

# Spirit of Life

Roman Catholic Church

## “WE OPEN OUR HEARTS”

### REBECCA MALONEY REFLECTS ON STEWARDSHIP AND FAITH

Last December, Rebecca Maloney had an experience with God’s providence that lifted her spirits in an remarkable way.

“I am a single parent and I have a lot of struggles in my life,” she says. “There have been many times that I have been praying for help, and God answered my prayers through the people around me. Around Christmas, I was struggling to make ends meet financially, so I said a novena. The day after the novena was done, someone gave me an envelope with a Christmas card and just the amount of cash I needed to cover my expenses.”

And, in the end, this impressive gift showed Rebecca what the true meaning of stewardship really is.

“It reminded me that stewardship is God’s way of answering other people’s prayers through us,” she says. “When we are involved in our parish and give to others, we open our hearts. Through all of my dark times, God has been there for me. He has done so much for me. What I should be asking is, ‘How many of other people’s prayers can I answer?’ When we are in a relationship with someone we love, they do things out of love for us, and we do things out of love for them – it is the same with stewardship. Stewardship is saying ‘yes’ to what God is asking us to do for the people around us.”

Day by day, Rebecca strives to live out the stewardship vision as a mother of her three children – Bridget, 8; Meghan, 5; and Henry, 3. By taking



*Rebecca Maloney with her children*

them to Mass on Holy Days, praying with them daily, ensuring that they have a Catholic school education and/or a solid Religious Education experience, and talking with them openly about matters of faith, she helps them grow in their friendship with Christ.

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## THE BIBLE

### THE TEXTBOOK OF STEWARDSHIP

**H**ave you ever wished that life came with an instruction manual? What a valuable resource that would be! Whenever you find yourself running in circles, this instruction manual would give you step-by-step instructions on how to fix the problem and reroute your course.

Well, here's some good news. For those living a Christian life, there is such a manual – the Bible.

Sometimes referred to as the “textbook of stewardship,” the Bible is a bountiful resource for the present-day Christian. Written by anointed prophets and sages, this collection of divinely inspired parables, poems and letters is full of testimonials that express the blessings that come from true discipleship, expressed through lives of stewardship.

Stewardship is not a new concept. The Bible gives proof to this claim through passages such as the 26th chapter of the Book of Deuteronomy. We read Moses' words, as he tells the Israelites to offer the choicest portions of their harvest to God: “When you have come into the land which the Lord, your God, is giving you as a heritage, and have occupied it and settled in it, you shall take some first fruits of the various products of the soil which you harvest from the land which the Lord, your God, gives you, and putting them in a basket, you shall go to the place which the Lord, your God, will choose for the dwelling place of his name... ‘Therefore, I have now brought you the first fruits of the products of the soil which you, O LORD, have given me.’ And having set them before the LORD, your God, you shall bow down in his presence” (Dt 26:1-2, 10).

St. Paul briefly touches on the essence of stewardship when he said, “In every way I have shown you that by hard work of that sort we must help

the weak, and keep in mind the words of the Lord Jesus who himself said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive’” (Acts 20:35).

Again, in St. Paul's second letter to the Corinthians, we read about living a life of Christian stewardship: “Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each must do as already determined, without sadness or compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver” (2 Cor 9:6-7).

While this is well and good, what does it mean for the present-day Christian? Why should it matter that the Bible alludes to stewardship in various passages? It shows us that Christians and Jews have struggled with and benefitted from the concept of stewardship for thousands of years. It ties the message of stewardship to the role of a Christian disciple. It gives proof that stewardship and discipleship go hand-in-hand. It offers encouragement to us, that stewardship is in fact a foundational component of the Christian life, a way of life that one of the founding fathers of the Church – St. Paul – preached about and advocated.

The Bible is indeed the textbook of stewardship. It lays out the steps we must take to become true disciples of Christ. Reading and meditating upon God's Word is always a fruitful exercise. Those who regularly delve into Scripture often develop a deeper understanding of who God is, how and why He loves us, and how we can show Him our love in return.

As you strive to become a grateful steward and live the life of Christian discipleship, develop a love for Sacred Scripture. Allow God's Word to nourish your soul regularly, and watch as stewardship changes from a foreign concept to an integral component of your daily life.



