pay our bills.

A wealthy widow died and left \$10,000,000 to be divided between her niece and charity. The niece was to decide how much she would give to charity. At first she thought she'd give \$100,000, but then she reduced it to \$10,000. When it came to the formal reading of the will, the aunt had stipulated that her niece would receive whatever she was willing to give away. The rest would go to charity.

I began to fully practice sacrificial giving at a difficult time in my life when I had nowhere to turn, but to God.

November 1986 I was crippled in an auto accident. A few months later I was knocked off my crutches and my purse was stolen. In April my best friend died and my husband fell in love with a younger woman. In just six months I lost my health, my husband, my friend, even my purse. But I was not abandoned. God still held me really close, true to his promise to hold me, just as he holds each one of you, in the palm of his hand. Then gently and lovingly God began to nudge me, to tell me it was time to pick up my crutches, step out and begin to build a new life. One of the ways God did this was through my children. When my husband left, my sons offered me money for college. But they said, "Mom, if you don't go to college, you don't get any money!"

All my life I shared joyfully my gifts of time and talent. The Book of Proverbs promises: "Give God your treasure and He'll take your worries, too." And Jesus taught: "Give and more will be given to you", but Jesus never promised we would always be happy and successful. I was alone and scared. I didn't even have a full time job, so it seemed irresponsible to give money away before I paid my bills. Besides my income was so small, 10% certainly didn't help the church much. So why tithe? God doesn't look at the amount we give and God will never compare our gift with anyone else's. God looks

into our hearts at the love with which we share the gifts He gives us. Think about it: We can give without loving, but it is impossible to love without wanting to give. Remember Jesus' story about the widow? People were giving large sums of money. She gave just a couple of pennies. I believe she probably looked around hoping no one would notice, but Jesus saw her and was so moved He called his disciples over and said: "See that woman? She gave more than all the others because they gave their leftovers, she gave everything she had." A rich person is not the one who has the most. The truly rich reach out to share whatever they have.

In the slums of Calcutta, Mother Theresa cared for souls as well as bodies and she believed that the giver's spiritual need to give is even greater than the obvious physical needs of the hungry and the homeless to receive. When we give the material things we cannot keep, we gain the spiritual that we cannot lose. What we give now will pay dividends throughout eternity because sacrificial giving changes us. It loosens our attachment to material things and unites us more deeply with God and our brothers and sisters all of whom, like us, are created by God in God's image and likeness.

Our Catholic Church is unique! Many Christian Churches ask a full 10% to give to the Church – and they don't support a school. Our Catholic Church asks a percentage, the ideal being 10% giving half of that to our parish and the other half to charities of our choice.

Not everyone begins at 10%; but those who start at 3, 4 or 5% find that as their confidence in God grows so does their offering. And you don't have to stop at 10%. Some give much more.

Will you spend your time; use your talents; and give your treasure to continue Jesus' work in Resurrection Parish and in the world today?

Pray about your decision. Talk it over with God, in your family and with people you respect. Then make a commitment to give more than you're giving now and remain open even to increasing that amount, keeping in mind that God will never be outdone in generosity.

Sacrificial giving is not about the needs of your family, the church, the hungry, the homeless and the sick to receive; it's about your need to

- accept God's gifts gratefully
- nurture them responsibly
- share them in justice and love and
- return them to God with increase.