

SOTP Pastors Letter – TO EVERYONE (Stewardship1.1)

Dear _____,

Before I was ordained to the Priesthood I had one persistent thought on my mind, which was serving God by becoming a priest. I knew becoming a priest would give me the opportunity to be a part of something much bigger than myself, and would allow me to carry on the sacraments and teachings that Jesus Christ gave us.

Once I became a Pastor I was so grateful for God allowing me to lead parishioners in their spiritual journey through life; however, I was also introduced to another aspect of being a pastor: the daily management of a parish. I learned very quickly that in order to effectively minister to a parish community, the management and fiscal wellness of the parish must be addressed.

I am grateful to God that over the years the Lord has placed leaders, volunteers, and stewards, such as you, in my path to help me with the monumental task of leading a parish. It is because of your love for God as well as your brothers and sisters in Christ that has made Sacred Heart Parish obedient to God's commandments:

"Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" and He said to him, "**YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND.** This is the great and foremost commandment. The second is like it, **YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.** On these two commandments depends the whole Law and the Prophets."
Matthew 22:36-40

It is with these thoughts that I am happy to introduce to you the beginning of our Stewardship of Treasure campaign. As you know spiritually being a Steward of Treasure is not just giving a dollar amount every week, rather it is a complete awareness of our finances in relationship to God. How we give, how we spend, and how we save our money, directly affects our Christian responsibilities, and indirectly affects our relationships with our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Over the next few weeks we will begin to explore what it means to be a Steward of Treasure. We will hear from lay witnesses how becoming a steward of treasure has changed their life, how it has changed our parish, and how you can participate. Therefore, this special "State of the Parish Report" will allow you to read about how Sacred Heart Church has focused on becoming better Stewards, and how our parish has used its Treasure to help the community.

This weekend at Mass you will hear one of the greatest stories of Stewardship in the Bible about Widows Might, and how she understood the meaning of trust and giving. I look forward to seeing you at Mass, and praying God's blessing on you and your family,

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Msgr. Louis F. Kihneman
Pastor

Letter to REGULAR Givers and envelope users (Stewardship 2)

Dear _____,

This past weekend at Mass we heard two powerful testimonies about being a Steward of Treasure. One was a heroic widow that God praised from the pages of scripture, and one was your fellow brother in Christ, Gary Mysorski. Their powerful example of Stewardship reminds us that trusting in God can only result in a deeper commitment of our love for Him, and our neighbor.

These examples also teach us that tithing is coupled directly with our faith. Practically, it makes sense why God has instructed us to tithe since it helps detach us from materialistic things, and helps us focus more on our brothers and sisters in Christ rather than our self. It also allows us to exercise our faith in God by trusting the Lord will provide for all of our needs.

It is because of this deep conviction in tithing that I have chosen not to ask any parishioner for a specific amount of money or a specific increase in their regular offertory. Instead, I have decided to ask every parishioner to pray for the "Widows Might" and to make a commitment to God and their self in giving their full tithe to God, and trust He will provide for all of our needs.

"Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in My house, and test Me now in this," says the LORD of hosts, "if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you a blessing until it overflows." Malachi 3:10

Enclosed is a special commitment card and envelope with a chart that shows how a tithe, or 1/10th of your income, should be distributed. I am asking that you give only 5% of your income here to the parish, 4% of your income to other charities, such as St. Vincent de Paul, Sacred Heart School, the retirement fund for priests and religious and our parish mission in Guatemala, and 1% to the Bishop's Annual Appeal.

This weekend at Mass please use this special commitment card and envelope with your offering, committing your tithe through the next year. I will in turn take your commitment, along with everyone in the parishes, and offer it up to the Lord at Mass as a gift to God and confidently pray that the Lord provide for all our needs and hear our prayers.

Thank you for being a Steward of your Treasure over the past years and humbly serving as an example of the hope that I have of every parishioner giving their heart to the Lord. Your past financial support has allowed this parish to lead parishioners closer to God, feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and give drink to the thirsty.

I look forward to seeing you this weekend, and I ask that you pray for the success of this Stewardship of Treasure campaign. I am grateful to be your pastor, and my door is always open to help you and your family in anyway that I can.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Msgr. Louis F. Kihneman
Pastor

Letter to Sporadic Givers (Stewardship3)

Dear _____,

This past weekend at Mass we heard two powerful testimonies about being a Steward of Treasure. One was a heroic widow that God praised from the pages of scripture, and one was your fellow brother in Christ, Gary Mysorski. Their powerful example of Stewardship reminds us that trusting in God, can only result in a deeper commitment of our love for Him and our neighbor.

