

SUE'S SERMONETTE

Psalm 84:1-2

How dear to me is your dwelling, O Lord of hosts! My soul has a desire and a longing for the courts of the Lord; and my heart and my flesh rejoice in the living God.

The sparrow has found her a house and the swallow a nest where she may lay her young; by the side of your altars, O Lord of hosts, my King and my God.

These 2 verses pretty much sum up my view of the world and how I see my life at St. Elizabeth's.

The first time I set my foot in the door, I was greeted enthusiastically by Pat Lofstedt. At the peace I received a hug from Kaycee Johnston and at the dismissal a warm welcome from Sandy and John Stonehouse. Fr. John's sermon was one of the best I had ever heard - it left me wanting to hear more! (I don't think I have actually looked forward to hearing sermons until I got to St. Elizabeth's.) It may sound kind "out there" but when I worked for the Cathedral Book Store in Atlanta part of my job was to take the Book Store on the road and visit as many parishes as possible. There were three of us who spent our Sundays this way and on Mondays we would share our impressions (as well as our sales) with each other. It turns out we could feel the presence of the living God in some parishes and yet not so much in others. So I was thrilled when I left St Elizabeth's that September morning feeling that "the sparrow had found her home" in the Pacific North West.

My husband Ed and I moved here from Atlanta in the Spring of 2014. In less than a year's time we had both retired, sold a house, bought a house, moved across country, lost a friend and a sister to cancer. If you look at a list of life's greatest stressors you will see that we hit quite a few of them in that time. On the plus side we

were now living in the same part of the world as our daughter, grandson and son-in-law for the first time in a 20 years.

Although we had planned carefully for our retirement I felt like we didn't really know what was what financially until we had the chance to live it for a while - so my first pledge here was a rather timid one.

But that's the good thing about proportional giving stewardship. You may start low, say 3% but you work your way up to the goal of 10% and even beyond. With God's help, this year I will be a lot closer to my goal of tithing and by next year I should achieve it!

What do I mean by proportional giving you ask? To me it means giving a part (a percentage) of what I have to see that God's work can be done in this world and to know that my "generosity" will enrich not impoverish me.. .."The Lord is my shepherd I shall not want..."

From the Church's point of view, making a commitment financially is an essential part of belonging to a worship community. When you pledge, you promise a portion of what you have to support's God's work. Your gift expresses your faith that we, the community of St. Elizabeth's are good stewards of God's gifts.... Making this commitment is an important step in our relationship with Christ. And I might add that making a gift of your time and talent is important if we are to see our little Church thrives.

This week I hope you received a Stewardship Letter with a Financial Pledge Card and a Time & Talent Pledge form. The Church teaches us that making a financial commitment should be a spiritual decision reached after prayer and reflection. On the back of the

Pledge Card there is a prayer written by Fr. John to help us find our way.

Let us pray:

Gracious and loving God, giver of all that is good and true and beautiful and life-giving. Inspire our hearts as we prayerfully discern the pledges we make for the coming year with the resources that you have provided. Let our pledges represent for each of us our gratitude to you for all that we received from your abundance. Inspire us with the vision of your church as the holy, healthy and vital legacy that has been given into our care and that we nurture for future generations. Keep this vision ever before us as we search our hearts and minds for the offering that we can give responsibly and joyfully, and grant us the grace to strengthen the church and bring your loving kingdom ever closer.

AMEN

(Proportional Giving material adapted from "Your Gift to Your Church" pamphlet.)