

The Faithful Steward Plan

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

We emphasize stewardship at St. Mark because it is an essential quality of being an active disciple of Jesus. *Every* Catholic is called to be a good steward, whether or not they have school-aged children. For me, stewardship is very simple: as Christ gave his life for me, so I must give my life to others. That involves giving my *Time, Talent, and Treasure* - but it starts with giving Jesus my heart.

Our Catholic School - which is one of our most important ministries - is certainly a place where children draw closer to Jesus. If it were just another school that taught reading and math, it wouldn't be worth our efforts. We certainly maintain very high academic standards, but our primary goal is to bring our children closer to Jesus, particularly in the Eucharist.

For too long the spiritual and academic benefits of Catholic education have been available only to households with the ability to pay a standard tuition rate. But high tuition is the top reason more students aren't enrolled. As a consequence, Catholic schools are closing in our country at an alarming rate.

But the Faithful Steward Plan isn't just about enrolling more students. While that would be a worthy goal by itself, my hope is that it will improve our *entire* parish. How? By encouraging participating families to increase in their practice of stewardship, they will become leaven in the dough for the entire Saint Mark community.

So What is The Faithful Steward Plan?

The Faithful Steward Plan is the best way to register your children for Saint Mark Parish School. You set your own level of commitment of *Time, Talent, and Treasure* for the school year, rather than having the school set them for you.

To qualify, a family will commit to:

1) Attend Mass faithfully on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation at Saint Mark Parish at least 75% of the time, and put their Sunday envelope into the collection basket every time they are at Mass as an outward sign of their stewardship.

2) Be active in parish ministries and school activities and complete the volunteer hour reporting form as an outward sign of their stewardship.

3) Faithfully fulfill a pledge to tuition payments that they set for themselves at a financial facilitation meeting.

4) Use their stewardship commitment card annually in the fall to make additional commitments to the parish of prayer, ministry involvement, and offertory giving (what we commonly refer to as *Time, Talent, and Treasure*).

What is the alternative to The Faithful Steward Plan?

If the Faithful Steward Plan is not right for you, then you can choose to enroll your children using the Full Cost Tuition Contract enclosed in this packet.

My long-term dream is for St. Mark to become a Total Stewardship Parish, in which all ministries, including the school, are supported by the entire parish, and children could attend without paying tuition. It's a beautiful model that has been very successful in some parishes. For now, though, I believe the Faithful Steward Plan is definitely a step in the right direction.

I Remain Yours in Jesus and Mary,

Rev. W.R. Harris