## A LETTER FROM OUR PASTOR

# WE CANNOT BE PART-TIME CHRISTIANS

Dear Parishioners,

**M**ay is traditionally celebrated in the Church as the month of Mary, our Blessed Mother. As the Mother of the Church, she provides us with an example of what it means to be a servant of God and our fellow humans, as well as how to obediently fulfill the promptings of the Holy Spirit.

As Catholics, we are called to model the life of Jesus. That can be difficult, and there are certainly challenges to living as a disciple of Christ. But living stewardship and discipleship brings intense contentment and joy to those who take that risk. As we hear in St. Paul's letter to the Romans, "All things work for good for those who love God."

After Jesus Himself, we look to our Blessed Mother as an ideal steward and an example of what stewardship means. As the Mother of Christ, she lived her life and her ministry in a total spirit of faithfulness and service. She responded to the call to be a disciple. For us to be disciples, we also need to be good stewards of the gifts we have received. Our Church and our parish are gifts to us from God.

At no point in Holy Scripture does Jesus tell us that following Him is easy. We know it is not always simple and effortless. It requires dedication and commitment. Pope Francis has said on more than one occasion, "We cannot be part-time Christians and Catholics! We should seek to live our faith at every moment of every day."

I suspect that is how Mary lived her life from that moment she turned it over to God and His Will. So, let us vow together during this month of Mary to follow her example, and seek to be the kinds of good stewards that will make our faith community even stronger and more effective.



I pray that we all can find the strength to live and practice our faith as we should. This means being faithful to the sacraments and looking for ways to help and serve one another. We have a great parish – let us make it even greater.

As we hear in Holy Scripture, "May the Lord bless you and keep you. May the Lord make His face shine upon you, and be gracious to you! May the Lord look upon you kindly and give you peace" (Numbers 6:24-26). Pray for me, as I pray for you.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Msgr. Chad Gion". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Msgr. Chad Gion,  
Pastor



## “GOD CAN MOVE MOUNTAINS, AND HE ALWAYS WANTS TO HELP US” THE INTERCESSORY PRAYER MINISTRY

*“Again, I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything for which they are to pray, it shall be granted to them by my heavenly Father. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.” – Matthew 18:19-20*

It all began with a beautiful desire in Sr. Vandana’s heart, and it has now flourished into a key ministry at our parish – one that touches hearts and souls with the merciful love of Christ every day.

“I have always been struck by the Scripture passage Matthew 18:19-20 because it shows us how powerful the ministry of prayer is,” Sr. Vandana says. “And this passage helped inspire me to start the Intercessory Prayer Ministry. One day I prayed that if God wanted a prayer ministry at Spirit of Life, He would have someone talk to me about it. That very day, Msgr. Gion came to me and asked me if I would begin a prayer group at our parish.”

The Intercessory Prayer Ministry group currently meets in the Adoration Chapel on Tuesdays from 8 to 9 a.m. There are five ladies who come regularly to the meetings, as well as parish staff members who participate when they can. The meeting includes praise and worship singing, as well as the reading of the Sunday Gospel followed by a meditation on it. This special time is then followed by the Divine Mercy

Chaplet, along with intercessory prayer for our priests, parishioners and local community, as well as for the concerns of our nation and our world.

The intercessors also lift up all the intentions submitted through our parish Prayer Line, as well as those that have been put in the prayer basket at the entry of the Adoration Chapel or the one located in the church gallery.

“Many times, we don’t turn to God when we are in trouble,” Sr. Vandana says. “But the truth is, God can move mountains, and He always wants to help us. Through prayer, we can advance the Kingdom of God in our broken world. God moves in situations and circumstances because of our faithfulness to intercede according to His will. I want everyone in our faith community to know they are not alone – that our ministry is praying for them.”

Over time, Sr. Vandana and numerous others have witnessed amazing answers to the prayers offered by the Intercessory Prayer Ministry.

“Spirit of Life has a food pantry which serves lunch daily to people in need in our community,”

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## **THE INTERCESSORY PRAYER MINISTRY** *continued from page 4*

Sr. Vandana says. “When I first started helping at the pantry, I wasn’t sure how to interact with those who came because they weren’t very open or friendly. However, I felt a responsibility to pray for them, and have the Intercessory Prayer Ministry do so, as well. Over time, I have noticed a real change in their attitude. They are now friendly with us, and some of them even want to come back to the faith.”

By praying for them carefully and consistently, Sr. Vandana has also found the strength and wisdom she needs to give them words of hope.

