

33rd Sunday
11/19/2023

THE TREE AND THE GENERATOR

Think of a tree; the roots go down and the branches go up. The more deeply rooted the tree is, the higher it can grow and bear fruit.

The first two servants in today's gospel illustrate responsibility and generosity. They gave time. It takes time to engage in trade. They gave talent. Each was entrusted with a sum according to his ability. And they gave treasure. They gave back all they earned. They didn't skim off the top.

Generosity acts like a generator in a large power plant. The generator keeps the energy flowing. The generator keeps the light on and allows for so many other things to happen. Our parish is like a large power plant. We are open literally, 365 days a year. In addition to the hundreds who attend one of five Sunday Masses, there may be over 700 people or more on campus during a school day. We have what is probably the largest Catholic grade school on this side of the state with an increased enrollment this year.

Our Early Education Center starts the work of evangelization early on. Our St. Vincent de Paul Food Pantry does tremendous work five days a week serving Christ in the less fortunate. Prayer groups, study groups, marriage preparation, retreat experiences and so much more, all important to the life of the Church happen here. And while that is happening, 68 hours a week, people are praying before the Blessed Sacrament in our adoration chapel.

From pre-baptismal preparation to post funeral luncheons, we seek to accompany people sharing the joy of the gospel and helping them lead lives of intentional faith, growing together in faith service and generosity. Most important of all, is what we're doing right now—the Sunday celebration of the Eucharist.

What keeps all this going? What has always kept it going: generosity, the generosity of so many people like you with their time, talent and treasure. Like a generator, you continue to keep the lights on and so much more. In terms of what is material, that's what keeps the power plant of our parish not only going but growing.

And that has been happening. Through your regular giving and through our See the Possibilities campaign, I have some news to share.

The first has to do with our parish debt—we don't have one. When I returned here twelve years ago, it was over six million dollars, and today, through your generosity, it is zero, nil, nada. For the first time in this century, we're debt free. Thank you for making that happen and thank you again. We have secured our past and we continue to enhance our present. Our St. John Paul II turf field gets a great deal of use and we continue with the renovation of our worship space, much of which you see right now.

There's more to come with original art statues of the Blessed Mother and St. Joseph on the way that will be placed where the servers sit. And I'm pleased to share that a new organ is coming. It should arrive later this month and be up and running before Christmas. And we look to embrace our future with a new rectory, a bolstered school endowment to help our school continue its fine work in the future and a cash reserve fund to meet additional expenses. We rejoice in being debt free but we continue to need your help.

Recently, all registered households received, or will receive, a mailing from me asking once again for your help. The mailing includes a pledge request for 2024. I ask you to prayerfully consider making a commitment either by returning the envelope or completing the information on line. We will continue to face financial challenges but as a parish we are capable of meeting these with your help. Our theme this year is, *Growing together in faith, service and generosity.*

Figuratively and literally, the Eucharist is the lifeblood of who we are as Catholic Christians and there is no substitute for that. What the Eucharist is to the spiritual life of our parish, regular generous giving is to our financial life and there's no substitute for that. A parish is to be a home of faith, service and generosity that in some way mirrors the faithfulness, service and generosity of God the Father shown through Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit.

The first two servants in today's parable, shared time, talent and treasure and I ask the same of you, according to your ability. Think of a tree, the deeper the roots go down, the higher the branches may grow and bear fruit. The deeper the roots of our faith grow, the higher the branches of our service can grow, not just in church but everywhere, and can bear the good fruit of generosity that reflects the generosity of our God.