

***REIMAGINED***  
**CONSECRATION SUNDAY**

**STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM**

Prepared for the Congregations of the  
Episcopal Diocese of New Jersey

2020

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## INTRODUCTION

Although the Diocese of New Jersey's 140 church buildings have been closed for several months due to the COVID-19 pandemic, our churches have remained **open**. We reimagined how Easter would be celebrated; we adjusted our worship practices to meet the reality that the buildings were closed and we could not meet in person; and we found creative ways to maintain and grow our social justice ministries to meet the increased needs of our communities.

**This is NOT the year to cancel plans for an annual pledge campaign!** It is the year to grab onto what we've learned and to **grow** the annual pledge campaign! Parishes will need to make adjustments to the traditional ways in which annual pledge campaigns have been organized and executed in the past.

Many parishes in the Diocese have used, with great success, the **CONSECRATION SUNDAY** platform in the organization and execution of their annual pledge campaigns. The following is a modified (or reimagined) strategy that will meet the unique challenges the pandemic imposes while retaining the most positive and potentially transformational aspects of the Consecration Sunday approach. This modified (but no less robust) expression of Consecration Sunday will discard what physical distancing and quarantine render impossible (such as face-to-face meetings and events) while retaining what is essential – the spiritual foundations of authentic Christian Stewardship. Our hope is this reimagined approach will make the Consecration Sunday platform more accessible to more parishes in the Diocese.

# WHY CONSECRATION SUNDAY?

*Why is the Consecration Sunday platform a useful guide for executing a successful annual pledge campaign?*

1. **The Spiritual focus of the Consecration Sunday approach!** Parishioners are not asked to give their “Fair Share” to support the budget and pay the church’s bills. Instead, the people are asked to respond to the urgently important theological question: *What is God calling you to do in terms of your personal stewardship in life?*

The clear and unambiguous focus of the Consecration Sunday approach is not to raise dollars to keep the doors of the church open, but to make disciples (the principal mission of the church) by promoting Christian growth and formation through the application of the principles of Transformational Stewardship.

2. **The organized, step-by-step approach** to the planning and execution of an effective annual pledge campaign in the context of a local parish. This approach is especially helpful for congregations that have not conducted (or have limited experience conducting) annual pledge campaigns.
3. The consistency of the message: **What is God calling you to do in terms of your personal stewardship in life?**
4. **There is no attempt to use guilt or other forms of manipulation** to encourage parishioners to expand their stewardship commitments. The emphasis is on encouraging as many people as possible to “show up” on Consecration Sunday to hear the Gospel of Christian Stewardship proclaimed in all of its transformative power, trusting that the Holy Spirit will move the hearts of God’s people to gratitude and generosity!

# THE ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE

We recommend forming a committee of six members (a chair and five members) who can give us approximately five hours each week during the campaign. It would certainly be possible to execute this plan with a smaller committee; however, having fewer members would require more work for everyone. The Stewardship Committee would be responsible for the following activities:

1. Secure the enthusiastic endorsement of the campaign plan from the Rector/Priest-in-Charge. While having this endorsement will not guarantee the success of the campaign, not having it will severely limit the possibility of success.

Also, Committee members will help secure the Rector/Priest-in-Charge's commitment to preach two stewardship homilies during the campaign (a homily on the Gospel of Christian Stewardship on the weekend of Week #1 and a homily on proportional giving and the "Widow's Mite" on the weekend of Week #4 – the weekend before Consecration Sunday).

2. Secure the services of a competent and experienced **GUEST LEADER** who agrees to participate in an orientation meeting with the Stewardship Team at least six weeks before Consecration Sunday (CS); a meeting with the leaders of the parish one week before CS; and to preach the homily and lead in the distribution and collection of the Estimate of Giving cards on CS. The orientation meeting and the meeting with parish leaders will be online ZOOM meetings.
3. Plan and execute all campaign-related communications, including weekly e-blasts (and snail-mail to those who do not have email capability), presentations given during "*Stewardship Time,*" and those related to post-campaign follow-up.
4. Make sure that **EVERY** Estimate of Giving card is acknowledged and thanked in a timely fashion.
5. Make sure that all who pledged in 2020 but did not respond to the 2021 campaign are personally contacted and encouraged to participate.
6. Arrange for an online ZOOM Town Hall meeting to take place two weeks after Consecration Sunday to announce and celebrate results of the campaign; to offer a final Blessing and Consecration of the pledges; and, most importantly, to **THANK** everyone who made a financial commitment for 2021.

