

“YOU CANNOT TEACH ADULTS NEW THINGS.”

By Bill Marianesⁱ

The title of this article comes from Greek philosopher Socrates. I think he got it right in his entire statement which was: “You cannot teach adults new things. You can merely create the environment in which they discover the truth for themselves.” This belief is the basis of the “Socratic method” used by law schools and other educators to teach by asking questions and helping people learn to think and discern the truth.

Are you ready to discover the truth for yourself? Each of our Igniting the Flame of True Christian Stewardship program begins with Socrates’ words and then asks two key questions.

Question #1: Do you believe in John 3:16?

In John 3:16 we learn that “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” Let’s focus a little on that last part. Do you believe in the resurrection? Do you believe in the possibility of Heaven or everlasting life? Do you believe there is anything after this life?

These are fair questions because in his book, American Grace, Robert Putnam reports on the results of a nationwide survey that concluded that while 80% of Americans are absolutely sure there is a God, only 60% are absolutely sure that there is a heaven and only 52% have this level of certainty about life after death. What do you believe?

I am pleased to report that 100% of the attendees at all Stewardship Calling Igniting The Flame programs raise their hands and testify to believing in the resurrection, the possibility of Heaven and the promise of John 3:16. This leads us to our second question.

Question # 2: Are you ready?

If this were the exact moment when you were called to meet your Maker, is the state of your faith and the body of your works sufficient to assure you of salvation for all of eternity? If they are, congratulations, you are unique and ready. But if you are like most of us, there is more you can and should do. So, what keeps us from going “all in” and better using our gifts for God’s greater glory and our salvation?

Stewardship is what we do with all of the gifts God gave us. He didn’t have to give us any, or many, gifts. Did you ever wonder why your Father blessed you with all of the incredible talents, abilities and resources He has entrusted uniquely to you? And are you doing the best you can with them? If not, why not?

When we are asked to reconsider our stewardship commitments, we sometimes excuse our own conduct (or lack thereof) by sitting in judgment of our perception of the relative lack of contributions of others. But when our judgment day comes, won’t we stand alone? Whether we did more or less than our brother or sister probably won’t really matter. It’s about what we do with the gifts we were given. It’s personal. Being “less bad” than someone else does not make us “good.”

My good friend and priest, Father Barnabas Powell delivered an inspiring sermon sharing one of the most critical lessons he learned from his pastoral counseling training. He informed us that most people already know the right thing to do. They know when they are doing the right thing and when they are not doing enough. The job of the counselor/advisor/mentor is merely to help us actually admit and acknowledge what we already know. Sounds like Socrates actually had it right.

So is your stewardship contribution of your time, talent, treasurers and tithes to your Parish/Diocese/Metropolis/Archdiocese the best you can do given the gifts you have been given? What was the first answer that came to your mind? If your personal salvation for all of eternity depended on the truth of this answer, what would your answer be?

In his book, The Second Brain, Scientist Dr. Michael Gershon, explained: “A hundred million neurotransmitters line the length of the gut, approximately the same number that is found in the brain.” Thus, when someone asks you: “What does your gut say?” or advises you to “Follow your gut” they are actually giving you sound scientific advice.

Our Father has given us a “second brain” to help us discover the truth for ourselves. So, what does your gut say right now? Is there anything more you can do, or give, for your Parish/Diocese/Metropolis/Archdiocese and for your salvation? The icon of Pentecost inspires us to reflect on our personal ministry. To be a part of Christ’s holy commission and help bring His word and our faith to ourselves and others through the exercise of our own unique stewardship calling can be a noble and compelling life objective for each of us.

Eternity is an awfully long time. It is far longer than the relatively short time we will spend on this orb we call earth. So, if what we do with God’s gifts to us here helps determine where we will spend the rest of eternity, our stewardship stakes in our daily lives just got a lot higher.

This brings us back to question #2. Are you ready? Is the state of your faith and your body of works sufficient to assure you of the right result on judgment day? As John 3:16 teaches, our belief in our Lord is a critical part of our faith journey. So too is our stewardship over the “talents” God has given us.

Ask yourself the right questions, and you will discover the truth for yourself. Then go do something more today (and for all the tomorrows you are given) in gratitude for Christ’s redeeming love and to help prepare your soul for salvation! God bless you as you pursue your own unique stewardship calling. SOTPAETJ (stay on The Path, and enjoy the journey)

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