

STEWARDSHIP

Article 2 of 8

We continue with our reflection on the substance or “guts” of stewardship, namely, the act of receiving. As I noted in a previous article the first consideration of most people on the theme of stewardship is financial giving, i.e., a tithe. Although the giving of one’s treasure is constitutive of the stewardship way of life, time and talent are also included. Moreover, our gifts of time, talent and treasure presume previous gifts. For how can we give what we do not have? And who ultimately is the bestowal of every good gift? Our faith tells us: God. In Eucharistic Prayer IV of the Mass, the priest addresses the Father in these words, “Source of life and goodness, you have created all things, to fill your creatures with every blessing and lead all people to the joyful vision of your light.”

The truth of God’s benevolence is also brought out clearly in the ritual of the first Christian sacrament in the celebration of baptism, you might recall the blessing of the priest over the father of the child toward the end of the ritual. The priest initiates the special blessing over the newly baptized child’s father in the following words, “God is the giver of all life human and divine...” God is the giver! Not only is the divine life received from Him in baptism of divine origin, but also our human life. The ritual for baptism expresses that one’s entire life is a gift from God—”something to be grasped at.”

It often happens that when we experience the precariousness and fragility of life through some personal affliction, such as the loss of health or a loved one, we quickly become aware of how our life is not our own. Consequently, we come to know that even our breath is given to us. We may “take a breath,” but the breath is nevertheless given. The scriptures testify to the fact that our very life was breathed into us by God. The book of Genesis states that “God formed man out of the clay of the ground and blew into his nostrils the breath of life, and so man became a living being” (Gen. 2,7). The breath of God, in Hebrew, *Ruah*, initiated our human life.

The gifts of our human and divine life deserve much reflection and attention in personal prayer. Awareness of these truths is a game changer and few people really “get it.” The giving component of stewardship absent the awareness of our giftedness normally results in a begrudging, resentful and narrow spirit of giving. Certainly, such an attitude is not in conformity with the spirit of St. Paul who stated that “God loves a joyful giver.”

Sunday is the day par excellence to consider, i.e, literally to be with, the truths of our giftedness beginning with the breath of life received from the *Ruah* of our benevolent God. Before deliberating upon what we are to give as disciples through the stewardship way of life, let us take ample time on this Day of the Lord to be enlightened on the abundant gifts we have received by a benevolent God who owes us nothing. Through the gift of understanding bestowed upon us by the Holy Spirit, may we truly “get It.” In Christ’s Love

Fr. Steve