



Creating a Better Village:

Sharing Your Time, Talent and Treasure

It takes a village to raise a child, is said to be an African proverb which means that it takes an entire community to raise a child; and essentially that child has the *best* ability to become a healthy, productive member of society if the entire community takes an *active* role in contributing to the rearing of the child.



It Takes A Village

This same value holds true for our parish – to be most successful as a parish, as a community and as a diocese, all of us at St. Mark's should prayerfully consider sharing our time, our talent and our treasure. Imagine the difference we could make around the church, in our parish and throughout the community. As we kick off this year's Stewardship drive, we are thankful for the generous gifts and talents for which you share, and invite you to reflect on your gifts – your time, talent and treasure – and how those gifts may better serve our village at St. Mark's. Before you 'check the box' to serve on a particular ministry, take time to evaluate where you are – as an individual, as a couple, as a family. What new way can you touch and in return, be touched through your practice of Stewardship?

In 2007 while reading the Sunday bulletin, my husband was drawn to a request for volunteers – St. Mark's was looking for married couples to serve as a lead couple and facilitate lessons with those wishing to be married in the Catholic church. This call for volunteers ran in the bulletin for a few weeks, and while I noticed it, I thought, *Someone else will respond; Is this REALLY something we are qualified to do?; Do we have time? What will I lose and/or need to give up to say YES to this?*

While I was busy asking questions and making excuses, Stephen was listening to God's calling. He was excited for our chance to volunteer and do something together – to be mentors and help guide young couples to better understand and appreciate this gift of love through the sacrament of Holy Matrimony. I can still hear today the love and sincerity in Stephen's voice when he said, "We are being called, Bernadette. We have been blessed with this second chance in mar-

riage – we are here for a reason – to share our story." I couldn't have agreed more. The timing was good – earlier that year, I had finished my college education and I no longer attended classes at night or studied on the weekends. Our sons were 17 and 14 years of age, and while parenting skills and testing were at an all-time high, they were somewhat 'self-

sufficient'. It was also a chance for our sons to witness our act of saying "YES" to God, to our parish and to those desiring to enter into this lifetime commitment of love. Our sons experienced the separation, the divorce and the remarriage. They saw firsthand the love and commitment put forth each day and knew we had something special to share.

We said, "Yes" to the call for Lead Couples because we fondly remembered our Village who supported us through a most difficult time. In 1997, we were newly divorced, Alex and Nicholas only 4 and 7 years of age, and almost daily we would hear from friends and acquaintances in our small community, "We continue to pray for you and your boys." It was that Village – our small town, our parish families, who through love, support and prayer helped us to where we are today.

As you reflect on your talents, your unique gifts and experiences which God has bestowed upon you, take a prayerful moment and ask yourself, *Am I fully utilizing these special God-given talents of which I have been blessed? Am I wholeheartedly supporting the village, our parish family? If not, why not?*

This is our parish – our community – our family. Pray, listen and respond. Our village is counting on all of us. May God bless this St. Mark's family.

Written by Bernadette Lawson, member of our Stewardship Committee