

A Spirituality of Stewardship
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A. Introduction

1. Retreat Experience: August, 2006 -- director: Fr. Robert Barron
 - expression: “the law of the gift”
 - summary: everything we have comes from God / we are called to give it back / God doesn’t need our gift so it comes back elevated, multiplied, and intensified
2. Poetic Experience (epiphany) -- from the Anglican George Herbert (1593-1633)

*“Lord, my first fruits present themselves to thee;
Yet not mine neither: for from thee they came,
And return. Accept of them and me,
And make us strive, who shall sing best thy name.” (118)*

“Restore to God his due in tithe and time. . .” (135)

3. Recommended Reading – Robert Ellsberg’s All Saints (365 “stewards”)

A. Five Convictions regarding Stewardship

1. Stewardship consists in four (unsplit) infinitives
 - to receive God’s gifts.....GRATEFULLY
 - to nurture/tend God’s gifts.....RESPONSIBLY
 - to share God’s gifts.....JUSTLY / CHARITABLY
 - to return God’s gifts.....ABUNDANTLY
2. Stewardship, as a concept & practice, has tremendous power – to change life / one’s destiny!

The idea and practice of stewardship have the power to change our self-understanding and our understanding of the meaning of our lives. Steward-disciples recognize God as the origin of life, the giver of freedom, the source of all they have and are. They see themselves as caretakers of God’s gifts. They are grateful for what they have received and are eager to cultivate their gifts out of love for God and one another.” (cf. NCCB pastoral letter on stewardship)

3. **Third Conviction: stewardship is inclusive! demanding! joy-filled!**

“Stewardship plays an important role in the lives of people who seek to follow Christ. In particular, Christians must be stewards of their personal vocations, for it is these that show how, according to the circumstances of their individual lives, God wants them to cherish and serve a broad range of interests and concerns life and health, along with their intellectual and spiritual well being and that of others; material goods and resources; the natural environment; the cultural heritage of humankind.” (cf. NCCB pastoral letter)

“What have you done with the garden entrusted to you?” (Machado)

garden of our body	garden of emotions	garden of the mind
garden of family-friends	garden of the “polis”	garden of the arts
garden of the globe	garden of the “chip”	garden of money
garden of decisions	garden of history	garden of the soul

4. **Convictions of others – regarding stewardship as a way of life**

- “Whatever is not given is lost!” (proverb from India)
- “What is not used is but a load to bear.” (Goethe)
- “All belongs to the Lord.” (Lev. 27:30)
- “Take only what ye need.” (George Eliot)
- “All is gift – give it away, give it away.” (a poet)

- “Learn to give in the right way, at the right time.” (Peck)
- “God has given me a gift and I have to use it.” (Jones)
- “unnoticed giving” most closely resembles God’s goodness (Boros)
- “A sense of gratitude is a primary source of joyful generosity.” (Maurac)
- “All my trust is in your promise.” – trust/faith: foundational elements in stewardship

5. **Conviction: stewardship demands a “vision” – seeing (then acting) as Jesus did**

His [Jesus] is a vision of a world in which people are more concerned with giving than with having, with sharing than with possessing, with serving than with being served; where each is valued for what he or she is rather than that they have; where the narrow loyalties of class or race or tradition or party are of less weight than the solidarity of the human race created in God’s likeness; and where in areas of conflict and violence, forgiveness and reconciliation have been proved to be the most powerful of all weapons.” (Michael Mayne’s Pray, Love, Remember, 33)

Psalm 116:12

*What return can I make to the Lord
for all that the Lord has done for me?*