



Hospitality

St. Gerard's Parish, Calgary

by Dr. Lori Montgomery

It's something that visitors to St. Gerard's parish in southwest Calgary often comment on – their first impression as they arrive at mass. The gathering area is a beehive of activity, with parishioners and visitors alike drawn into conversation. And in the midst of it all, Father Greg Coupal is hovering as if he's hosting a dinner party, making sure everyone feels at home, pausing to welcome back those who have been away. He says he never made a conscious decision to begin mass this way – it's what he's always done.

"You're celebrating with those people who are coming in the door – that's part of putting yourself in the frame of mind to celebrate the mass," he says. "I think the quiet, personal stuff has to come before that. We tell the people that when you're coming to church, it doesn't start when you walk in the doors – it begins in the parking lot, sometimes on the way from home. Well, it's the same with us – it doesn't start when we put on the vestments."

Father Greg credits pastoral associate Doreen Yochim and music co-ordinator Patti-Jo Haley with being a driving force when it comes to consciously incorporating hospitality into their work with all parish ministries. Things like the annual Men's Retreat and the Parish Celebration Weekend are features of life at St. Gerard's that newcomers consistently say that they appreciate. Yochim says that for her, it isn't possible to separate hospitality from our mission as God's people – to demonstrate God's love to each other. As such, any vocation must involve hospitality, she says.

"If you are called into the music ministry," she says, "then you need to be shown the extravagant love of God in that ministry, and you need to show it to others... I think we all have to be recipients and experience it, and we also have to give it. If I'm in Bible study and I don't experience from others that extravagant love of God, I won't be back again. So I think we've all got a responsibility to exhibit that wherever we are."

Father Greg insists that there isn't really a recipe for creating an atmosphere of hospitality – but again he gives the credit to his parish team.

"Certainly part of it is going to be by example – it doesn't matter what your role is in the community, or the parish," he says. "You're modeling it, and other people are going to pick up on it, particularly if you're in a role of leadership. Doreen has the same role, in terms of extending hospitality – she models that tremendously."

Both hasten to add that hospitality is a work in progress, and that like any community, St. Gerard's parish has areas where work still needs to be done. A project is underway, for example, to welcome new parishioners and encourage them to become involved in parish life. Formation for ministry leaders is an ongoing challenge, as it is with any large group of people.

"From my perspective, it's just important that we keep it before the people and say that this is not a one-shot thing – it's a way of living as a community," Yochim says. "It's a life-long journey – it's constantly evolving. I hope that we never get to the point where we say that 'we're there.'"

Formation Opportunities

Inside this Issue

The Stewardship Office for the diocese of Calgary has been open six months now! Stewardship is a way of living out our discipleship to Jesus. Our parishes and people are already manifesting their discipleship as stewards in many ways. The office is here to help that spirituality develop and to offer practical strategies for encouraging a stewardship way of life.

One of the most obvious starting places for good stewardship is hospitality. What does it mean to be hospitable? What does hospitality look like? In this issue of the newsletter, I encourage you to take a fresh look at hospitality in your parish, your ministry, and your own life of faith. The cover story is a testimony from St. Gerard's parish to the ministry of hospitality. On this page you are invited to take part in some of the many formation events coming up this year. The third page offers a stewardship examination of conscience for use in your Lenten penitential services or prayer groups as a way of preparing the heart to welcome the Paschal mystery. And our stewardship saint for this issue is St. Joseph, who extended his hospitality to the Word made flesh through Mary.

May we welcome the risen Christ at Easter as stewards of the mystery of salvation!

The stewardship movement is vibrant in North America. This year there are many opportunities for forming parish leaders in stewardship. Below is a list of upcoming events both local and further afield. Participation in one or more of these events can set your parish on the right foot for beginning the stewardship journey and can boost your existing stewardship efforts.

March 20-25, 2006

Niagara Falls, Ontario

Stewardship Institute

This 5-day Institute follows a retreat format and is an intensive immersion into stewardship as a way of life. For registration details visit www.catholicstewardship.org and look under Conferences and Events. The Institute will be held at the Carmelite Retreat Centre. For details about the location visit <http://www.carmelniagara.com/>. There will also be an Institute in Danville, California, July 17-21, 2006.

May 13, 2006

Calgary, Alberta

Diocesan Stewardship Day

This will be a day of formation, community-building, and an opportunity for parish representatives to gain and share inspiration for stewardship in the Diocese of Calgary. Details about the program, location, and registration will come directly from the Diocesan Stewardship Office soon.

June 8-9, 2006

Vancouver, British Columbia

Northwest Region Stewardship Conference

For those of you who were unable to send a representative from your parish to the International conference in San Francisco last October, this formation opportunity will help your parish leaders kick-start stewardship in your parish. To register, visit www.rcav.org/stewardship/

October 1-4, 2006

Boston, Massachusetts

International Catholic Stewardship Council Annual Conference

<http://www.catholicstewardship.org/en/events/conference.cfm>

June, 2007

Edmonton, Alberta

Western Canadian Stewardship Conference

Details to be announced

Stewardship Examination of Conscience

What have you done with the garden entrusted to you?