# THE CAMPAIGN CALENDAR

From our experience, most parishes in the Diocese conduct their annual pledge campaign “*after the World Series and before Thanksgiving.*” The following dates assume an official launch on **Sunday, October 18, 2020**, but we encourage each parish to set their own timeline based on what works best for the congregation. A series of announcements/E-blasts will be made during worship and in newsletters two weeks before the official launch, announcing the theme of the 2021 campaign and that **CONSECRATION SUNDAY IS COMING ON SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 16<sup>th</sup>**!

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<b>STEWARDSHIP SUNDAY (October 18)</b>	<p>Every congregation in the diocese is encouraged to make this week’s sermon about stewardship. In the Gospel reading for October 18 (Matthew 22:15-22), Jesus affirms the all-encompassing reach of God's ownership. Everything we are and everything we have belongs to God. We are stewards of these gifts God has given to us, which include the gifts of our time, talents and treasure.</p> <p>The Rector/PIC preaches a homily on the “Gospel of Christian Stewardship” and announces his/her “enthusiastic support” for the campaign and encourages the people to prayerfully consider their response to the question: “AS WE PRAYERFULLY CONSIDER (INSERT THEME), <b>HOW ARE YOU BEING CALLED TO RESPOND TO THE AMAZING GRACE GOD HAS PERSONALLY SHOWN TO YOU THROUGH THE 2021 CAMPAIGN?</b>”</p>
<b>WEEK #1 (October 18-24)</b>	<p><i>Tuesday, October 20<sup>th</sup>:</i></p> <p>An e-blast (snail-mail for those who do not have email capability) goes out to every member from the Rector/PIC announcing the theme of the campaign and encouraging everyone to prayerfully consider their response to the question: <b>HOW ARE YOU BEING CALLED TO RESPOND TO THE AMAZING GRACE GOD HAS PERSONALLY SHOWN TO YOU THROUGH THE 2021 CAMPAIGN?</b></p>

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**WEEK #2**  
**(October 25-31)**

*Stewardship Time (during the announcements):*

Bishop Stokes' video answering the question: "Why Is Stewardship in the midst of a Pandemic so vitally important" will be shown (if it is not possible to show the video, then the text of the Bishop's comments will be read to the congregation). Some congregations may choose to offer a stewardship testimonial by a member of the Parish following the Bishop's video.

*Monday, October 26<sup>th</sup>:*

An e-blast is sent to everyone in the parish from the Chair of the Stewardship Committee with Bishop's video attached (snail-mail with the text of the Bishop's video included to those who don't have e-capability).

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**WEEK #3**  
**(November 1-7)**

*Stewardship Time (during the announcements):*

The chair of the Stewardship Committee will give a brief (no more than 3 minute) presentation about the 1<sup>st</sup> foundational principle of Christian Stewardship: **We are not OWNERS of the things we have...We are STEWARDS!** Some congregations may choose to offer a stewardship testimonial by a member of the Parish following the chair of the Stewardship Committee's presentation.

*Monday, November 2<sup>nd</sup>:*

An e-blast is sent to everyone in the parish from the Chair of the Stewardship Committee with a copy of the presentation attached (snail-mail with the text of the Stewardship chair's presentation included to those who don't have e-capability), and a reminder that Consecration Sunday will be on **Sunday, November 15<sup>th</sup>!**

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**WEEK #4**  
**(November 8-14)**

The Rector/PIC preaches a homily about “**Proportional Giving.**” The story of the Widow’s Mite (Luke 21:1-4) is a great example of such a homily.

*Stewardship Time (during the announcements):*

The Senior Warden or Treasurer gives a brief (no more than 3 minute) presentation regarding “Proportional Giving” that encourages people to calculate their gifts to the church NOT in terms of a \$\$\$ amount but in terms of the % that gift represents of the givers’ entire income. It is advised that the person making the Proportional Giving presentation introduce the “**Congregational Giving Step Chart**” as part of his/her presentation. (A copy of the chart is included in the Appendix).

The Guest Leader will conduct an online ZOOM meeting with Parish leaders on Sunday afternoon/evening. The Guest Leader will present an inspiring stewardship message and encourage the leaders of the parish to make a series of phone calls to every parishioner during the next six days reminding them of the importance of attending Consecration Sunday (either in-person or virtually via livestream).

