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Our Mission Guided by the Love of Jesus Christ

A Reflection on Stewardship from Bishop McConnell

The Reverend Jonathon Jensen, Rector of Calvary Church, East Liberty, asked me to write a reflection on Stewardship for "Agape," Calvary's parish newsletter. I am happy to join with him in sharing this with the diocese.

Dear Friends in Christ,

"What is stewardship?" I asked the distinguished looking gentleman sitting next to me. I was a young man attending my first annual meeting as a new parishioner. I had just read the agenda, and "Stewardship" occupied a prominent place about halfway down the page.



He smiled and said, with a slight tinge of irony, "It means 'fundraising.' This is the business part." Then he leaned over and whispered conspiratorially, "Hold onto your wallet!"

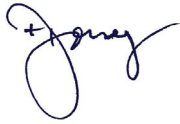
It was years before I could think of the word in any other way. And that is sad, because stewardship actually is a doorway into the totality of a joyous Christian life. It describes the essence of who we are, as human beings, in God's sight: our call, our walk, our destiny are all summed up in this word.

At the very beginning of the Bible the human race is charged with the stewardship of creation – with dominion, with wise oversight to see that the entire living world should flourish. We are commanded to do this, not as owners, but as tenants, a point driven home in the law of Moses. The portion of Leviticus dealing with property rights is introduced by this charge: "The land shall not be sold in perpetuity, *for the land is mine*; for you are strangers and sojourners with me." (Lev. 25:23). The Psalms amplify the theme: *All the beasts of the forest are mine, the herds in their thousands upon the hills* (50:10). Saint Paul declares this fulness of God's sovereignty is anchored in the Incarnation of Jesus Christ, the presence of the Trinity in every level of being: *He is before all things and in Him all things hold together*. (Colossians 1:17)

So, God holds in his hands all that is. Everything that is put into our hands is a gift and blessing from God. As we receive these gifts we, who bear God's image, are commanded to mirror God's character in what we do with these gifts: they are to be enjoyed, to be used for the good of others, to be power for our nurturing and strengthening the whole created order as gift and blessing for the generations to come. Seen in this light, nearly everything we engage in is an act of stewardship: friendship and marriage as the stewardship of our affections; child-rearing as the stewardship of the future; respectful care of the elderly as the stewardship of the past; the pursuit of mercy and justice as the stewardship of virtue.

When I am in my right mind, this is the worldview I have in the moment I give, whether to a homeless person on the street, or to a parish during a Sunday offering. Bishops are blessed with many opportunities to give! I wish I could say I always did so gladly. I have the same range of fear, worry, and just plain stinginess that afflict us all, and sometimes those hold me back from giving what I should. But I have always found that giving has given me great joy, has brought me friendships I would never otherwise have known, and has given me a family across the world through the Body of Christ. Simply put, I have found the more I give, the better my life. I can't explain it, except to say that when we do what we know we were made to do, we are happier. As the Lord opens His hand to fill *all things living with plenteousness* (Psalm 145:16), may we always open our hands in giving, and so fulfill our calling, rejoicing as we do so.

Faithfully your bishop,

A handwritten signature in dark blue ink, appearing to read 'Dorsey'.

(The Right Reverend) Dorsey W.M. McConnell, D.D.
VIII Bishop of Pittsburgh

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