

June 27, 2010

Who is happier? The person who lives his or her life with clenched fists grasping for themselves their time, friends, talents, and resources? Or those who live their lives with open hands, anxious to share with others their perhaps limited resources, time, talents, hobbies, and pleasures in life? From my experience, it is more often than not the latter.

My parents had very limited resources, but were always anxious to share them with others. In various ways, they tried to teach my sisters and me the importance of generosity. I will never forget that we received throughout our grade school days 55 cents as a weekly allowance, but only on condition that we put 25 of the 55 cents into our own children's Sunday envelopes.

The tendency toward self-seeking and individualism in society comes from a forgetfulness that our very life and all we have is God's gift. When we appreciate that our lives, our faith, our family, friends, talents, and world are all God's gifts, we find a deeper purpose and different approach in living. Our attitude becomes more like the psalm: "What can I render to the Lord for all that He has given to me?"

The Sacred Scriptures teach us that we are stewards of the wonderful gifts God has given us: life, salvation, the Church, family, friends, the resources of this earth. Can you think of anything that you have generated solely on your own power? We think of artists "creating" their works of art. However, God has given them the talents and resources to attain their marvelous accomplishments.

We are truly happy when we live as good stewards of the gifts God has given us, when we receive God's gifts gratefully, cherish, and tend them in a responsible and accountable manner.

How wonderful to be able to stand in awe and truly admire the gift of beautiful summer days, evening breezes off Lake Michigan, skies filled with stars and perhaps a full moon! How fulfilling to enjoy leisure with family and children that God has placed into our care! How fulfilling to extend Christ's compassionate love to those who are homebound, in hospitals, or nursing homes! How rewarding to "serve one another through love...Bear one another's burdens, and so you will fulfill the law of Christ" (Gal 5:13,6:2).

As followers of Jesus, our vocation is to be good stewards of what we have received, to bring more truth, justice, love, and peace into our society.

When we live with open hands and loving hearts, even in the midst of challenges and crosses, we will know a deep peace and inner joy. We can also live with the assurance of Jesus' promise: "Come, you who are blessed by my Father. Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Mt 25:34).