

## Good Steward Newsletter – November 2011

November 1, 2011 by [O'Meara Ferguson](#)



### November is Gratitude Month

Robert Morneau is the Auxiliary Bishop of Green Bay, Wisconsin. He is also the pastor of one of his diocese's largest parishes, a Packers fan (some might say fanatic), and an inspiring poet and preacher. He shares all these gifts—with warm humor and keen insight—whenever he speaks on stewardship at diocesan, regional and international conferences.

If Bishop Morneau is listed as a speaker at a conference you're thinking about attending, do whatever is necessary to get there. You will come away deeply satisfied by the power of his message, by his evident spirituality and by laughter, which truly is the best medicine for the physical and spiritual ills that beset us all.

At the annual meeting of the International Stewardship Council held in Orlando last month, Bishop Morneau told the more than 1200 participants that we have two choices in life. We can be grateful for all that God has given us, or we can be perpetually dissatisfied.

“Perpetual dissatisfaction describes my golf game,” the bishop said. “It's what our society encourages. My dissatisfaction prompts me to buy a new set of golf clubs, and to tell myself that these will make me happy. Instead of being grateful for what I have (a perfectly good set of slightly used clubs), I want more. Will the new clubs improve my game? Perhaps. Will they make me a happy man? Never.”

Gratitude is the path we should choose if we want to be fully satisfied as human beings. Why? Because saying thank you to God, to family members and friends and to all those who have sacrificed so much to obtain our freedom and prosperity as citizens of this great nation is the only effective way to shake off the perpetual dissatisfaction that weighs us down as individuals and as a society.

Gratitude is the soul of stewardship. The solution to our alienation, anxiety and unhappiness as human beings is to be grateful for what we have as opposed to coveting what our neighbors have. Two of the Ten Commandments affirm this truth. Desiring what others' have (a neighbor's spouse or material possessions) leads to profound unhappiness—often to serious sin and tragic consequences.

On the other hand, awareness of God's abundant blessings changes our whole attitude toward life. The ability to accept what we have, to say thank you from the heart, brings healing and hope. We no longer live as slaves to desire but as free women and men who thank God for his goodness and love.

As Bishop Morneau reminded his audience at the International Stewardship Conference last month, the primary task of stewardship education is to help people recognize their gifts with a grateful heart so that they can cultivate them responsibly and share them generously with others.

Bishop Morneau was one of the authors of the American bishops' 1992 pastoral letter, *Stewardship: A Disciple's Response*. This pastoral letter speaks of three —convictions or principles that are at the heart of Christian stewardship. The first conviction is that stewardship is not impulsive or short-lived. It is carefully considered, deliberately chosen and lived day-in and day-out in the concrete circumstances of our lives. Stewardship is serious business. It is a way of life that is only undertaken by mature men and women who can accept the risks and who are willing to pay the price.

The second conviction is that stewardship requires a radical change of attitude and lifestyle. It is not something that can be accomplished once and for all, but requires a lifelong —commitment. And what is committed is not something incidental or extra. Stewardship demands a total commitment—heart and mind, body and soul, intentions and actions. Indeed, the bishops say, stewardship means committing one's very self to the Lord!

The third conviction of the U.S. bishops' pastoral letter is that “Stewardship is an expression of Christian discipleship with the power to change how we understand and live our lives”. It is not enough to make a conscious —decision to become a disciple of Jesus Christ. It's not enough to make a total commitment of ourselves to a new way of life. *We must actually change*. Above all, we must live differently and make new choices about developing and sharing all the gifts God has given us.

November is gratitude month. It's the time of year when we celebrate the distinctively American feast of Thanksgiving.

This year, let's follow Bishop Morneau's advice and choose gratitude rather than perpetual dissatisfaction. This Thanksgiving—and throughout the holiday season—let's choose to be content with what we have instead of coveting what our neighbors have.