

Diocese of Bethlehem  
Stewardship Reflections  
from the  
Diocesan Stewardship Commission  
Proper 16 (August 22) through Proper 22 (October 3, 2010)

Proper 16 Today's Epistle says in part: *"Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us give thanks, by which we offer to God an acceptable worship with reverence and awe..."* The world may often be topsy-turvy, and our lives in turmoil, but the bottom line for believers is that God's kingdom cannot be shaken...we are safe if we commit ourselves to His protection.

Note: Dates vary, of course, but the two following reflections are meant to be used near Labor Day and whenever your start-up Sunday is scheduled. Adapt as you need to.

"A suggestion for this Labor Day weekend: As a way of being always thankful for God's many gifts, read the Litanies of Thanksgiving in our Prayer Book – particularly number 2 on p. 836, and number 5 on page 838 – they are good reminders for all of us."

"In many parishes, this is "start-again Sunday" – especially for Choirs, Church Schools, and Education programs. Give special thanks for all who lead those programs, and pray about how, as a disciple and steward, you might offer yourself to serve others in those ministries. Being thankful involves not only prayer, but action and participation!"

Proper 17 *"Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels unaware."* Blessed are those who make service to others an ingrained part of their stewardship lives. "Pay it forward" and "pass it on" are current mantras for some in our society. We have been so blessed by our Creator that these reminders should be welcome and, yes, sought out tasks for us.

Proper 18 Psalm 139 begins *"Lord, you have searched me out and known me; you know my sitting down and my rising up; you discern my thoughts from afar."* Even for those (or perhaps, especially for those) trying to be faithful stewards, God's discerning our thoughts from afar has to give us pause. How can we possibly keep our minds thinking and acting in the way God would have us respond to life? It's the old Holy Habits again which can help to keep us on the path. How are you doing with prayer, study, service to others, giving, and being faithful in community worship and activity?

Proper 19 Today's Epistle talks about saving sinners and showing great mercy. Timothy says that we are saved in order that we might gratefully tell of God's mercy by the example of our new lives in Jesus Christ. Does your prayer, giving, worship and service make you *"an example to those who would come to believe in Him to gain eternal life"*?

Proper 20 Today's Collect reminds us *"not to be anxious about earthly things, but to love things heavenly"*, so that even in our daily lives, when all around us may continue to change, create problems and worries, or even fade away, we can, with faith, put our trust in God and those things He promises us shall endure forever.

Proper 21 What a difference it would have made for Lazarus if the rich man, had showed him even an iota of the mercy and favor God had modeled for him in his pampered life. But the scales are eventually balanced, and Lazarus finds a lasting home near God, while the rich man is condemned to suffer for eternity. How often do we question why "bad things happen to good people", but take little comfort in God's promise to balance the scales gloriously in His good time? Must be because we're human and can never know the many mysteries of God...we just have to trust...and how hard and unsatisfying that can be!

Proper 22 Today's Collect says in part: *"...you are always more ready to hear than we to pray, and to give more than we either desire or deserve..."*. A favorite stewardship saying is "you cannot out give God!" Go ahead, trust this adage and put Him to the test. See what happens when you give back sacrificially and with thanksgiving; the results may surprise you!

Proper 23 In today's story of the two lepers, only one returns to Jesus to give thanks for his healing. Are we often like the other? Do we accept God's many blessings and gifts, but fail to respond in a sufficiently grateful way? The use of our treasure, time, and talent for the Lord's work is a good indicator of our gratitude to our God who gives all.