*Monday, November 9<sup>th</sup>:*

An e-blast is sent to everyone in the parish from the Chair of the Stewardship Committee with a digital version of the **Estimate of Giving** card and a link to video of the Senior Warden/Treasurers’ presentation attached (snail-mail with the text of the Senior Warden/Treasurer’s presentation included to those who don’t have e-capability).

The snail-mail correspondence will include a copy of the **Estimate of Giving** card. Parishioners should be encouraged to wait until Consecration Sunday to complete the Estimate of Giving card. There may be parishioners who choose to complete and send in their cards earlier, which will need to be tracked accordingly.

*Tuesday, November 10<sup>th</sup>:*

A snail-mail should go out to all who received Monday’s e-blast with a copy of the **Estimate of Giving** card and instructions to hold off completing the card until Consecration Sunday (Sunday, November 15<sup>th</sup>), as well as an encouragement to be present “in-person” for Consecration Sunday and to watch the livestream broadcast if unable or unready to be physically present.

<p><b>CONSECRATION SUNDAY</b> <b>(November 15)</b></p>	<p>The Guest Leader will preach a robust and inspiring stewardship homily and will lead the congregation in completing the Estimate of Giving card. After all the completed Estimate of Giving cards have been returned to a basket at or near the Altar, the Rector/PIC will offer a prayer of Thanksgiving and Blessing of the commitments made by the members of the Parish for 2021. Those who are viewing the livestream broadcast will be encouraged to complete the <b>Estimate of Giving</b> card and to return it to the church office no later than <b>Wednesday, November 25<sup>th</sup></b>.</p>
<p><b>WEEK #5</b> <b>(November 15-21)</b></p>	<p><i>Monday, November 16<sup>th</sup>:</i></p> <p>A thank-you and acknowledgment letter is sent by the Rector/PIC to all who submitted <b>Estimate of Giving</b> cards and who made commitments of financial support for 2021 on Consecration Sunday. This letter will continue to be sent as additional <b>Estimate of Giving</b> cards are received.</p> <p><i>Tuesday, November 17<sup>th</sup>:</i></p> <p>An email/letter from the Stewardship chair is sent to all households who pledged in 2020 but did not submit an Estimate of Giving card on Consecration Sunday (or earlier). This letter will be an encouragement to renew and, possibly increase, their 2020 commitment in 2021, and to return a completed <b>Estimate of Giving</b> card (additional copy of the card will be attached/enclosed) no later than <b>Wednesday, November 25<sup>th</sup></b>.</p>
<p><b>WEEK #6</b> <b>(November 22-28)</b></p>	<p><i>Stewardship Time (during the announcements):</i></p> <p>The chair of the Stewardship Committee will give a “preliminary” report on the results of Consecration Sunday and will announce an online ZOOM Town Hall meeting to be held at <b>7:00 pm on Tuesday, November 24<sup>th</sup></b> and encourage everyone to “tune in” to hear a final campaign results report.</p>
<p><b>WEEK #7</b> <b>(November 29-December 5)</b></p>	<p><i>Tuesday, November 30<sup>th</sup>:</i></p> <p>The Rector/PIC serves as “host” of the Town Hall meeting, and thanks the Stewardship Committee for their efforts and thanks everyone who participated in the 2021 campaign. The Rector/PIC introduces the Stewardship chair who presents the final report of campaign results and presides over a brief Q&amp;A. The Rector/PIC concludes the meeting by offering a final Blessing/Dedication of the 2021 commitments and a prayer of thanksgiving and benediction. The campaign is officially over (“thanks be to God”).</p>

# APPENDIX

Included in this Appendix are the following sample materials that can be used as guides as you develop your Fall pledge campaign:

- A series of “Temple Talks” concerning three of the “Foundational Principles” of Transformational Stewardship
- The text of two stewardship homilies (one based on the story of the Widow’s Mite and one on the Gospel of Christian Stewardship)
- A copy of the Congregational Giving Step Chart
- A sample prayer of Blessing/Consecration
- A sample Estimate of Giving card

# TRANSFORMATIONAL STEWARDSHIP TEMPLE TALKS

## 1 It ALL belongs to GOD!

As we convene this morning/evening, I would like to speak to you about the most important of the four foundational principles of **TRANSFORMATIONAL STEWARDSHIP**, and that is the belief that everything we have...absolutely **EVERYTHING** we have belongs to God! Do you believe that? I believe it with every fiber of my being...the house I live in is not mine...the car I drive is not mine...my savings account is not mine... my 401K is not mine! In fact, I am not an owner of anything that I have! Everything I have (or ever will have) comes from God and belongs to God. We are not **OWNERS**...we are **STEWARDS**. And the difference between an owner and a steward is critically important to our understanding of Stewardship!

