

**FAMILY LIVING, FAMILY GIVING**  
**Stewardship Address given by Ms Clare Gates**  
**Sunday, October 21<sup>st</sup>, 2007**

I was honored and delighted when I was asked to give the address this morning. As I was preparing what I might say, what I wanted to say to you, it kept coming back to family. I have a heart shaped plaque that hangs in my kitchen given to me by a friend. It reads "Good friends become our chosen family" - that is how I feel about all of you - you are my "chosen family", and as all families have their joyous and not so joyous events we are no exception.

When I began attending All Saints' Church my daughter, Julia, was enrolled in the school. As a mother I felt it was my duty to insure she be given proper religious instruction. What she did with that knowledge later would be up to her. Julia is the result of a mixed marriage - her mother was raised Roman Catholic and her father was raised primitive Baptist. I have come to discover this is not uncommon among those who are not cradle Episcopalians. Having been a fallen away Roman I had no idea what Anglicans or Episcopalians were about or believed. Fr. McClasky was beginning confirmation classes on Saturday mornings, so I thought as Julia was five at the time I needed to know what she was being taught about God. I was surprised at how familiar the teaching and the liturgy were to me.

In fact, I can't remember exactly when but one Sunday morning it hit me. If the Mass were being said in Latin, this would be the same liturgy I was raised with as a child. That appealed to me very much. I am a strong believer in maintaining traditions.

While almost everyone was welcoming when I first starting attending Mass at All Saints' Ruth and Abb Scarborough and Melissa and Don Griffin were the people that stick out most in my memory as making sure I felt welcome and included on the Sundays that I did attend. Believe it or not, back then my attendance on Sunday was somewhat hit and miss. Once after Mass Ruth came over to me and told me she missed not seeing me at Mass the Sunday before, not in a judgmental way, but in a motherly concerned way. I remember telling her, I set the alarm on Saturday night but when it goes off on Sunday

morning I just I roll over and go back to sleep (life was very busy then). Ruth responded, just keep trying each Sunday to get to church and eventually you won't even think about it. You will just get up and be here. She was right. Now on Sunday mornings I am up before the alarm goes off. I was involved with the school, and the more I committed to being a member of the church the more involved I became on both sides of the alley.

As we were coming into the year 2000 I was taking stock of where my life was at as most of us do coming into a new year. The reality was grim. My marriage, this church and my work were stagnant. Painfully so. I guess this was the moment I turned myself over completely to God. No deals, no bargains. I prayed to God to please do something and regardless of the outcome, positive or negative, I would accept His will gladly. Just do something, please! Well, as some of you know it got much worse before it got better. In the next year my work situation improved. Within this church issues were identified and were being addressed in a thoughtful, Christian manner. It was a very difficult and stressful time. Some of our longtime parishioners felt the need to find another church. As there were fewer and fewer people in the pews each Sunday, I remember thinking, what do you do with a church without a congregation?

As the calling committee was formed and we were in our transition period we had many wonderful supply priests, but were still without a Shepherd. As the committee was narrowing down the list of potential candidates that would be suitable to assist us with our Anglo Catholic tradition I remember thinking, after the new Rector is in place I will give him a year. A year to do things his way, as there are always changes, and at the end of the year I'll decide if I want to continue at All Saints' or start going to St. Dunstan's which is in my neighborhood. Why am I driving downtown six and sometimes seven days a week?

Enter Fr. Tony. As I told him when he arrived, he wasn't my first choice, but I would support in him in anyway possible to rebuild our church. (The reason he was not my first choice was that I was not sure how a man without children would be able to relate to children - we still had the school then. I will admit I was wrong, they loved him!) While the call committee had briefed Fr. as to the parish finances as

we knew them to be at the time, it seemed that additional issues would continue to appear. The first year he was with us he made quite a few trips back to Australia to wrap up his affairs there and make the transition to the US. Each trip I kept waiting for the telegram saying "I've changed my mind. Stop. I will not be returning to San Diego. Stop." Well, he continues to return and our church continues to grow.

This was a joke we heard in Walsingham

Q: What is the difference between God and Fr. Tony?

A: God is everywhere in the world and Fr. Tony is everywhere but San Diego.

If I have not put you to sleep by now, and you have been keeping count, the third item on my petition to God was my marriage. Well that ship sailed. It wasn't one of the easiest decisions I have had to make but I survived with the support and prayers of my church family. I guess that is why I perceive you as family - your unconditional love, support and acceptance. That is what a family does for its members. When I am trying to explain to those of other faiths or parishes what All Saints' means to me I tell them that if we travel in tribes, I've found my tribe.

On the subject of acceptance - I know that the idea of women acolytes was not something that appealed to some of you. Being given the opportunity to serve on the altar gives my worship more meaning, and closeness to God that I had not experienced before. When I am serving not only is my heart full with the Holy Spirit, but overflowing. That is another thing I love about my church family, our Love of God is evident in our worship.

I guess I should get to the real reason why you are listening to me this morning instead of the Rector or his assistant. It is that time of the year - the annual pledge appeal. I would like to remind you Stewardship is more than an appeal to have a balanced budget - although that is VERY important. We are also in need of your time and talents. There are many events throughout the year that require volunteers for them to be successful. There are a couple of projects that your talents could make a reality. If you don't feel that you are able to commit regularly to one of the committees, I strongly

encourage you to participate in one event. The chairs of our numerous committees would love to hear from you. And don't forget the choir. I have asked Fr. if it might be possible for a comprehensive list of all the guilds, committees, etc...to be made available for a quick reference sometime soon.

Whether it be decorating the church for Christmas or Easter, assisting with one of the fund raisers, or offering your talents for a specific project. Many hands make light work and I can almost guarantee you will have fun at the same time. This is a wonderful group of people to work with, regardless of the project. A pledge to All Saints' in the coming year is a way of offering time, talent and money to our shared ministry. This could provide the resources to help bring the Kingdom of Heaven to someone, who is searching for a tribe to belong to and seeking a spiritual home full of welcome and love.

The stewardship dinner is coming up this Saturday evening and I do hope you are planning to attend. It is one of the events that join together those who attend the 8 and 10 o'clock services. I thank you for listening and hope that you will be thoughtfully generous with your pledge this year - be it your time, talent or treasures.