These examples also teach us that tithing is coupled directly with our faith. Practically, it makes sense why God has instructed us to tithe since it helps detach us from materialistic things, and helps us focus more on our brothers and sisters in Christ rather than our self. It also allows us to exercise our faith in God by trusting the Lord will provide for all of our needs.

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This weekend at Mass please use this special commitment card and envelope with your offering, committing your tithe through the next year. I will in turn take your commitment, along with everyone in the parish, and offer it up to the Lord at Mass as a gift to God and confidently pray that the Lord provide for all our needs and hear our prayers.

Sacred Heart Parish is grateful for all of your past generosity in giving your time, talent and treasure here and throughout the community. I am asking you to prayerfully consider tithing and to "Try the Lord" in this commitment. Your gift will *not be for a specific need*, but rather will be an expression of *your need to give back to God*. This request may be coming to you at a vulnerable time in your life or you may have been thinking about tithing for some time. No matter the situation, pray for wisdom and God will give you the answer.

I look forward to seeing you this weekend and I am grateful to be your pastor. My door is always open to help you and your family in anyway that I can.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Msgr. Louis F. Kihneman
Pastor

Appeal Letter to NO RECORD OF GIVING (Stewardship4)

Dear _____,

This past weekend at Mass we heard two powerful testimonies about being a Steward of Treasure. One was a heroic widow that God praised from the pages of scripture, and one was your fellow brother in Christ, Gary Mysorski. Their powerful example of Stewardship reminds us that trusting in God can only result in a deeper commitment of our love for Him and our neighbor.

These examples also teach us that tithing is coupled directly with our faith. Practically, it makes sense why God has instructed us to tithe since it helps detach us from materialistic things, and helps us focus more on our brothers and sisters in Christ rather than our self. It also allows us to exercise our faith in God by trusting the Lord will provide for all of our needs.

It is because of this deep conviction in tithing that I have chosen not to ask any parishioner for a specific amount of money or a specific increase in their regular offertory. Instead, I have decided to ask every parishioner to pray for the "Widows Might" and to make a commitment to God and their self in giving their full tithe to God, and trust He will provide for all of our needs.

"Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in My house, and test Me now in this," says the LORD of hosts, "if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you a blessing until it overflows." Malachi 3:10

Enclosed is a special commitment card and envelope with a chart that shows how a tithe, or 1/10th of your income, should be distributed. I am asking that you give only 5% of your income here to the parish, 4% of your income to other charities, such as St. Vincent de Paul, Sacred Heart School, the retirement fund priest and religious, and our parish mission in Guatemala, and 1% to the Bishop's Annual Appeal.

This weekend at Mass please use this special commitment card and envelope with your offering, committing your tithe through the next year. I will in turn take your commitment, along with everyone in the parish, and offer it up to the Lord at Mass as a gift to God and confidently pray that the Lord provide for all our needs and hear our prayers.

If this letter finds you at a vulnerable time in your life, or if you have not been to Mass lately, please know that I am here ready to serve you. There is no problem too great for the Lord, and I feel a special responsibility in helping every member of this parish. The Catholic Church teaches us that the Church is the Bride of Christ, and we must prepare ourselves spiritually for a commitment to God. If a full tithe is too much for you and your family at this point, then start with what the Lord leads you to give. Whatever the decision you make, please know you can never out give the Lord in generosity.

I look forward to seeing you this weekend and I am grateful to be your pastor. Thank you for taking the time to read this letter, and consider joining me in this commitment to the Lord.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Msgr. Louis F. Kihneman
Pastor

Letter to Parishioners that DID NOT RESPOND (Stewardship5)

Dear _____,

For the past month we have been talking about being Stewards of Treasure and how tithing plays an integral part of our relationship with God. Two weeks ago, I sent letters to the entire parish asking for everyone to “Try the Lord” in this endeavor and make a commitment in tithing for the next year.

If you have just recently submitted your commitment card, I thank you in advance for your commitment. However, if you have not had the opportunity to submit your commitment for the next year, consider allowing Advent as an opportunity to take this leap of faith.

A friend of mine shared a story with me of what helped inspire his leap of faith when he was at a point in his life where he felt he could not tithe. He was at a restaurant with some friends having a discussion about charity in the United States and abroad and the fact that the Catholic Church is the largest charitable organization in the world and about all the good works that it has done. He told his friends, if he were to hit the lottery he would want to give a large portion to the Church. Everyone laughed and continued with their meal. At the end of dinner the check came, and as they paid the tab one of his friends at the table commented and said, “You know, people go out to eat all the time and leave 15-20% gratuity to the server, but seldom do they give 10 % back to God.” It was at that point my friend was convicted by the Holy Spirit and reminded that he didn’t have to win the lottery or be wealthy to give. All he had to do is remember God always comes first!

