

Stewardship of Talent Talk
By Stephanie McIntyre
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Good morning! My name is Stephanie McIntyre; my husband, Charles, and I have been Sacred Heart parishioners for sixteen years. Over the years, our family has grown, and all six of us have become stewards of Sacred Heart Parish. I am here today to speak about the Stewardship of Talent and to ask you to consider or reconsider your commitment to service at Sacred Heart.

I will begin by reciting a prayer attributed to St. Teresa of Avila. It is a prayer that I discovered when I heard it sung by John Michael Talbot over twenty-five year ago when I was a lonely graduate student in Chicago.

Christ has no body now, but yours.
No hands, no feet on earth but yours.
Yours are the eyes through which he looks, compassion on this world.
Yours are the feet with which he walks, to do good.
Yours are the hands, with which he blesses all the world.
Yours are the hands, yours are the feet.
Yours are the eyes, you are his body.

This prayer, I think, explains what Stewardship of Talent is all about, and I'd like you to reflect on it as I tell you a little of my story.

My faith journey was initiated by my parents and nurtured by the priests and nuns as I grew. I was baptized at Visitation Church in Tacoma, my mother's home parish. I attended St. Vincent de Paul grade school, Bellarmine Prep, Gonzaga University and Loyola University Chicago.

I was raised by two families—my parents' combined Irish and Mexican families and our parish families at St. Theresa's Parish and at Holy Rosary Parish.

My parents made sure my brother, John, and I attended Mass every Sunday and Holy Day, but additionally, we grew to understand that our faith was about more than fulfilling our Sunday obligation, our faith was about service to others.

Therefore, we spent many a summer day helping our mom and close friends weed, mow and beautify the grounds at the St. Theresa' mission church property in Dash Point. We saw our mother teach third grade CCD, chair the Women's Group, prepare and deliver meals to the housebound and infirmed members of our parish, craft items for the yearly Ecumenical Bazaar, sing in the choir, serve on the Building Campaign committee, and participate in Pastoral Council. My dad helped with Men's Club breakfasts, parish picnics, and served on the Building Committee and Pastoral Council, too.

My brother and I watched our parents "build" the St. Theresa's community; we watched and helped them to be good "stewards" of the parish. We didn't understand nor did we appreciate it at the time, but our parents, in the '70s and '80s, were bringing the message of Vatican II to fulfillment—the notion that we, the people, are the Church.

As I stand before you, I realize that my parents' experience and mine aren't all that different. Gosh, we really do become our parents in so many ways, don't we?

Since Charles and I arrived at Sacred Heart in October 1996—me with nine month old Michael on my hip and pregnant with our daughter, Mary Kate—we have followed in the footsteps of my parents and in the footsteps of Charles' aunt and uncle, MaryAnna and Frank Powers.

The first Sunday we attended Mass at Sacred Heart, MaryAnna and Frank introduced us to at least 50 people—all ages, backgrounds, situations, etc. Having grown up a Tacoma girl, I knew almost no one in Bellevue, but my insecurities faded in the loving welcome we received from Aunt MaryAnna and Uncle Frank and their Sacred Heart family.

Charles and I, as a young married couple, had fabulous models for Catholic stewardship and hospitality in my folks and in his aunt and uncle. Our level of involvement at Sacred Heart can't begin to come close to all that MaryAnna and Frank did and to all that Frank does now, but their hospitality inspired us to help others.

We began by helping to serve coffee and donuts at 9:00 Mass, and then we were off and running! I became the co-chair of the Moms with Young Children group; we added two more children to our family; I lectured; Sr. Mary Jo trained my three older children as altar servers; I served as a Pastoral Council member and became its first woman chairperson; and I finally joined our wonderful choir.

On any given Sunday, you will find me singing with the Sacred Heart Choir while my son, Daniel, serves and my husband helps with the collection—then I race over to teach Sunday School.

What I learned in the years since I was a starving graduate student is that as much as I needed the Church to ground and center me, the Church needed me, too. I have learned that the Church of today and of the future is not solely about the clergy, and that the clergy need the laity. To quote from St. Teresa's prayer, "Christ has no body now but yours." You—we—are Christ in this world. Stewardship of Talent is not simply a matter of what we "can" do; giving of our talent is what we "must" do. The pastor cannot do it all; neither can his parish staff.

Whether you feel called to help the office staff with the parish website, whether you feel called to assist the St. Vincent de Paul Society as they serve the needy, whether you join the Knights of Columbus, whether you serve as a Eucharistic minister, whether you teach Sunday school, whether you accept a position on the Finance council, whether you care for babies in the Sunday nursery, whether you prepare and deliver meals to families where mommy has just had a new baby, whether you help Mary Dickins with grief ministry...

I can assure you that the blessings will be abundant, the connections you make will be long lasting and true, and you will be assuring the Church of a future. I trust that you will not let the opportunity for Stewardship pass you by.