



CHURCH
OF THE
ASCENSION

Stewardship Invitation by Dr. Patrick Johnston – October 2018

“All things come of Thee, oh Lord; and of Thine own have we given Thee.” This is often said during the blessing of those alms given during mass. I must ask of myself, what things have come to me for which I do not give proper credit to God? Then I must challenge myself; to what proportion do I give back to God, and in what ways?

We worship in the catholic tradition, recognizing the presence of Christ’s body and blood in the sacraments. We offer the very best we have to the glory of God. This beautiful house of God is adorned by many gifts to the glory of God. If you look at the stained-glass windows, kneel before the ornate statues of the Blessed Virgin Mary or the archangel Michael or our beloved alter, walk the stations of the cross or witness the grandeur and beauty of the mighty organ; note that each dedication begins “to the glory of God.” How easy it is to worship in this place. How easy it is to forget the privilege of doing so depends heavily on the gifts others have given.

I have not served on the vestry for a couple of years but I remember times when the pledges of the parish barely covered the cost of the music. I believe it was Saint Augustin who said, “he who sings prays twice.” How easy it is to sing and to worship with the backup of our incomparable choir and organist rendering their gifts. But music is not our only expense. There is the roof over our heads, the boiler that provides us heat, the air conditioning that some may take for granted. There is the cost of bread, wine, and incense. The ornate liturgical vestments, the polished floors and the pews we sit in—all of these things, great and small, have in some way been the gifts of others, given to the greater glory of God.

When the budget exceeds what is given by our current members and friends, the vestry sometimes takes from the principal balance of our endowments to make up the difference. These endowments were the gifts of others, to the greater glory of God, and should not be taken for granted. If our budget only allows for the funding of the mass and the place where we worship, how do we give to those outside of our parish? What is invested in sharing of what we have, to the greater glory of god, with those most in need? We survive mostly from the interest earned from our endowments and from the generous pledges of those able and willing to give. Taking money from the principal balances of our endowments is unsustainable in the long run.

I must pause to reflect on what I am willing and able to give. It’s easy to identify with gifts given from our parish, absent any contribution on my own part. If I cannot give money, what more do I have to offer? Do I serve at the food pantry? Do I serve at the alter? Do I read in church? Do I usher or help to present the elements? Do I take time to welcome a visitor or to provide coffee and cakes for our fellowship after the mass? Do I look for opportunities to give of myself to the greater glory of God? Or do I only take and enjoy the gifts to God others have given, to the greater glory of my own experience? I ask you to examine what you are willing and able to give with the following meditation, “All things come of Thee, oh Lord; and of Thine own have we given Thee.”