



# SAINT JOHN FISHER PARISH

MARCH 15, 2018

Dear Parishioners:

For many years I have talked about stewardship as a way of life. All that we have and all that we are is a gift from God. Our lives should be one of gratitude to God. As stewards we recognize that we are entrusted with our gifts. "A steward is one who receives God's gifts gratefully, cherishes and tends them in a responsible and accountable manner, shares them in justice and love with others, and returns them with increase to the Lord." *Stewardship: A Disciple's Response*, Pastoral Letter on Stewardship of the Bishops of the United States, 1992.

In the early church, members of the community brought from their homes the gifts of bread and wine, made by members of the household, to be offered at the celebration of the Eucharist. These would be the "first fruits," that is to say, the best and freshest bread, and the best wine, as well as other food items, offered by the family in gratitude to God for the gifts they had received. Any gifts not used at the Eucharist were distributed to the needy of the community.

For the past ten years as you sit down for the offertory, the priest adds a few brief words: "Let us take a moment of silence to consider how God's Word just proclaimed calls us to put ourselves at the service of Christ's mission." Then there is a period of silence. Utilize that silence to reflect: "What are the gifts I have received from the Lord? Have I thanked God for these gifts? How have I used them, grown in and with them? In what way can I put the words of the day's Scripture into action? Have I returned my best, my 'first fruits' to the Lord with increase?" This is what the gift we bring as our offering represents. As we place our gift in the collection basket, we remember with gratitude all those gifts we have received and Christ's challenge to use them to witness to, and proclaim the Good News in a hurting world which so desperately needs "good news" today. Even if you are giving electronically through *Faith Direct*, I recommend that you use one of those coupons you receive from them to place into the basket.

If we give as grateful stewards, we give the first portion to the Lord. For you whose income has decreased, the first portion may be less than we have given in the past. However, it is still the first portion; it is still a sacrificial offering. Before we bring up the bread and wine to the priest, we gather up the collective offerings of all those taking part at Mass. The presentation of our gifts, financial and otherwise, like the Mass itself, should *never* be seen as routine. When the basket is passed around, ideally, I would like each person to take the basket in both hands before placing the personal offering in the basket. Then all the offerings are placed in one large basket, which is carried up in procession to be presented to the priest.

The Eucharist is our time to give not only our treasure but our hopes, anxieties, fears, and joys in thanksgiving to the Lord. It is a special and sacred time. Let us make the most of it.

Yours in Christ,

Rev. Msgr. David A. Sork  
Pastor