

## *Stewardship Expressions*

*Summer 2010*

*Greetings all. As summer fast approaches we look forward to less scheduled days, with vacation and relaxing personal refreshment opportunities. A wonderful benefit of the change of pace is time for observation and reflection. In June we celebrate the World Day of Prayer for Priests (June 11<sup>th</sup>), Father's Day (June 20<sup>th</sup>) and the first day of summer (June 21<sup>st</sup>). Other seasonal events include Independence Day (July 4<sup>th</sup>), weddings, Parents' Day (July 25<sup>th</sup>), family reunions, travels, the Feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary (August 15<sup>th</sup>), summer employment and next-stage planning. Each relates to stewardship formation and expression. This summer take time to focus on stewardship as it relates to you, your family, career, vocation and on-going personal and spiritual development.*

Think back to the time(s) you first felt loved. How did you notice the feeling? What circumstances gave you the awareness of another's care and connection to you? How has your sense of being loved grown over time? Using your personal experiences, in what ways do you show others your care and love in daily life and in special ways?

Stewardship is all about relationships with God and others. Look for God's presence and gifts. See Jesus reflected in the faces, words and actions of others. Know that your call to discipleship and stewardship commissions you to also imitate Christ in all aspects of daily living. Give yourself summer gifts of time for contemplation, prayer and spiritual reading to enhance your relationship with God. Keep Mass attendance a priority throughout the summer months. Look for opportunities to "pay forward" kindnesses received from others. Gift others with caring words, acts of service and gracious hospitality.

Ponder the daily activities surrounding a vocation as a priest, and as either a father or mother to a family. Pray that each may faithfully honor his or her vows/roles, accept responsibility, reflect love, and serve with a willingness to respond as called and needed.

Stewardship suits all ages. Children can learn that discovering and using their gifts is enjoyable and inspiring. Children need help to develop as stewards through family prayer and religious practices, in fostering courtesy and respect, through support for serving efforts, and in learning how to develop in personal care/responsibility. Teens, young adults, adults, elderly, infirmed and disabled can also be nurtured, through encouragement and motivation, to make offerings of prayer, time, talent and treasure.

Consider the wonders of God's Creation – pondering the design and sustainability of foliage amidst summer heat, the beauty of night skies, environmental freshness following a rain, garden bounties, and the ever changing colors of nature. Observe and be "wowed" by these and other of God's loving and generous design. Proactive stewardship care of the environment reflects appreciation for God's awesome Creation.

Celebrate life in special moments and accomplishments, in the ordinary happenings of daily living, in opportunities and events that arise, in friendships, in health and happiness, and in all that inspires particular meaning and gratitude.

All are called to follow [Jesus]. How will you use your life and gifts to encounter God, spread the Gospel, live as a witness, inspire others, and build the Kingdom of God on earth through service and outreach? Stewards define their response in word and action. God bless you this summer and always.

Suzanne Erpenbach, Director of Stewardship, Diocese of Knoxville