

## STEWARDSHIP

### Article 3 of 8

This week's reflection concerns my final thoughts on the *receiving component* of the stewardship way of life. My previous two reflections concerned the receiving and recognizing of God's gifts as illustrated within the scriptures and selected liturgical rites of the Church. At the risk of over-repetition, I need to reiterate again that stewardship as an expression of discipleship must be rooted in an awareness and appreciation of God's blessings otherwise it will not perdure.

My treatment of the notion of receiving within the context of stewardship now turns to one of the most influential saints of the last thousand years: St. Ignatius of Loyola. Ignatius' claim to fame centers on his founding of the Society of Jesus, more commonly known as the Jesuits, and the composition of a systematic program for discerning the presence of the Holy Spirit and evil spirit in one's life. In his hallmark work, *The Spiritual Exercises*, Ignatius or Nacho, as he is often called, laid down a pivotal meditation for persons making his one month spiritual "boot camp" of spiritual exercises. The meditation is titled, *Contemplation to Attain Love of God*. In this key period of prayer for converting one's entire life to God in service, Nacho asks the retreatant to pray for a particular grace. The grace: "Lord, give me an intimate knowledge of the many blessings received so that full of gratitude I May love you and serve you in all things."

In this grace, loving and serving the Lord in all things can be related to the responding component of the stewardship way of life. However, isn't it interesting that before Nacho looks to have the person focus on doing, he begins with receiving. "Lord, give me an intimate knowledge of the many blessing received" is a telling petition in the line of Ignatius' thought. He is literally saying that before doing and giving we must first receive and, moreover, have an "intimate knowledge" of these blessings. Again, not just any knowledge, but an "intimate knowledge." Intimate knowledge is more than just informational. Rather, it is transformational. Once we have intimate knowledge we are no longer the same. There is a certain sense of "awe" associated with intimate knowledge. You might say that we are held dumb in the midst of such knowledge.

Intimate knowledge is more than just reflecting upon what we have. It is a knowledge that links us to the Creator. Moreover, it is special sort of understanding given by the Holy Spirit. In fact, understanding is one of the gifts of the Holy spirit. Such knowledge leads spontaneously to gratitude. Since this intimate knowledge is a gift of the Holy Spirit, we must pray for it daily.

The intimate knowledge of what we have received leads to gratitude and a desire to respond to God's generosity with our own gifts. My subsequent reflections on stewardship will focus on the response component of the stewardship way of life.

In Christ's Love,  
Fr. Steve