“Many of those who come to the pantry have a lot of painful stories to tell,” she says. “I enjoy listening to them and being there for them. We do not just give away food at the pantry, but spiritual

assistance, as well. God has given the Pantry Ministry so much grace. A while ago, we only had 20 people who came regularly, and now there are over a hundred that come every day.”

As St. John Chrysostom once said, “Prayer is the place of refuge for every worry, a foundation for cheerfulness, a source of constant happiness, and a protection against sadness.” Don’t hesitate to take advantage of this wonderful spiritual tool!

*If you would like to submit a prayer request, please email the parish office at [office@myspiritoflife.com](mailto:office@myspiritoflife.com).*

## **“WE OPEN OUR HEARTS”** *continued from front cover*

“I hope to bring my children to have a real relationship with God,” she says. “I enjoy sharing my faith with them as we go through life together. I try to keep a good family prayer life, and I talk to them about why we do what we do as Catholics, so they understand.”

She also models a faithful commitment to stewardship to her children and those around her by preparing the second-graders at our parish to receive their First Holy Communion and First Reconciliation. She really puts her heart into what she does, and it shows. Her daughter, Bridget, is currently one of her students.

“The Sacraments of First Communion and Reconciliation are such milestones, so I want to make sure I prepare the children very well to receive them,” she says. “My goal is to help my students develop a close relationship with God, and make it integral to their lives. I want them to see that faith is not just about memorizing prayers and going to CCD because their parents make them. I want them to have a genuine love of their Catholic faith.”

Over and over, she continues to discover what a beautiful joy and grace it is to bring children

the sacred light of faith.

“I am a music teacher by profession, so I like working with kids,” she says. “I really appreciate working with them on a spiritual level, and I learn a lot from them. It’s refreshing to see how they approach their faith in such a simple way. It is wonderful to see how happy they are after they have made their First Confession. It is also really powerful to see how excited they are to receive their First Holy Communion. As adults, we can forget how amazing it is to receive the Eucharist.”

She also has found that children are full of an often “untapped” spiritual potential.

“I believe that children are capable of far more than we as adults give them credit for,” she says. “For example, every year, I bring my whole class of 7 to 8-year-old children into Eucharistic Adoration. They sit there, and they are quiet and respectful. I feel that sometimes children can be even more in tune to what is going on during adoration than we adults are, because they are not distracted by so many cares and concerns. And each time I do it, one of my students comes up to me and thanks me for letting them experience that quiet time with Jesus.”



## CELEBRATING THE CORONATION OF MARY THE MAY CROWNING

**F**or many Catholics, May Crownings of statues or icons of the Blessed Mother have become rites of spring. Like flowers blooming or Mother's Day, this annual Marian devotion reminds us that the cold of winter is behind us, and it ushers in a month during which the Catholic Church pays special homage to Mary as the Queen of Heaven and Mother of God.

Generally taking place during the first weekend of the month, May Crownings bring children – often, recent First Communicants – out in their Sunday best to participate in processions and adorn statues of the Blessed Mother with crowns of flowers or actual gold crowns. Additionally, the children often place roses at her feet, and Catholics carry out similar practices in their homes by placing roses around statues of the Blessed Virgin, or even adding ornamentation to images of Mary. But where did this practice come from, and how did it develop into the tradition that we currently know and love?

The Coronation of Mary had been a popular subject in European art and literature for centuries, but the tradition of the May Crowning can be most accurately traced back to the late 16th century. Perhaps inspired by the practice of adding ornamentation to Marian icons that

had been carried out by some Eastern churches, Pope Clement VIII added two crowns to the icon of Mary with the Infant Jesus in the St. Mary Major Basilica in Rome. The crowns were eventually lost, but were replaced by Gregory XVI in 1837 in a rite that was to become the standard practice for crowning.

While the May Crowning is not an official liturgical celebration on the Church calendar, it is an important practice in honoring Mary as the Queen of the Universe, and its imagery is especially influential in the faith formation of children. As Liz Kelly writes in *May Crowning, Mass, and Merton and Other Reasons I Love Being Catholic*, “One of the defining aspects of being Catholic is devotion to Mary. I favor no Marian celebration more highly than May Crowning, the feast that recognizes Mary as queen of heaven and earth. To a person of any age, this is a mighty big title, but to a child of five or six or seven, it expands to enchanting, magical proportions. How many queens does one get a chance to meet in a lifetime, much less crown?”

