Dear brothers and sisters,

When Fr. Anthony asked me to come speak about Stewardship today, I must admit I was hesitant. I have various time commitments, one of which is a newborn that keeps me up most nights; I came up with a bunch of excuses as to why I shouldn’t be the one coming up here to speak today. But instead of responding right away, I took a pause and waited. When I discussed it with my husband he said, “being asked to give a sermon is an honor and it wouldn’t be me speaking, it would be God speaking through me”. Right away it hit me, “how could I possibly say no?”

The newborn that is keeping me up at night, is a blessing from God. It is HE who decided when I would become a mother. The ‘time’ I do have in this life is also a gift from God.

So here I am today to speak to you about Stewardship - and what that means. The definition of a Steward is someone who is hired to manage or look after something. God gave each of us time, different talents and various treasures to manage on his behalf and calls us to use them to look after his children. For example, the other day I saw a post on Facebook of a poor woman saying she forgot to sign up for a program that would provide donated gifts to her children for Christmas. Upon seeing this post, I was filled with a profound sadness as I pictured four of God’s children waking up unable to celebrate the joy of Jesus’ birth. However, I quickly realized that God was sending me a message on how he would like me to use some of the assets he so graciously provided. Like a stewardess, who looks after you on a plane (although we don’t really use that term any more), I was called to look after this family in need. In Peter 4:10, we’re called to use our gifts to serve others as faithful stewards of God’s grace. We are all Stewards of God - which means we are asked to look after all that he has given us and to help those around us. Everything we have today comes from God. It is His; I own nothing.

In Psalm 24: 1-2, David says,

The earth is the Lord’s, and everything in it,
   the world, and all who live in it;
for he founded it on the seas
   and established it on the waters.

The truth is: God owns everything we call “ours”. He is the owner and I am the manager. Let’s walk through an example, let’s assume I made $500 last week and I come to church today, how much of that belongs to God?

All of it! Some may say, 10% of $500 is $50. No, the principle of tithing does not mean $50 is God’s, and the rest is yours. It all belongs to God. You may argue, “My power and my own ability have gained this wealth for me,” but remember that the Lord your God gives you the power to gain wealth. The time and talent you use to get your treasures all come from God.

Many of us have heard the story of the ‘Poor widows sacrifice’ - Jesus was in the temple observing the crowd put money in the offering box. Many of the wealthy gave generously but one poor widow put in everything she had. In Luke 21: 3-4 it reads,
"I tell you the truth,' he said, 'this poor widow has put in more than all the others. All these people gave their gifts out of their wealth; but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on.'"

The rich had given out of their abundance, but the poor widow gave all that she had. The rich had made a big contribution while the poor woman had made a big sacrifice. Jesus gave greater respect and honor to a woman who gave very little by earthly standards than the high and mighty people giving large sums. Never devalue your gift, however small it is. Remember that in Jesus’ eyes, generosity is not determined by the size of the offering but by the size of the sacrifice.

Now, if we are all clear that God owns everything and we are his managers, we must learn to think, therefore, like His managers. A manager oversees the owner's assets for the owner's benefit. The job of a manager is to find out what the owner wants done with His assets and then to carry out His will.

Then the question becomes, **how should I know what God wants me to do with His assets that He has entrusted to me?**

It’s important that you understand that God designed you with a purpose in mind. God loves you. He has a specific, unique and glorious destiny for you. He promises to guide you.

We have a GPS in our car or on our phones. When we take a wrong turn, it reroutes us; it even tells us how to avoid traffic and accidents. But it never gives up until we reach our destination. You can ignore it or switch it off, but if you follow it, it makes your journey more enjoyable and peaceful. Eventually, it will say ‘You have reached your destination.’

Of course, this is not a perfect analogy. God is not a machine but a person who is with us on the journey. God wants to communicate with you and has promised to guide you. But you need to choose to listen and not “switch Him off”. The thing is, the GPS stays silent when we stay stationary, so we need to be trying in order for God to guide us.

For starters, God gave us all unique talents and skills to benefit others. How can you put that into practice? Maybe there’s a ministry that uses your skill or talent to help others. If you love cooking, volunteer to cook for a neighbor in need. Or if you paint, hold art classes for nursing home residents. If you look in your community, you’re sure to find a need you can meet with the talents God’s given you. And if nothing exists, you can always start your own ministry!

Aside from using your God given talents, we are shown where there’s a need in God’s kingdom. There are signs everywhere - sometimes we call it intuition, the universe, the voice in our heads, sometimes it's deja vu - hearing something over and over.

One of the ways God may be trying to get your attention is through pictures or dreams. Did an image or something symbolic come out of nowhere? You might have accidentally brushed it off as something else, but it could be God. When The Holy Spirit steers your focus somewhere and then speaks spiritually through the moment, listen carefully.

Another way God brings us guidance is through people messengers. The Lord will use family, friends and even total strangers to speak a word into your life that will pierce an area God is trying to deal with. God can use these people to bring you the gospel and give you advice or direction. Again, listen.

I know in the past I have disregarded the signs or I got distracted by other things in my life and forgot about the sign. But I’ve become much more mindful and open,
especially during this time. I have found that the more I listen, the easier it is for me to know how God wants me to manage his property. I’ll share a couple of examples. I often see people begging for money on the side of the road when I’m driving. In the past, I have thought they would use the money I give them for the wrong reasons. But I realized that I was being presented with an opportunity to give, and how they spend what was given to them by God was up to them to manage. So now I always have money in my car console that I give any time I’m given the opportunity to do so.

Another example, when the pandemic first started and we were all in quarantine, I was inundated by stories of the impact this had on the elderly, especially in nursing homes - they were very hard hit. The message kept presenting itself to me in various forms until one day I decided to do something about it. I started a fundraiser and raised money to deliver 100 gifts of Joy to elderly in a nursing home.

Another realization I’ve had recently is that people are good about giving an inheritance when they die. (They will give it all then.) Why not begin that practice while you are alive? Leave a legacy while you’re living, not just an inheritance. I know for me, I want to be known as someone who gave joyfully and abundantly throughout my life, not at its end.

And lastly, it’s important to remember that each of us will be held accountable for how we manage what has been entrusted to us by God. Each will give a personal account to God. God will want to know what we have done with the gifts He has entrusted into our care.

So remember, we are all Stewards of God, managing His assets, and there are signs all around us guiding us on how to give joyfully, abundantly and sacrificially. I challenge each of you to try to find ways this week to give of your time, talent and treasures and see how it feels to be called on by God to do so.

Amen.