As the book of Genesis explains, God placed the first human beings in a garden “to cultivate and care for it” (Gn 2:15). God wanted Adam and Eve to practice stewardship in the Garden of Eden. For the Christian steward, today’s world is a garden to cultivate for the glory of God and the service of humankind. Bishop Robert Morneau—Auxiliary Bishop of Green Bay, WI—identifies nine gardens entrusted to contemporary Christians by God. I invite you to reflect upon these areas as you ask the question: What have you done with the garden entrusted to you?

Bodily Garden

Do you give your body proper nutrition? Do you get adequate rest? Do you seek medical care when necessary? Do you objectify the body? Are you in right relationship with your sexuality?

Social Garden

Do you nurture good and strong relationships? How do you care for your family, your friends, your community? Is there any racism in your heart? Any discrimination?

Psychological Garden

Do you pay attention to your moods and your emotions? Do you tend and respect what is going on inside yourself? Are you prone to navel gazing?

Intellectual Garden

Are you a good steward of your mind? What kind of books and magazines do you read? What kind of music fills your ears? Do you engage in conversations that stimulate your mind? Do you challenge your mind to grow?

Political Garden

Are you informed about local and national government? Do you take time to get to know the issues? Are you open to dis-

cussing and hearing different points of view?

Economic Garden

How do you manage your economic resources? Take a look at your credit card bill or cheque book—where you spend your money reveals a lot about what is important to you in life.

Cultural Garden

Do you attend cultural events? Do you support the arts either as a patron or as a volunteer? Are you open to experiencing unfamiliar arts and cultures?

Moral Garden

Moral comes from a Latin word meaning “custom”. Do you take time to understand the customs of your faith, the traditional teachings on morality? Do you invite the Gospel message to form your decisions?

Technological Garden

Does technology ever control you? Have you become a slave to your e-mail, cell phone, or blackberry? Do you neglect relationships and responsibilities in favour of the television or the internet? Do you use technology as an instrument to furthering the kingdom of God?

These nine gardens make up the **Spiritual Garden**. Spirituality encompasses our whole life in God. Stewardship is essential to the life of Christian discipleship. This Lent, let us welcome Jesus and the Spirit to all these gardens of our lives.

St. Joseph



In their pastoral letter on stewardship, the U.S. Bishops treat the stewardship of creation—the care and cultivation of the world. They draw attention here to what they call “noble human effort”, which we would more readily refer to as “work”. What is work? Is it merely what we do grudgingly to put food on the table? The pastoral letter defines work as a *fulfilling human vocation*. Viewed in such terms, work becomes an indispensable component of the life of prayer. In fact, the monastic cycle of prayer is called *opus dei* in Latin, the work of God. Prayer can be work; it is our vocation as Christians to engage in prayer. Similarly, work can be prayer; fulfilling our human vocation is itself a prayer offering of praise and thanksgiving.

St. Joseph, the husband of Mary and step-father of Jesus is traditionally associated with work on account of his vocation as a carpenter. Naturally, he has been especially venerated by labourers and trades people. In addition to working with his hands, St. Joseph also fulfilled his human vocation as a faithful steward of God’s gifts. Let us remember the four principles of stewardship as we ponder the life of St. Joseph, whose feast is celebrated on March 20th this year: 1. To receive God’s gifts with gratitude. 2. To cultivate them responsibly. 3. To share them lovingly and in justice with others. 4. To return them to the Lord with increase.

As you know, in old age Joseph was espoused to Mary, a young virgin. Before they came to live together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. Scripture tells us that *Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly (Mt 1:19)*. Even before hearing from the Lord, Joseph planned to deal lovingly and in justice with Mary. But then, before he could divorce her, *an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, ‘Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife . . . When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him (Mt 1:20, 24)*. The first principle of stewardship hinges upon receiving. Receiving is difficult because it requires humility, it puts one in relationship with the giver, and often enough the gift is not exactly what one wants. In receiving God’s gift of Mary, Joseph was not getting the simple girl he expected, he was humbled by her pregnancy, and accepted an even closer relationship with God by raising God’s Son in the world.

Being the step-father of Jesus was not an easy task; from the flight into Egypt to losing the adolescent Son of God in the synagogue in Jerusalem, Joseph was challenged to exercise the second principle of stewardship and cultivate the gift of raising Jesus with responsibility.

Why was Joseph so willing to accept this vocation? In that dream, the angel convinced Joseph to take Mary as his wife saying: *for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit (Mt 1:20)*. God was about to give the ultimate gift of love to humanity in the incarnation, which would be followed by the ultimate act of justice on the cross. Joseph recognised that his role in this salvific event was the third principle of stewardship, to share this gift with others. Like Joseph, we too are called to become stewards of the mystery of salvation by our collaboration with the church in the work of redemption begun by Christ. The pastoral letter and the Second Vatican council explain that *through work, we build up not only our world but the Kingdom of God already present among us*.

At the end of the message to Joseph the angel said *[Mary] will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins (Mt 21)*. Talk about returning God’s gifts with increase! By his stewardship of God’s gift of Jesus, all humanity would receive redemption.

Through his stewardship, the humble carpenter Joseph illustrates for us the relationship between work and stewardship: *Work is a partnership with God—our share in a divine human collaboration in creation. It occupies a central place in our lives as Christian stewards*. St. Joseph, pray for us.

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