Owners manage and control their own stuff...**STEWARDS**, on the other hand, manage and control someone else's stuff. If you believe this foundational principle, then the new paradigm of **TRANSFORMATIONAL STEWARDSHIP** will make sense to you. If you don't believe it (and I am sure there are those listening to me who do not believe it) that is ok...all I ask is that you prayerfully consider that it may be true and that you listen with an open heart and an open mind, and that you allow God the Holy Spirit to speak to you regarding your individual "Stewardship of Life". To reiterate foundational principle #1...**EVERYTHING WE HAVE BELONGS TO GOD**...we are not **OWNERS**...we are **STEWARDS**!

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## 2 Stewardship is NOT primarily about fundraising!

Foundational Principle #2...Stewardship is NOT Fundraising. In the old paradigm of Transactional Stewardship – stewardship was all about fundraising. It was about raising the funds required to keep the doors of the church open and the lights on. It was about raising the funds needed to pay the priest's extraordinary compensation package and the parish assessment to the Diocese!

Stewardship, in the old way of thinking, was all about fundraising, which is why the annual campaign was usually done in the fall – the time when the annual operating budget was being created. The question parishioners were asked was, "will you assume your fair share of the responsibility for providing the financial resources to keep the ministry of the church going?" But Transformational Stewardship is the exact opposite way of thinking-Stewardship is NOT about raising the funds needed to operate the church. Stewardship is about growing in your relationship to God and to His Son, Jesus Christ. Stewardship, in this new way of thinking, is about your formation and growth in Christian discipleship. It is about the health of your

relationship to God. Let me be clear...there is absolutely nothing wrong with fundraising - every church does it to a greater or lesser degree. But Stewardship is NOT about fundraising.

Let me try to explain it this way. Suppose when I come into the office on Tuesday evening (for Bible Study) I find a check on my desk from an anonymous donor for five million dollars (that is a 5 and six zeroes behind it!). As a result of this gift, the Church of the Good Shepherd would be set financially for years to come. We would never have to worry about money. We could comfortably live off the interest we would earn each year from investing that money, but we would still need to do an annual stewardship campaign! We would still need to preach/teach about the principles of Transformational Stewardship. Why? Because stewardship is NOT about fundraising. Stewardship is about our growth and our development as disciples of Jesus Christ!

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### 3 Proportional Giving!

In the old paradigm (what I call Transactional Stewardship), what was most important was the size of the gifts that were given. Not all gifts had the same value. The larger gifts were valued more because they were able to pay for a larger chunk of the annual budget. But in the new paradigm, the Transformational Stewardship paradigm, the size of the gift is not what matters most. What matters most is what the gift represents in terms of the giver's total income. What matters most is not the size of the gift, but what the gift costs the one who gives it. And this is what we call PROPORTIONAL GIVING.

The Biblical model of proportional giving is the wonderful story of the Widow's Mite (found in the 21<sup>st</sup> chapter of Luke and the 12<sup>th</sup> chapter of Mark). In this story, Jesus recognizes and congratulates the stewardship of a poor widow who puts two small copper coins into the offering plate (two coins worth about one penny). Jesus makes the astonishing claim that she put in more than the other donors who put in larger and more impressive gifts.

Why? Because they gave out of their abundance, but she gave out of her extreme poverty...everything she had! You see, it's not the size of our gifts that matter most, but it is what those gifts represent in terms of your total income. In a few weeks, you will be asked to think about your response to the 2019 annual stewardship campaign, and you will be asked to calculate your gift not in terms of the dollars you gave last year, but in terms of what percentage of your income your gift represents. If you gave 2% of your income last year (which is what the average Episcopalian gives), you will be asked to prayerfully consider giving 3%...or 5%...or perhaps 10% of your income in 2020, and that's called Proportional Giving and that is the third foundational principle of Transformational Stewardship.

