

# Impact

Bring faith to life. Find life in faith.

## Impact this month

This month, invite the Holy Spirit to show you how you may grow as a disciple and as a good steward.

Make a list of the ways in which you give your time, gifts, and material or financial resources in service or outreach. Consider, too, the ways you give to your family, parish, and local community.

Reflect on how you may be called to risk giving more. How might you deepen your commitment to love and serve? What or who would help you to trust God more deeply in order to sacrifice in this way? How might doing so enrich your life and faith?

Make some commitment to follow-through on this reflection. Share with another who will check in with you about this periodically.

As you reach out in sacrificial love, be attentive to the ways in which doing so gives you a sense of purpose, meaning, or peace.

## Risk giving more.

### Follow the example of the young boy

The crowd had followed Jesus into a deserted place. And, as time passed, Jesus sensed their hunger. They hungered for him, the hope they felt in his presence, and for physical food - the day had been long and they had left in haste to follow him. He tested the disciples, wondering if their experience of being sent in mission had strengthened their faith. "Where can we buy enough food for them to eat?"

This is a story of faith - the faith of the disciples who sought to respond to their Teacher, and of the young boy who gave his five loaves and two fish. Surely he did not expect the great miracle that produced enough food to feed them all. The boy could have succumbed to the fear that the disciples would eat his food and leave him hungry. He might have simply stated the obvious - the little he had could not possibly feed the crowd. Yet, he risked giving what he had and trusted that Jesus would use it well. Through his generosity, the crowds were fed and all experienced a remarkable outpouring of the mercy and care of God through Jesus.

**What will your response to Jesus' command be? How might you feed the hungry - those who need spiritual, physical, and emotional sustenance?** When we consider what faith in Jesus leads us to do with our lives, especially when we pay close attention to the Gospel and Jesus' message of care for the hungry and poor, compassion for those who are suffering, grieving, and in need, suddenly discipleship becomes "real," and so does "stewardship." This is where faith meets life.

We always have room to grow as disciples and stewards, whether we have never given these things conscious thought before or we have been on the path of stewardship for a long time. And we always have fears to face. It might be fear that if we give too much of our financial resources there won't be enough for us; it might be worry that if we give too much of our time, we will be tired and stressed. The obstacles might be more subtle, however. Perhaps it is not fear that we will not have enough, but rather, simple selfishness. Sometimes we simply don't want to share with others.



We find the path through the obstacles when we act on our commitment to Jesus. The leap of faith that feels so risky becomes easier when we are encouraged by and learn from those in our lives and community who freely give of themselves and their resources. There is great value to the example of people who embrace stewardship and tell us that "God will never be outdone in generosity," or "God loves a cheerful giver."

How might you follow the example of the young boy whose generosity and trust in the Lord brought about an outpouring of the love of God?



# Be prepared.

## Grace is in your midst

I include in my email signature a brief quote from St. Elizabeth Ann Seton who said, "Be prepared to meet your grace in the daily circumstances of your life." Every time I send an email, I see the quote and am reminded to be attentive, to pay attention to the ways I experience God's love and how I am called to share it with others.

Like the air we breathe and the passing of days, nights, weeks and months, God's grace is always with us. In order for this to change us, we must be attentive to God's love and mercy in our daily lives.

Being attentive is not always easy. We have responsibilities we must fulfill, people who need us, many things that vie for our attention. Being attentive to God and God's action in our lives may feel like another "thing" that has to be done, even while we know that doing so is good for our spiritual well-being. Let us consider small ways in which we may grow in attentiveness, becoming conscious of God's love throughout our days.

**Morning:** Begin the day with a time of prayer. If only for five minutes, take time to be mindful of God's love and mercy. Invite the Holy Spirit to give you an open mind and heart throughout the day, in order to perceive God's grace in your life and to respond to it freely and generously.



**Midday:** Just before or during lunch, pause to thank God for the blessings of the morning. Make a note of any special moments, experiences, or gifts received — a kind interaction with a co-worker, a task completed, a complicated situation that was resolved. Just being alive is a gift! Look ahead to the afternoon, and ask God to give you the grace to live as a disciple in the hours that come.

**Dinnertime:** If you live with others, take a moment at dinnertime to hear about each person's day. Pray a prayer of blessing over the meal you will share and the time you have together. Ask God to be with those who lack food, shelter, or companionship, and consider ways you may help to meet their needs in the future. If you dine alone, talk with God while you eat, as a friend would converse with a friend, sharing silence and your inmost thoughts.

**Night:** Before you go to bed, thank God for the day that is passing. Make note of the grace of the day, mercy received and given. Resolve to grow in attentiveness to God's love and in willingness to be a bearer of God's mercy in the days to come.

Taking St. Elizabeth Ann's instruction to heart can be life-changing. The grace of God is not abstract, distant, only for a few special ones. God's grace is for each of us. In our midst. Waiting for us to pay attention, to be prepared. We know and experience God's grace uniquely, as each of us is fearfully and wonderfully made, created in God's image and likeness. Just as God's grace is poured out on each of us personally, so we are called to share the love of God with others in the way in which only we can. Be prepared to meet your grace. - Leisa Anslinger

## Grow in trust

Be at peace.



Do not look forward to the changes and chances of this life with fear. Rather, look to them with full confidence that, as they arise, God to whom you belong will in his love enable you to profit by them. He has guided you thus far in life. Do you but hold fast to his dear hand, and he will lead you safely through all trials. Whenever you cannot stand, he will carry you lovingly in his arms.

Do not look forward to what may happen tomorrow. The same eternal Father who takes care of you today will take care of you tomorrow, and every day of your life. Either he will shield you from suffering or he will give you unflinching strength to bear it.

Be at peace then, and put aside all useless thoughts, all vain dreads and all anxious imaginations. - St. Francis de Sales