



Update!

Building a Brighter Future at St. John Vianney
October 14/15, 2017 *Vol. 1 No. 8*

Stewardship and Sacrificial Giving

*The following is a presentation made by
Debra Gunn, the Director of Development
of the Diocese of Saginaw
at the masses on the weekend of October 7/8*

Congratulations on the start of your capital campaign! I am so excited for you and the parish.

My name is Debra Gunn. I am the Director of Development and Stewardship for the Diocese of Saginaw and I've been asked to speak about Sacrificial Giving.

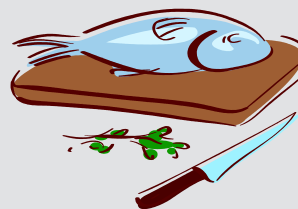
I know that *St. John Vianney* is a stewardship parish. I've talked with some of your wonderful steering committee members. You probably have heard many times about Time, Talent and Treasure. We understand these concepts. What if I reframed *Time*, *Talent*, and *Treasure* and explained **Grace**, **Gratitude**, and **Generosity**? *Grace* is an undeserved gift from God. God gives us so much. He gives us our family, our children, and friends. God gives us the ability to work and take care of our families. *Grace* is everything we are – every new breath we take is a gift from God.

With *Gratitude*, we receive these gifts. We receive them gratefully from God. From a spirit of gratitude, we share them *generously*. If everything we receive is from God, and He is the originator, then we generously give back to Him with a grateful heart. We give back our Time, Talent and Treasure.

What is Sacrificial Giving? Sacrificial giving is giving back to God our *first* fruits. It is giving back off the top – it is not giving out of what's left over.

As Fr. Bill mentioned in his homily, we've been in the vineyards the last few Sundays. I want to take you on a fishing trip to explain sacrificial giving.

I had a great teacher, Fr. Dan Danielson. I remember a story he told during one of his homilies to describe sacrificial giving. He goes on to say that all his life he grew up thinking that tails and heads were the best part of the fish. Yes, *tails and heads*! He and his father would go out salmon fishing and bring back these big, beautiful salmon fish for dinner. His father would cut the fish and always give the center section of the fish to the neighbors down the road. The neighbors didn't have much. This was the start of Fr. Dan's teaching to share as a child.



Fr. Dan would take these big, meaty, salmon steaks to his neighbors and then enjoy a delightful meal of the remaining salmon. In his adult years, he told his friends that the tails and heads were the best part of the fish. Fr. Dan's friends informed him differently. Fr. Dan *did not know* that his father was giving away the best part of the fish to a family in need, the first cut, or the first fruits, or the *Sacrificial Gift* to the neighbor. Fr. Dan concluded in his homily that this was how he started understanding what Sacrificial Giving truly meant.

I want to share a story of my husband and me. My husband and I were still living in California at the time. We were visiting on vacation in Sanford and went to church where the pastor said the church was really close to meeting their CSA goal. He asked everyone if they could increase their CSA gift to meet the goal. My husband and I were already taking care of our home parish and diocese in California and our other charities. This request was above and beyond what we were already doing and we weren't planning on an extra gift.

My husband and I looked at each other and nodded "YES", I raised up 1 finger. My husband raised two fingers. I put down his one finger and said we would give "one finger." He insisted on two fingers. I whispered to him, "I'm not sure what the Holy Spirit is saying to you, but He's not saying the same thing to me." My husband and I were both self-employed, I paid the bills and knew what the two fingers represented in our budget. And it doesn't matter if it was \$10 or \$100 or \$1,000 or more - add your own zeros to match your budget. Because we were self-employed, our income was up and down. However, I surrendered and said, "Ok, Mitchell." We agreed on two.

I've learned 3 things since that weekend.

1. This is when we realized that our bank account is with the ***Bank of God***. God makes deposits and God asks for withdrawals. We stepped out in trust in the Lord that He would continue to take care of us. We made our contribution, and our Lord continued to provide for our needs. It was a stretch, but we did it. We returned to God what was His originally.
2. The second lesson I learned was to think about what I own and what owns me. Hmmm, *What do I own.... and What owns me?* The monthly budget and fear *owned* me and kept me from making a generous decision. My husband's experience was so much different from mine. Lord, You have given us so much.
3. The third lesson is this. ***The question is not what I decide to give – I believe the deeper question is what do I decide to keep?*** Like Fr. Dan's father who decided to keep the tails and heads for his family.

I know that *Generosity frees MY spirit to be joyous*. I do not understand the saying, "give until it hurts." I do understand "*Be a joyful giver*." We are called to be joyful givers. How can you not be joyful when you give generously? You are being asked to contribute sacrificially to the *Building a Brighter Future campaign for St. John Vianney*. I ask you to pray and listen to the Holy Spirit and JOYFULLY give sacrificially.

I want to close with this: 2 Corinthians, Chapter 7-8

"Each must do as already determined, without sadness or compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. Moreover, God is able to make every grace abundant for you, so that in all things, always having all you need, you may have an abundance for every good work."

May God bless you and *St. John Vianney* on this exciting journey.

Thank you,

Debra Gunn
Director of Development, Diocese of Saginaw