# SAMPLE STEWARDSHIP HOMILIES

*Outrageous Stewardship...a homily for Proper 27B (based on the story of the "Widow's Mite")*

Text: Mark 12:41-43

The Temple treasury was crowded and noisy as usual. Richly robed merchants made large and impressive contributions to maintain the machinery and to support the Temple Building Fund. One woman, bent over and clothed in black, with a small child clinging to her skirts, dropped two small copper coins into the treasury box, paused to voice a silent prayer, and then moved on. Jesus observed the scene and gathered his beloved disciples around him and said: *"Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the Treasury, for they contributed out of their abundance, but she, out of her poverty, has put in everything she had...all she had to live on."*

There are at least three kernels of Gospel truth about Christian Stewardship embedded in the remarkable story of the Poor Widow (our Gospel reading for this 27<sup>th</sup> Sunday after the great feast of Pentecost).

The **first truth** is that it is not what you give but what you keep for yourself which defines your stewardship of life. Let me say that again...it is not what you give but what you keep for yourself which defines your stewardship of life. Jesus informs us that this poor widow gave everything she had. She didn't give 10% and keep 90% for herself. She didn't give 50% and keep 50% for herself. No, she gave it all...everything she had to live on...her last penny! Friends, it is not what you give, but what you keep for yourself which defines your stewardship of life!

The **second truth** revealed in this story is an unfortunate truth, an uncomfortable truth, it is the sad but certain truth that the more we have the less we give...THE MORE WE HAVE, THE LESS WE GIVE! In 2008, a fascinating book was published by Oxford University Press entitled *Passing the Plate; Why American Christians Don't Give Away More Money*. One of the surprising (and disturbing) statistics revealed in the book is that as American Christians' incomes rise the percentage of their disposable income that they give to support the ministry of the church (and other religious organizations) actually declines. They point out that Christians earning \$10K or less gave about 2.3% of their income while Christians earning \$70K or more gave a total of 1.2%. My friends, it is sad, but it is certainly true...the more we have, the less we give!

The **third and final truth** about Christian stewardship revealed in today's Gospel is that there are really only two kinds of stewards who give to support the work of building and advancing God's Kingdom. There are those who give out of their abundance and there are those who give out of their poverty.

And the truth is that all of us here this evening/morning (even those of us on fixed incomes, those of us who rely on Social Security, even those of us living on unemployment compensation) give to support the advancement of the Kingdom, give not out of poverty...but out of ABUNDANCE. As I mentioned a few weeks ago, according to the Global Rich List, if you own your own home (no matter how modest it is) then you are wealthier than 95% of the world's population. If your annual income is \$25K or more you are wealthier than 98% of the world's population. Friends, the truth is that all of us have been richly blessed, and by the world's standards we are all fabulously wealthy, and when we give to support the building and advancing of God's Kingdom, we give, not out of our poverty (like the Poor Widow in today's Gospel). No, when we give, we give out of our ABUNDANCE!

Every time I hear the incredible story of the outrageous Stewardship of an unnamed widow who gave God her last penny, I wonder what kind of FAITH could inspire a person to do what she did that day in the Temple (I don't know about you, but I want that kind of faith in my life). Whenever I hear this story, I wonder how it is possible for a human being to trust so absolutely - to trust without question or hesitation in the promises of God to be free, to voluntarily give away everything and keep nothing for herself (I don't know about you, but I would like to trust God. I want to have that kind of freedom in my life and experience that kind of freedom in my life). Every time I hear the incredible story of the outrageous Stewardship of an unnamed widow who gave God her last penny, I wonder if I found myself in a similar situation, if I were down to my last dollar, would I keep it for myself or would I do what she did? Would I have the faith and the freedom to give it away...I wonder?

**Amen!**

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## The Gospel of Christian Stewardship...a Stewardship Homily

Text: **Matthew 6: 19-34**

A young, bright, and tremendously successful corporate attorney was leaving his beautiful home for the office one Monday morning. In the doorway, blocking his exit, the attorney's three-year-old son Jonathan sat on the floor, playing with his wooden blocks. The father stepped over his son, patted him on the head and said, "have a nice day Johnny," and walked out to the driveway where his cherry-red BMW convertible was parked. He put the key into the ignition when all of a sudden, a guilt bomb went off in his head. All of a sudden, the successful attorney realized that he didn't really know his own son. He realized that since the day Johnny was born, he had been so pre-occupied pursuing success in his legal career that he had totally and completely neglected his own flesh and blood. In that painful moment of self-awareness, the attorney's eyes were opened to the truth.

