

Welcome to the Fall Pledge Drive

The annual fall pledge drive serves the practical purpose of determining next year's income so we can set a budget for the year. But it is also an opportunity for us to deepen our understanding of how God calls us to be stewards of the many gifts He has given us. Look for your pledge package in the mail, review it carefully, and spend time in prayer reflecting on what you are grateful for.

IT'S TIME TO REALIZE THE SPIRITUAL VALUE OF SACRIFICIAL GIVING

One day Jesus encountered ten lepers, who called out to him: “Jesus, master, have mercy upon us.” Jesus told them to go show themselves to the priests and as they traveled they all were healed. Upon discovering their healing, only one of them—a Samaritan—returned to Jesus, knelt down before him, and gave him thanks. Jesus replied, “Were not ten cleansed? Where are the nine? Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?”

All of us have physical, spiritual, and emotional ailments. God has healed us in various ways, given us life, and richly blessed us. We see God’s work all around, in our loved ones, the beauty of the Central Coast, the material comforts we enjoy, and our own community of faith. The story of the grateful leper now stands before us. Are we going to be like the Samaritan who recognized his blessings and gave back to God with a heart shaped by true thanksgiving? Or, are we going to be like the other nine who forgot God?

A powerful way to show our thanks is through sacrificial giving. By its nature, sacrificial giving implies giving away something we would like to keep or use for ourselves. *Christian* sacrificial giving involves reflecting on the blessings God has provided us with through a lens of faith, recognizing that we have been but stewards of all that we have: ultimately God is the source of all our blessings and benefits.

In addition to being signs of thanks, acts of sacrificial giving can be *sacramental*. They can transform us spiritually, instilling in us a heart for God and those in need, reminding us of our dependence and reliance on our creator and sustainer, and uniting us emotionally with the one who sacrificed everything—even his own life—for us.

Sacrificial giving is also *spiritual discipline*, much like fasting or abstinence. It is relatively easy to give when it is painless. For instance, it is fairly easy to give some *money* when we have far more than we need, but it is hard to give when it hurts, no matter how much we have. A checkbook can be a barometer of the heart, for it can reveal what is really important to someone: “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Matthew 6:21). Consistent sacrificial giving keeps our priorities in check, reminding us that saving in order to give back to God is as important as saving for a new car or special vacation. The point of sacrificial giving has nothing to do with giving a respectable amount, or as much as we’re expected to give. The spiritual value of giving comes from the *sacrifice*. For some, this may require giving in the millions, for some in the thousands, and for others in the hundreds or less.

Similarly, it is easy to give of our *time* when it is convenient, but it is hard when it prevents us from doing something we’d naturally prefer to do. The spiritual value in the sacrificial giving of our time can be even greater than it is in financial giving, for it is plausible that giving of ourselves in the use of our time is at the heart of the Christian sense of giving. To give willingly of one’s time in service to others is to engage in protracted action (in contrast with the brief time it takes to write a check), consciously focused on the needs, not of ourselves, but of others.

For many of us, giving our time is harder than giving our money. But, the truth of the matter is our church needs more people to volunteer their time and leadership to make some

programs happen and to ensure that others work well. It is remarkable how few people do the bulk of our church's work. We need people to step out of the pews, to step up in giving time to the church's programs and, perhaps, to start others, in order to serve the needs of our parishioners and potential parishioners. I hope you will join me in thinking very seriously about how you can give sacrificially this next year. How much money would it take for your giving to be *sacrificial*? How much time would it take? If you're like me, whatever the specific answer to these questions might be, the general answer is this: more money and time than I've been giving. It's time to *realize* the spiritual value of sacrificial giving.

Yours in Christ,

Todd R. Long
On behalf of the 2008 Stewardship Team

Vestry Stewardship Statement
St. Barnabas Church

God has blessed us all abundantly in our individual lives and in our life together as a parish.

To honor God's graceful presence in our lives we seek to be faithful stewards of all the time, talent and treasure we have been given. We joyfully commit to continue our exploration of how we each might apply that stewardship in our lives.

The members of the Vestry invites the people of St. Barnabas to join us on this journey as we embrace the vision of stewardship as a joyful response of gratitude and generosity to God's extravagant gifts.

