

Everyday Steward: “Until God opens the next door, praise him in the hallway.”

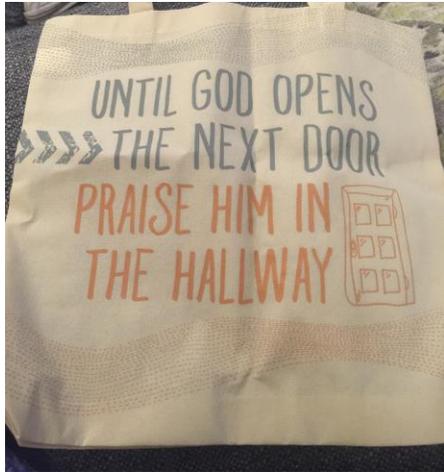
I had something completely different to talk about this month, until I went to a Deanery meeting and this topic came to the surface: *How can we combat the culture of consumerism with stewardship?* The culture that prevails in many of our communities is driven by an urgent need of gratification, a give-to-receive complex. This concept is in direct opposition to the concept of stewardship. Stewardship creates and grows a *culture of giving*. A Parish with a strong *culture of giving* looks like this:

- Ministry Hosts welcome guests at the front door on Sunday...
- A sense of welcome exists on all ministry committees, and new ideas are welcomed and not judged and newcomers are engaged, not put on the sidelines...
- Sunday liturgy is carefully planned to be engaging and joy-filled, it is *planned* with Parishioner input...
- Parishioners know each other and care for each other; they know who sits next to them in the pews...
- Each Parishioner has been asked for something; rather it is to volunteer for a youth ministry trip, or to flip pancakes on the grill for the Pancake Breakfast. Everyone has been asked to participate...
- Each Parishioner gives freely of their treasure, when they have the opportunity...

You will understand where I am heading with this; we have to create a culture of giving in our Parishes that exists from being intentional disciples. The above examples are individuals intentionally giving of their time, talents, and treasures for their own faith life, and for those around them. Intentional discipleship is not a new concept; it has just gained some traction recently. I am currently reading a book called Forming Intentional Disciples: The Path to Knowing and Following Jesus by Sherry Weddell. So far, it provides an engaging conversation on stewardship and how we can each be called to participate. I would add it to the summer reading list! I would wager that if we could create a conversation that was approachable, engaging, and collaborative within our Parishes about the call to be intentional disciples in our ministries, we would witness a culture of giving and stewardship emerging from these conversations.

Hosting the conversation is just the beginning. As I have visited many Deaneries and Parishes over the last couple of months, I have found new ideas and strategies that help get the conversation started or bring it back to life. While many of us might be shifting gears during the summer months (less hours, travel, etc.), I hope we keep at the forefront the conversation on stewardship. One parish is working on a Bingo Board that will appear in their Bulletin and highlight “to-dos” for stewardship, including sitting somewhere new at Mass and introducing yourself to those around you. Another idea is to create a section in your bulletin called, “Visitor’s Guide” that highlights upcoming events, local restaurants, or parks around your Parish.

The summer months provide a great backdrop to your stewardship efforts. From welcoming travelers who are visiting the city, to hosting Parish festivals that create a close knit community, we can find the doorway to intentional discipleship is open; we just need to be willing to participate.



I will leave with this quote from a bag I purchased from the Benedictine Inn and Retreat House I visited last week, "Until God opens the next door, praise him in the hallway." We may not have it all figured out, but we can at least meet each other in the hallway to get started.