For all intents and purposes his three-year-old son was an orphan. Overcome and absolutely devastated by the weight of his parental neglect, the attorney got out of the car, walked back into the house, threw his briefcase on the sofa, sat down on the floor and began to play blocks with little Johnny. After a few minutes, little Johnny began to sob. His lower lip quivered and he said, “Daddy...why are you mad at me...I didn’t do anything wrong...why are you mad at me?” (long pause). You see, there is a difference - a huge difference - between sitting on the floor and playing blocks with your son out of love and sitting on the floor and playing blocks with your son out of guilt. The difference is so obvious that even a three-year-old can recognize it.

The Church has, in my humble opinion, made a serious mistake - a strategic and tactical error in the past by trying to motivate/stimulate/encourage/inspire Christian Stewardship through the creative application of guilt. The strategy too often has been, “*make people feel guilty because they don’t give, or because they don’t give enough to the church and they will give more*”. Now, in the interest of transparency, I confess that as a priest and pastor and as a professional fundraiser, I have used this kind of strategy from time to time. But, over the years, I have come to realize that guilt (no matter how creatively it is applied) is a very poor, and, in the long run, a very ineffective motivator of stewardship!

You see, there are really only two ways to think about and talk about Christian Stewardship. You can think of it from the perspective of the Law or you can think of it from the perspective of the Gospel. Now the Law teaches us, instructs us, about what we OUGHT to do for God, but the Gospel reminds us about what God has done for us in Jesus Christ...

Now, I am sure that the LAW of Christian Stewardship is very familiar to most of us: we OUGHT to give--generously, joyfully, even sacrificially--as an expression of gratitude for all that God has done for us. We OUGHT to give because everything we have comes from God (we are managers...not owners). We OUGHT to give because the church needs our money to advance God’s Kingdom of justice and peace in this community and around the world. The bottom line is we OUGHT to give, and if we are not giving, or not giving enough, we are not carrying our weight. We are not doing our fair share. That is the Law of Christian Stewardship and, if you have been involved in the life of the church, then you have all heard it before (usually around this time of year...after the World Series and before Thanksgiving).

But I wonder if we are as familiar with the Gospel of Christian Stewardship? My guess is that we are not because when it comes to Stewardship, what we have heard most frequently and with the greatest clarity is the Law of Christian Stewardship, and the Law without the Gospel is a distortion of the truth. So this morning, on this Consecration Sunday, I would ask for us to ponder, for a few moments, the Gospel of Christian Stewardship.

At the heart of St. Matthew’s version of Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount, Jesus makes an absolutely astonishing and counterintuitive statement about Christian Stewardship. He says (in verse 21 of chapter 6), “Where your TREASURE is, there will your HEART be also.”

Where your TREASURE is, there will your HEART be also. You can't avoid it. You can't prevent it. Your heart will always, ALWAYS follow your treasure. Just as day ALWAYS follows night and summer ALWAYS follows spring, so will your heart ALWAYS follow your treasure. And with these incredible words, Jesus summarizes and describes what I believe is the HEART of the Gospel of Christian Stewardship. Where your TREASURE is...there will your HEART be also.

Now you would think that just the opposite would be true - that where your HEART is, where your passion is, that is where your treasure will be (if you are passionate about classical music, then you will think nothing of investing thousands in the finest music library money can buy, or if you are passionate about golf then you will spend large sums of money on the latest equipment and greens fees or on the gadget that is guaranteed to straighten out your slice). Even the church has fallen victim to what I call the greatest myth of stewardship - if you just get people involved in the life of the parish then they will give. But Jesus sets us straight about that - in the Gospel, Jesus teaches that just the opposite is true. Get people to give, to invest in the mission and ministry of Christ's church, and they will get more involved. They will become more deeply committed and faithful disciples! Why? Because where your TREASURE is, there will your heart be also! And friends, here is the great Good News: we can, through our stewardship of life, influence the "Habits of our Hearts." We can influence and direct our hearts in the way we want them and need them to go. We are not the helpless victims of our feelings and emotions, of our obsessions and compulsions. We can have a "change of heart" and Jesus tells us how - invest your treasure in the things you want to care about or need to care about and your heart will always, ALWAYS follow your treasure.