This year, make a special effort to honor the coronation of Mary through participation in a personal or public May Crowning devotion.

## **“AN EXCELLENT WAY TO SERVE MY PARISH, MY CHURCH, AND MY LORD” THE SPIRIT OF LIFE FINANCE COUNCIL**

**T**he Finance Council is certainly one of the key lay advisory groups at our Spirit of Life Roman Catholic Church – while the pastor is directly accountable to the bishop for the administration and stewardship of temporal affairs of the parish, an active and well-formed Finance Council is a key element in promoting the financial health of the parish.

A parish Finance Council is mandated under the *Code of Canon Law*: “In each parish there is to be a finance council which is governed, in addition to universal law, by norms issued by the diocesan bishop and in which the Christian faithful, selected according to these same norms, are to assist the pastor in the administration of the goods of the parish without prejudice to the prescript of Canon 532” (537). Canon 532 states clearly that the pastor is the responsible party; decision-making is his, with the advice of lay boards like the Finance Council.



“Our parish Finance Council serves as advisors to the pastor concerning financial affairs,” says Patrick Lengenfelder, who has served as the Chair on the parish Finance Council for the past five years. “We monitor and keep track of various parish funds, income, and expenses, to assure that the parish is

able to meet the needs of the parish and our many ministries and programs.”

A member of the Finance Council for more than 15 years, Pat also serves as a parish Trustee (a corporate administrative position). According to Pat, the makeup of the Finance Council begins with Msgr. Gion. In addition, Fr. Kadrmas sits on the Council, and Finance Administrator Cheryl Hansen prepares all the reports to be reviewed, and she also participates in the meetings in an advisory capacity. The other Trustee Karen Rohr is a member along with lay appointed members Lynn Geary, Caroline Kozojed, Steve Moore, and David Volk.

The Finance Council meets on a monthly basis, normally

*“When I was asked to serve on the Parish Finance Council, I prayed, and I honestly felt called to do it. Therefore, I accepted the invitation and I have never regretted that. This is an excellent way to serve my parish, my Church, and my Lord.”*

– Patrick Lengenfelder, Finance Council Chair

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## LITURGY SCHEDULE

### Spirit of Life

**Monday:** 8 a.m.

**Tuesday - Thursday:** 7 a.m., 9 a.m.

**Friday:** 7 a.m., 9 a.m.,

**Saturday:** 9 a.m., 5 p.m.

**Sunday:** 9 a.m., 11 a.m., 6 p.m.

**CONFESSIONS: Sunday:** 8-8:30 a.m.

**Saturday:** 3:30-4:30 p.m.

**Wednesday:** 7-8:30 p.m., and 20 min. before  
weekday Masses except Mondays

### St. Martin's Parish

**Even Months:** 9 a.m.

**Odd Months:** 11 a.m.

### St. Anthony's Parish

**Even Months:** 11 a.m.

**Odd Months:** 9 a.m.

## **THE SPIRIT OF LIFE FINANCE COUNCIL** *continued from page 7*

the second Thursday of each month.

“As we should, we always begin and end with prayer,” Pat says. “After the opening prayer, we review the minutes of the previous meeting. As is the case with most Boards and Councils, we follow a relatively typical agenda. We go over the previous month’s financial statements provided to us by Cheryl Hansen, then after discussion we formally approve those. We go into ‘Old Business’ to take care of anything we have carried over from previous meetings. We also review the fundraising issues, especially the campaign for the new rectory. I cannot stress enough that we are advisory in nature, not decision making.”

As a layperson, Pat is the Chief Financial Officer (CFO) for an organization, so he is very familiar with both financial terms and reports. But his involvement in our Finance Council began with prayerful, faithful discernment.

“When I was asked to serve on the Parish Finance Council, I prayed, and I honestly felt called to do it,” Pat says. “Therefore, I accepted the invitation and I have never regretted that. This is an excellent way to serve my parish, my Church, and my Lord.”

With the renewed concentration at the parish on stewardship, the Finance Council is a perfect example of what stewardship is. To really be a stewardship parish, we need people who are willing to share their gifts. There is no question that the members of the Finance Council agreed to serve because they recognize that this is a good way to share their gifts, their talents, and experiences. There are many similar ways a person can serve the parish and the Church, and we encourage them to consider ways they can do that.

*If you would like more  
information about our  
Finance Council, please  
contact the parish office  
at 701-663-1660.*