

Dear Parishioner(s);

I am writing today to introduce you to a new stewardship service offered at St. Francis by the Sea. Beginning May 1<sup>st</sup>, we will be providing a simple, safe, and convenient way for you to make your weekly or monthly offering. This new service is an electronic giving program that allows you to make your offertory contributions directly from your checking account or by credit card. Perhaps you already use a service like this to pay utility bills or insurance payments, or to make planned investments like IRAs.

The safety and convenience of this new method are not the primary reasons why I am encouraging you to enroll. I am asking you to join me in using this service as a way of promoting parish-wide planned, prayerful stewardship. First, I would like to acknowledge that we have a large number of generous parishioners who have supported our parish for many years. With the use of our electronic giving program, we hope to build on their commitment to stewardship. The key to good stewardship is not a secret. It is prayerful, planned giving! Electronic giving makes this a much easier task. Anyone who has ever supported the Church financially recognizes they do it as stewards of the gifts God has first given to them; and also in recognition that it is necessary for the success of the mission of the Church that they give something back.

Most of us want to be good stewards but let's face it, we don't always do as much as we plan or discern through prayer because we have so many distractions and competing interests for our finances. The normal pace of our lives can thwart even the best of intentions. Our stewardship can change from week to week and it is hard to get back on track. You might be running late and can't find your envelopes, or realize you don't have a check or cash with you on Sunday. In addition to these common problems, there are occasions when we are not able to attend Mass due to illness, travel, extended vacations or last minute emergencies. Electronic giving will help keep you committed to the planned, prayerful giving that you intended, and keep it as a priority in your life. I can tell you from my own personal experience it works. I have been personally using planned giving through bank electronic transfers since long before I ever entered the seminary. I learned as a financial planner that most of us become better stewards when we don't have to make decisions at the last moment.

Many of the Catholic Churches across America have started to offer electronic giving. Our Diocese has provided us information on this service and encourages it as a tool for improved stewardship. Our pastoral council, finance council and school board support this program and encourage its use in the parish and the school. After careful consideration and input from our stewardship committee and other leadership groups, I am pleased to be able to present this program to you. Whether you are a seasoned steward or are recognizing the importance of stewardship for the first time, I ask you first to take the time to pray that the Holy Spirit direct you to be faithful in supporting the mission of the Church, and responsive to the gifts God has given you. May God continue to abundantly bless you and your family.

Enclosed with this letter is a sign up brochure that provides additional information and answers to some frequently asked questions. If you enroll in this new program, you will receive new contribution cards that you can put in the weekly offertory indicating you are participating in the electronic giving program. You will also continue to receive envelopes for our special second collections.

If you need additional assistance, please stop by the parish office and we will help you sign up or answer any additional questions you might have.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Fr. Mike