



Stewardship

in Motion

May 2008

Mary's Month of May



May is considered to be the season of the beginning of new life. In the church, across many nations and cultures through history, May has traditionally been dedicated to Mary.

There are many ways for a parish to

celebrate May as Mary's month. Often churches have a daily recitation of the rosary. Some include the crowning of Our Lady's statue. May crowning became popular in the United States, especially prior to Vatican II. This practice continues in many parishes today. A statue of Mary is honored with a wreath of blossoms to indicate Mary's virtues, virtues that were to be imitated by the faithful. The important thing is that Mary be honored in a special way.

On May 31st the church calendar celebrates the Commemoration of the Visitation. When Mary heard that her elderly cousin, Elizabeth, was expecting a child, she hurried to help her. Mary's service brought Christ to the home of Zechariah and Elizabeth.

As you enjoy seeing the flowers blooming and the earth springing back to life after a long cold winter's rest, let the month of May be a season of new spiritual life and a time of re-dedication and renewal for you and your family. ■

"Bicycling with God"

At first I saw God as my observer, my judge, keeping track of the things I did wrong, so as to know whether I merited Heaven or Hell when I die. He was out there, sort of like the President. I recognized his picture when I saw it, but I didn't really know him.

Later on, it seemed as though life was rather like a bike ride, but it was a tandem bike and I noticed that God was in the back helping me pedal. I don't know just when it was that He suggested we change places, but life has not been the same since. Life with God in the "driver's seat" made life very interesting!

When I had control, I knew the way. It may have seemed boring but it was predictable. It was the shortest and safest distance between two points. But when He took the lead, He knew delightful but challenging long cuts, up mountains and through rocky places and at breakneck speeds; it was all I could do to hang on! Even when I thought it looked like madness, He said "Pedal."

I worried and was anxious and asked, "Where are you taking me?" He laughed and didn't answer and I started to learn to trust. I forgot my predictable life and entered into the "adventure". When I'd say "I'm scared", He'd lean back and touch my hand.

He took me to people with gifts that I needed; gifts of healing, acceptance and joy. They gave me their gifts to take on my journey; actually, I mean God's and my journey. We were off again and He said

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BICYCLING WITH GOD

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"Give the gifts away; they are extra baggage and too much weight." So I did; to the people we met and I found that in giving, I received and still our burden was light.

I did not trust Him at first, in control of my life. I thought He'd wreck it but He knows "bike secrets", knows how to make it bend to take sharp corners, jump to clear high obstacles and fly to shorten scary passages. I am learning to shut up and pedal in the strangest places and I'm beginning to enjoy the view and the cool breeze on my face with my delightful and "constant companion".

And...when I am sure I just can't do any more, He just smiles and says "PEDAL■"



Electronic-Giving

"People who would give us \$20 or \$25 a year, now give us \$10 a month." The Chronicle of Philanthropy quoted the director of development for a charity in a story about donations made by automatic withdrawals from bank accounts. Even small charities are using this method to increase donations. The expectation is for this method of giving to increase "as more Americans start to pay their rent or other expenses through automatic bank account deductions or credit card charges."

There are two things a parish should do when offering this option. Since some people felt uncomfortable not putting anything in the offering during Mass, one parish printed a card kept in the pews: "I faithfully gave my offering electronically." All one has to do is put this in the offering basket. Each Sunday the ushers make sure each pew has at least one or two cards for the next Sunday. The card also advertises the idea.

Second, putting something in the offering each week is a way for parents to teach their children about stewardship and generosity. Parishes should offer some alternatives for

parents who use automatic payment of contributions.

Rather than thinking of E-Giving like paying a bill, one pastor said, "We use direct withdrawal to pay things that are really central to our lives. Why not put God in that category?" And why not make giving as convenient as possible?

If your parish provides for automatic withdrawal, consider "Electronic Giving" as an efficient, helpful way to make your offertory gifts. If your parish does not currently offer this option, encourage your parish's financial officer to seek information on how this option can help enhance your parish's stewardship fulfillment■

