

*"This is the day the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it."*

*Psalm 118:24*



## STEWARDSHIP IN MOTION

### Fight the Fear

Well, here we are in October and in many parts of the US leaves are already falling! Also falling, it seems, is much of our confidence in our current situation. The economic, political and societal tribulations of recent times have produced headaches and headlines and have certainly shaken much of the optimism that one normally finds among us.

It would be insensitive at best, and ostrich-like at worst, to pretend that we are not facing turbulent waters (an especially haunting analogy given the recent hurricane destruction in Texas), but as Christians we are called not to give in to despair, but to have hope. As Saint Paul instructs us in Sacred Scripture, ***"Make no mistake brethren, about the trial that has befallen us...it was something that overburdened us beyond our strength, so that we despaired of life itself. ...so God would have us learn to trust, not in ourselves, but in him who raises the dead to life. It is he who has preserved us... and we have learned to have confidence he will preserve us still... only you, too, must help with your prayers."*** (2 Corinthians 8-11)

It is understandable that many of us feel that we're in an especially difficult time in history; it can seem like we're boiling in a cauldron of chaos. If history has taught us anything, however, it is that struggle is a commonplace for mankind and suffering is an inescapable element here on Earth.

Fear and pessimism can intrude on our daily lives in these times, but knowing we are called to be people of hope, we need to boldly move forward and cultivate our Gospel-centered approach on the journey. When we are frightened or even depressed we are more prone to frustration, apathy and indecision. These feelings are poisonous to our good intentions of stewardship.

Fortunately, we can call on the saints to model for us a path to a hope-filled holiness rather than gloom. Saint Francis of Assisi, whose feast we celebrate on October 4th, encountered a very troubled world during his time. Political strife among the princes continued unabated in those times, while armed conflict between the city-states seemed ubiquitous. Beyond that, even the Church was awash in a sea of troubles. In a 2010 lecture, Pope Benedict XVI described the conditions Francis faced during his early life: *"The Church had a superficial faith which did not shape or transform life; it had a scarcely zealous clergy and a chilling of love. It was an interior destruction of the Church which also brought a decomposition of unity..."* Francis, wounded in battle at an early age in one of these conflicts, and then soon after ravaged by a debilitating illness, could have chosen to avoid much interaction with either his local parish or the Church itself. Yet he responded to God's call to ***"rebuild my Church"*** and set out to do just that.

Nearly 800 years later we have Franciscan friars and sisters all over the globe. The Franciscan impact and presence on our world is immeasurable, all due to the perseverance of one gentle soul from the tiny town of Assisi.

October is a month associated with harvest in much of our nation. We can look upon this time to reap what we have sewn in our parishes as faithful stewards. Don't be afraid to immerse yourself with a parish outreach or a committee to achieve an important task. Few of us can have any significant impact on the decisions made at the highest levels of government or business, but we can have a profound effect on the lives of those who live among us in our parish. There is much to be accomplished – from the mundane tasks such as the setting up and taking down of chairs and tables for a parish event, to the more substantive missions such as teaching the faith to our youth or lending our expertise in monetary affairs to our finance committee. Perhaps you have not shared your talents as a baker during a season that has plenty of festive holidays to celebrate, or maybe you are a born organizer – just the person needed to establish a book group focused on spiritual topics. The opportunities are virtually endless, but the important thing to remember is to not allow fear to foreclose the possibilities.

It is in times of distress that churches need more of our help, not less. This is because the material, emotional and spiritual support they provide us all will be needed all the more. We've all heard the adage about the lighting a candle rather than cursing the darkness. It might also behoove us to reflect upon Saint Paul's

admonition in his letter to the Galatians (6:2): **"Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ."**

We must lose the prideful sense that we are the sole determinants of our own destiny. We profess our faith with the understanding that we participate with Our Lord on our journey to salvation. We are called to believe the tenets of our religion both in season and out, so our call to be good stewards does not have an exemption clause when times are uncertain.

Everything we have comes above, from the God who made us. Might we suggest taking time each day to savor the simple delight of God's creation and in that moment remind ourselves of Psalm 118:24 - **"This is the day the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it."** So, let's not unduly fret about the tensions on the street, the economy, the world, and the anxieties of the moment; let's make an effort instead to savor the authentic joy that God provides for us each day if we'll only stop to consider it.

It is appropriate to close this reflection with a call to faith from Saint Paul's epistle to the Hebrews: (6:9-10) **"Beloved, of you we have better confidence, which does not stop short of your salvation... God is not an unjust God, that he should forget all you have done, all the charity you have shown in his name, you have ministered, and still minister, to the needs of his saints."**

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## DO YOU KNOW?

Most of us are aware of patron saints and have implored their intercession often. However, did you know that among their ranks are patrons for cab drivers (Saint Fiacre) gravediggers (Saint Anthony the Great) and yachtsmen (Saint Adjutor)?