

## Stewardship Sermon, November 23, 2003

**Frank Innes**

*Think of God's mercy, my brothers and sisters, and worship God, I beg you, in a way that is worthy of thinking beings, by offering your bodies as a holy sacrifice, truly pleasing to God. Do not model yourselves on the behavior of the world around you, but let your behavior change, modeled by your new mind. This is the only way to discover the will of God, and know what is good, what it is God wants, what is the perfect thing to do.*

*-Romans 12: 1-2 (Jerusalem Bible)*

I have been extraordinarily busy this past week (for me anyway). I was in Atlanta working on a deadline by day, and working on personal projects by night. I had to really look at how to spend time, hour by hour, to get it all done. My lazy, entropic side just wanted to watch TV or go to the 14-screen theatre a few times to catch up on movies. I did succumb and saw *Elf*, which I commend to you, and watched television on occasion.

But, as the week wore on, and I was thinking more about Stewardship, it brought home to me, in a much deeper sense, that Stewardship truly is a way of life. How I, how we spend our time, use our talents and skills for the good of others, how we spend our money – these are the tangible, concrete, expressions of our “spiritual worship”.

Time, that is, the actual passage of our lives from moment to moment, may be the most immediate gift we have from God. Time cannot be stored up or grow like money, or expanded, as you may recall that Superman was able to do. We first must use it to take care of ourselves, being attentive to our loved ones, providing for their material needs, for recreation. A good part of the time that remains, ought to be spent in service to God, through community volunteerism and action, ministry in this community of St. Mary's, Hamilton Village, and expressing our beliefs in the voting booth.

Skill and talent are the ways we can make the most of the time we have, and, perhaps expand it, by sharing each of our unique gifts that enrich the lives and insights of others –

motivating others to devote more of their time and skills to serving others. From *James 1:22-25*:

*<sup>22</sup>But be doers of the word, and not merely hearers who deceive themselves. <sup>23</sup>For if any are hearers of the word and not doers, they are like those who look at themselves in a mirror; <sup>24</sup>for they look at themselves and, on going away, immediately forget what they were like. <sup>25</sup>But those who look into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and persevere, being not hearers who forget but doers who act—they will be blessed in their doing.*

Money, the fruit of our labors, has overwhelming power in our world and in our lives. We could go on and on in debating how much is taken and misspent by this or that political leader or that CEO. The mass media provides an infinite supply of suggestions on how best to empty our wallets, along we stories of how our pockets are being emptied behind our backs by business and government while despoiling our environment.

Tithing or pledging a fixed amount of money on a regular basis is another concrete acknowledgement that all that we are, all that we have comes from God. I relate this to stewardship of the earth as giving back while taking the least of earth's resources that we need to thrive and doing what we can to renew those resources.

Last week, at the parish annual meeting, I handed out cards to everyone in attendance and asked each person to write down her or his personal ministries at St. Mary's. What was written on these cards is evidence that, in our small Christian community, we truly are "*doers of the word, and not merely hearers*". With your leaflet this morning, you were given a card. For those who weren't present at the meeting, On the card, please list your ministries and leave it with an usher as you leave the church.

ALL SING:

*We give thee but thine own,  
Whate'er the gift may be;  
All that we have is thine alone,  
A trust, O Lord from Thee.*