Where your TREASURE is, there will your HEART be also. THEREFORE:

- If you want to experience more profoundly the joy of your salvation, increase your giving.
- If you want to feel more closely connected to Christ and to His Body the Church, increase your giving and invest a larger percentage of your treasure in the work God is doing in the world.
- If you want to love God with all your heart/soul/mind/strength and have greater confidence and trust in the promises of God, Jesus teaches us HOW - increase your giving and invest a larger percentage of your treasure in the things which will advance the Kingdom and proclaim the Good News of the Gospel of Grace. Expand your "Stewardship of Life." WHY? Because where your TREASURE is, there will your HEART be also.

My friends, as our Eucharistic celebration continues on this Consecration Sunday...as we prepare to, once again, approach the Table of Grace and to hold in our hands the most precious treasure that we will ever hold or handle in this life - the Body and Blood of our Lord in the Bread and the wine of the Holy Eucharist, let us pray that the Gospel of Christian Stewardship will set us free. Free from our bondage to self and from the tyranny of our material possessions.

Pray that the Gospel of Christian Stewardship will set us free to give generously, joyfully, even recklessly, and let us remember, let us never forget that we are never more Christ-like, never more in harmony with the heart/mind/spirit/example of Jesus, we are never more closely aligned with Jesus' word/will/way than when we "MAKE EUCHARIST," than when we, with grateful and thankful hearts, offer what we have to offer (nothing fancy, just the ordinary things of our altogether ordinary lives). A little bread and some wine, our time and our talents and our treasure, believing and trusting that God will take what we offer, and God will transform these ordinary things into what we and the world most desperately need - what we and the world cannot live without....(Long pause)...And friends, MAKING EUCHARIST is the essence. It is the heart and soul and center of the Gospel of Christian Stewardship.

THANKS BE TO GOD!

**Amen!**

# CONGREGATIONAL GIVING STEP CHART

## A Revealing Breakdown of our Congregation's Giving Patterns

*(Find out Where You Are on this chart of Weekly Giving)*

\_\_\_\_\_ (\$200.00 and more per week)  
\_\_\_\_\_ (\$150.00 to \$199.00 per week)  
\_\_\_\_\_ (\$100.00 to \$149.00 per week)  
\_\_\_\_\_ (\$75.00 to \$99.00 per week)  
\_\_\_\_\_ (\$50.00 to \$74.99 per week)  
\_\_\_\_\_ (\$40.00 to \$49.99 per week)  
\_\_\_\_\_ (\$30.00 to \$39.99 per week)  
\_\_\_\_\_ (\$20.00 to \$29.99 per week)  
\_\_\_\_\_ (\$10.00 to \$19.99 per week)  
\_\_\_\_\_ (\$5.00 to \$9.99 per week)  
\_\_\_\_\_ (\$1.00 to \$4.99 per week)  
\_\_\_\_\_ (\$0.00 per week)

***Will You Grow One Step This Year???***

# BLESSING OVER NEW CONSECRATION SUNDAY PLEDGES

Loving Father,

You have entrusted us with the awe-inspiring task of sharing the message of the Gospel. We humbly dedicate these pledges to Your use. We are comforted by the knowledge that You will multiply these gifts. We pray that You will allow our gifts to become a resource that lifts the shadows of despair from the dark corners of people's lives. We recognize that only You can restore faith to the faithless, hope to the hopeless, and love to the loveless, but You invite us to become partners with you in renewing creation and bringing reconciliation to relationships with You, with each other, and with the Earth. May Your will be done on Earth as it is in heaven.

Amen.

## CONSECRATION SUNDAY ESTIMATE OF GIVING CARD

### *Estimate of Giving Card...For Christ and for His Church!!*

My commitment is to GROW in my Stewardship of Life in response to God's Grace:

\_\_\_ I have never PLEDGED before, but I will make a pledge this year.

\_\_\_ I have always been a "Leftover" giver, but this year I am committed to First Fruits Giving

\_\_\_ I have always calculated my gift on the basis of a dollar amount, but this year I am committed to Proportional Giving.

\_\_\_ I have never practiced the Biblical principle of tithing, but this year I am committed to giving 10% of my income (either gross or net) back to God.

\_\_\_ I am committed to signing up for the Simply Giving (electronic giving). Please contact me about getting started.

My commitment over the next twelve months IS

\$ \_\_\_ per week

\$ \_\_\_ per month

\$ \_\_\_ per year

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Apt. #: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: (     ) \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_, State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail address: \_\_\_\_\_