

## Stewardship – From Here To Eternity

Len Krenik – St. Odilia Stewardship Council Member

Good morning (or evening) everyone. My name is Len Krenik. I am a member of the St. Odilia Stewardship Council and I am here to talk about how stewardship has been a big part of my life for the last 25+ years. I have been a St. Odilia parishioner for 31 years and have been actively involved with our music ministry for 29 years. You might have heard me sing from the “other side of the sanctuary” but this is my first time speaking to you.

I will start out by saying that stewardship is a way of life and pertains to HOW we use our time, talents, and treasures or material goods. Most people think when they hear stewardship, they are going to hear about money or pledging or something like that. That is not what my talk will be about today. I want you to know how the Lord has changed my life and how my changed heart relates to stewardship.

I believe the Lord first touched my heart about stewardship on a Sunday here in this church during the early 1980's. I heard a parishioner by the name of Bob O'Toole stand in this very place and talk to us about stewardship, how it should guide our lives, how we should give 10% of everything we have, and that we need a change of heart to live according to the way God wants us to live to be proper stewards of God's gifts.

I got to thinking about what Bob had said and I began to pray about it. I couldn't figure out how to trust God enough that it would work in my life so I was skeptical. As I thought about tithing 10%, I thought I would have to give up too much but the Lord knew my secret thoughts and I believe God secretly reminded me how long eternity is because I had this secret nagging question asking me how I wanted to spend eternity – with God or in that hot place. I remembered my second grade teacher had told us a story to help us understand eternity. If the world was a steel ball and a dove brushed its wing against the steel ball once every 1,000 years, eventually the ball would be worn away from the dove's wing wiping against it. The length of time needed to wear away the steel ball is a huge amount of time that no one can estimate but that length of time would only compare to the beginning of eternity.

I began to ask myself what was most important – enjoying all kinds of toys in this very short lifetime and very possibly spending eternity in hell or changing my life and spending eternity with God. I began by discussing with my wife how to we could get to tithing 10%. It took a few years of gradual increase, first we got to 10% of take-home pay, and finally we were able to tithe 10% of our gross pay.

During those same years as we struggled with tithing our income, I began to have a change of heart. I tried to seek a deeper relationship with Jesus to help me grow spiritually. I began to do the daily readings of the Catholic Church. I found out that by trusting in God ALL OF THE TIME, even when I had serious health problems with cancer as well as life's other hurdles, frustrations, and tragedies, I began to find an inner peace that I had not known before. WHEN ONE TRUSTS IN GOD FOR

EVERYTHING, ONE DOESN'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT ANYTHING. For me, the ability to trust in God at all times is the basis of perfect peace here on earth.

In today's Gospel at the wedding at Cana, Mary trusted her son Jesus when the wine ran out. Even though she had never seen Him perform a miracle, SHE QUIETLY TRUSTED IN HIM and said to the servants, "Do whatever He tells you". We know Jesus turned the water into wine. As an example of my trust in God, I can tell you that I have worked for a computer company in Arden Hills that once employed over 69,000 employees world-wide. This past summer, when I left that company which had been purchased by a large British Telco, after over 41 years, I was one of only about 100 employees in the United States still employed by that computer company and had survived many, many lay-offs over the 41 years. Because of my trust in God, I believe God had a major hand in keeping me safely employed during all of those years.

As a private pilot, I have been able to see first-hand much of God's beauty from the air. People have asked me if I get scared flying the airplane that my wife and I own. I reply by saying that there is tremendous peace and comfort knowing God is always at my side and I have no need to fear. After all, when one trusts in God for everything, one doesn't have to worry about anything.

I have come to realize that nothing in this world is ours. Everything we have is a gift from God and we are intended to be good stewards of what God has given us. As I began to understand this more deeply over the years, my life's priorities began to change. From a talent perspective, my wife and I had been singing with the St. Odilia Choir for a long time but we felt a need to praise God even more, so we began to a lot more volunteering. By doing so, we share the God-given musical and other talents we have with our faith community.

For me, proper stewardship of my time is more difficult than stewardship of my talent and material things and I struggle with that. I haven't made it to tithing 10% of my time. I know I need to turn the TV off more often to just spend time with God – primarily to listen. You see I still have a big problem with me doing too much of the talking while praying and not enough listening but I am working on that. By seeking God and trying to do God's will, I have found - THAT PEACE - that surpasses all understanding.

In summary, I know I have picked the better road to travel on my life's journey and it all centers around a changed heart, a yearning to live closer with God, inviting God to live within me every day, and living with an attitude of gratitude for all that God has given me. My wife and I pray daily and often ask God to guide our every thought, word, and deed so that all that we do, both as individuals and as a couple, we will give praise, honor, and glory to God.

May God bless you on your stewardship journey and remember, when one trusts in God for everything, one doesn't have to worry about anything.