I must admit that when I heard this story I was deeply moved as my friend and begin to ask, “Why do we sometimes give our best to the world and not to God.” We are all guilty of it, not just through our finances. It seems at times we tend to give more of our time, talent, and treasure to insignificant things in place of God. Rarely do we consider the ripple effects of our decisions.

I am asking you to join your fellow parishioners and me in this effort to grow spiritually and practice tithing and trusting in the Lord. If you are unsure if you can afford or sustain the commitment, then I urge you to pray with all your heart, and ask God for his council. I am confident that God will give you the right answer and will lead you to be at peace with your decision.

“For where your treasure is, there also your heart will be.” Luke 12:34

I have enclosed another commitment card and envelope for your convenience so you can mail, drop off at the parish office, or simply place in the collection basket this next week. Regardless of your decision, as your pastor, I am committed to helping you in your journey growing towards Christ. If you would like to talk to me personally about the spirituality of stewardship or if you are in need of special prayer I am here ready to serve.

Thank you again for being a member of our parish and may God Bless you and your family this Advent season. I am remembering you in my prayers and Masses daily.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Msgr. Louis F. Kihneman
Pastor

**Letter to Parishioners that DID NOT RESPOND, but gave Last Year
(Stewardship6)**

Dear _____,

For the past month, we have been talking about being Stewards of Treasure and how tithing plays an integral part of our relationship with God. Two weeks ago, I sent letters to the entire parish asking for everyone to "Try the Lord" in this endeavor and make a commitment in tithing for the next year.

If you have just recently submitted your commitment card, I thank you in advance for your commitment. However, if you have not had the opportunity to submit your commitment for the next year, consider allowing Advent as an opportunity to take this leap of faith.

Your participation in the past as a Steward of Treasure is deeply appreciated and has helped Sacred Heart Parish carry out our mission. For budgeting responsibilities, we have considered the same amount in financial support that you gave in 2009 for 2010. Of course this does not compel you in any way to continue your tithing, but allows Sacred Heart to create a financial plan for 2010.

If you feel you would like to change your commitment in giving more or less, please use the enclosed commitment card and mail, drop off at the parish office, or place it in the collection basket. Otherwise, we will proceed with our financial plan and use your 2009's contribution as the pledge for 2010.

Thank you for considering to join your fellow parishioners and me in this effort to grow spiritually and practice tithing and trusting in the Lord. If you are unsure if you can afford or sustain the commitment, then I urge you to pray with all your heart and ask God for His council. I am confident that God will give you the right answer and will lead you to be at peace with your decision.

"For where your treasure is, there also your heart will be." Luke 12:34

Regardless of your decision, as your pastor, I am committed to helping you in your journey growing towards Christ. If you would like to talk to me personally about the spirituality of stewardship or if you are in need of special prayer, I am here ready to serve.

Thank you again for being a member of our parish and may God Bless you and your family this Advent season. I am remembering you in my prayers and Masses that I offer daily.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Msgr. Louis F. Kihneman
Pastor

Thank You Letter (Stewardship7)

Dear _____,

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year! Thank you for your pledge in our recent Stewardship of Treasure campaign and what a wonderful Christmas gift it is to our parish! Your commitment will help the necessities that are demanded of our church; but more important, you will continue to grow spiritually in your relationship with the Lord.

Because you, along with your fellow parishioners, have chosen to participate in tithing, Sacred Heart Parish is developing a Charity account so that the parish can begin to "Tithe the Tithe" and fulfill the need to give from the offertory to the needs of the community. Part of this effort will involve removing the Diocesan second collections from your regular envelopes, so that the parish can give in your name through the parish charity account.

I would also like to encourage you to use the envelopes we will send to you for your offering, as it presents your gift to Jesus in the perfect gift wrapping and allows you to practice planning your gift to God. It also helps us sort through the many gifts every week in an expedient manner, allowing us to send you a record of contribution for your files or as proof of your federal tax deduction.

I am grateful and deeply touched by your tithe and reminded by this passage:

What use is it, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but he has no works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and be filled," and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that? Even so, faith, if it has no works, is dead being by itself.
James 2:14-17

I can confidently say that you have shown both your faith and your works through your financial support and commitment to this parish. Be assured, your offering brings clothing, food, and spiritual direction to the community and to all the organizations that our parish supports locally, nationally, and internationally.

Once again, have a Merry Christmas and thank you for your generosity. I pray that our loving God will continue to bless you and grant you His peace for this New Year! I am remembering you in my prayers and Masses that I offer daily.

Yours gratefully in Christ,

Msgr. Louis F. Kihneman
Pastor