

This past week I was at a birthday party for a priest friend of mine. I forget how it came around to this, but during the conversation he told a story of his younger brother. My friend said some time back he asked his brother if he donated to his parish. "Sure," he said. "What do you give?" "Whatever I have in my pocket." My priest friend said he looked at his brother with disbelief. His younger brother had a great job, a wife and kids, to all outward appearances was an adult – but was giving to the Church like a kid.

I have a confession to make. I was that guy. I never filled out a pledge card at my parish until I became a priest at 35. Try to think back to why that was, I think it seemed like kind of a hassle – and maybe I was thinking I was too poor to do that – or need to do that. I wasn't a church grown-up yet. That was for older people.

We hear a good bit today about our society's difficulty in committing – to anything. We have trouble committing to marriage. Commitment is one reason priestly vocations are hard to come by. Who

knows how long it took us to settle on a college major or career. The thing is – while we think keeping our options open, staying free, means we'll be happier, it's a lie. Happiness comes from deeply engaging and committing ourselves to decisions in life. On Stewardship Commitment Sunday it's good for us to stop and think about commitment. Who and what am I committed to?

Some of you here today don't know if this is the parish for you. Maybe you're a seeker, not even sure about God. Maybe you're visitors. There are legitimate reasons not to commit to making a financial pledge to the parish. But for most of us at Holy Family this is our spiritual home. We have in some sense "married" into this community. If that's the case, then we should "put a ring on it" as the saying goes. And a financial pledge is part of that commitment. That is part of what spiritual maturity means.

But, thinking back to my own experience, how do we step up like that without too much hassle? A parishioner told me of a recent

experience he had. He was talking with his twenty-something daughter, who also attends Holy Family, and she asked him, “What’s with these envelopes I keep getting in the mail?” She said she wished she could just give to the parish via her phone like she pays for everything else. He looked at her to see if she was joking – but she had never heard that this was even possible. He quickly set her straight. You can easily donate through your smartphone. But I was thinking . . . her confusion is on me. We haven’t communicated very well on this.

So today on this Stewardship of Treasure Weekend, I want to spend some time going over, not only why to donate to Holy Family, but how to do it in the easiest way possible for you. Of course, you can still use the traditional envelopes every registered parishioner receives in the mail. You can also give through your bank’s billpayer system. That’s especially nice for us because we don’t have to pay a service fee then. But I also know many people want to give via their phones, or at least

on line. That's your world. Me? I hand-deliver a check to the office once a month. But most of you are way ahead of me technologically.

So, I want you to take a look at these cards we had printed for the pews. [Show card] On the cards are the simple directions for setting up your account on your phone or computer. Go ahead and take out your phones now and turn them on if you want to do this. Just download the free Online Giving App at OLGApp.com. And register the APP with the Holy Family Organization ID# 1841. That's it. That's also the ID number to use to start donating online through your computer. If you have any questions, there will be a staff person in the narthex after mass to help you, and even to walk you through the steps right then and there.

I've spent this time going over stewardship-giving because our financial gifts are so important to our parish and our ability to provide a place where we can grow in our life in Christ. Our parish can seem very active, and it is, but it needs resources to work. And, to be blunt, this year our giving is down two and a half percent from last year. We're not

making budget, which makes this stewardship weekend providentially timed. If you can help the parish by increasing your pledge this year, even by a dollar a day, please do so. If you have never committed to a pledge to our parish before, but this is your spiritual home, the place you hope to grow in Christ, then please fill out a pledge card today. They are in the pews. If your financial situation changes for the worse, you can always contact us and rework the pledge.

Supporting our parish financially is important for the reasons I just mentioned. But giving back is even more important for each of us in our identities as mature Disciples of Jesus. If you're an adult in every other way, but are giving to your spiritual home like you're still a kid, then now's the time to step up and commit. The usual tithe for a disciple is 5% of one's income to the parish and 5% to other charities. But for someone new to stewardship pledging just start with 2% of your income.

My first stewardship pledges marked an important step in my growing journey in Christ. It was a sign of my becoming a full Disciple. Our faith tells us that our relationship with Jesus Christ in His Church is the most important thing in our lives. It makes us who we really are at the core of our being. Does the financial part of our lives reflect that truth?