

Seiler Stewardship Talk

Greg and Diane Seiler
October 18, 2026

Good morning. We usually go to the eight o'clock Mass, so for those of you who don't know us, I'm Greg Seiler. And I'm his wife, Diane. And I would say something: if you cannot hear us in the back, would you just mind raising your hand, and we'll make adjustments, either one of us.

Father asked us to make a comment about what stewardship means to us. Diane and I no longer take for granted the stewardship of the generations before us here at St. Peter's and throughout the entire Wichita Diocese. We've been parishioners of the Wichita Diocese our entire lives, with the exception of fifteen years, and we want to tell you what it was like to not have what the stewardship in this diocese offers.

We were both born and raised here in the Wichita area, Greg at St. Joe's and myself here at St. Peter's. We were both active in our parishes, our Catholic youth organizations. We actually met through CYO. We were married here at St. Peter's in what is now Dominic Hall.

I finished veterinary school, and none of the veterinarians in the area were looking for somebody to hire. I took a job with a professor that I knew in veterinary school, and he had started a new practice in the mountains of Virginia, the Blue Ridge Mountains. Gorgeous. It was on the western part of the state. Washington, D.C., and the politicians were on the eastern side of the state. Neither side claimed each other. But it was a practice in a town called Galax. It was about the size of Derby.

We were in the middle of the southern Bible Belt. So when we left this area, we were driving into our new hometown. There was a cathedral-sized church that greeted you on the right side of the highway. It was the First Baptist Church, and it was the largest church in town, which was a culture shock for us growing up here in west Sedgwick County.

We searched and found the Catholic church in the area, which would become our home. St. Joseph Catholic Parish was a simple, A-frame church, seven miles outside of town, on the hillside, tucked in the trees. We were a mission parish to another parish, St. Mary's, in Wytheville, which was an hour away. So we shared our priest. Our priest came to our parish for one Mass a week, and that was Sunday morning at 11:30 a.m. So we didn't have much choice. It was a decision for us, for that Mass.

That first Sunday, we were going into Mass, and the priest was greeting everybody coming into Mass. He saw us, and he asked where we were visiting from. I told him, I said, Father, we just moved here, so we're going to be new parishioners, but we come from Kansas. He was excited, and so he immediately got the church book out, and he signs us up as new parishioners before Mass. That took us a little bit of time, so it was time to start Mass, and so we celebrated Mass. As we're coming out of Mass, and we haven't met anybody yet, Father says, would I run for parish council next week? They were kind of desperate for some help,

and Father in particular.

Father Tony [surname unclear], and he was actually from Great Bend, Kansas, was the priest. But in the next few weeks, he got moved, and we received our own priest. His name was Father Merritt Jones, and he lived here at our parish at St. Joseph's. But then he also acquired two other mission parishes that were about an hour away. So we shared him.

Our parish family was small. It was a core of twenty to forty people, consisting of retired couples who had moved to the area and younger families who were also transplants to the area, so not a lot of native Catholics. Greg and I realized that we needed to get involved because we were so used to having so much here that we knew we needed to help to have that there.

So I began helping with religious education of the preschoolers and grade schoolers. I decorated the church and made banners for the liturgical seasons, and our group of young mothers and women organized potluck meals for social time after Masses. Greg taught religious education to the four high schoolers that were part of our church and did maintenance with another parishioner.

As I started veterinary practice, there were three questions I had to answer for every client that I met. They would hear me speak, and my accent, of course, didn't belong. So the first question is, where did you come from? And I said, well, I come from Kansas. I grew up on a farm in Kansas, which actually turned out to be a good thing because they thought I might well be able to know something about livestock, given the amount of livestock here in our state.

And then the second question: how did you end up here? So then I would explain that, because they don't get a lot of outsiders that show up there, not that move there anyway. But the third question would always come: which church do you go to? And I would say, well, we go to St. Joseph's Catholic Church out at Woodlawn. And then the conversation ended.

It was actually good that Diane and I both had jobs where we helped people. She took X-rays at the local hospital, and I, of course, being a veterinarian, was always helping with some sick animal or herd or something. So, in the eleven years we were there, we got to know a lot of people really fast, and we essentially became accepted outsiders.

Now, I never spoke about my Catholic faith there at all, but I worked hard. The other two veterinarians in the practice, we all worked very hard to do our best for their animals and for their operations. I mean, it was day and night, and they had never had veterinarians who helped them at night there.

But the one thing they remembered, when the day came when they knew we were going to be considering moving back to Kansas, they remembered that we were Catholic. They knew we were moving back to what they would call their kinfolk. That's a good thing, because kinfolk were very important to the mountain people there. So the most common statement that I would hear, as they knew they might be talking to me for the last time, they would say, you know, you Catholics aren't bad at all. And I didn't know I was bad to begin with. We were bad

to begin with, okay? Exactly.

So the time came for us to make our move back home, and with that brought three children. It also brought a profound realization of the gift of faith and foundation that we have here. The foundation laid by the generations before us of Catholic faith and education is not to be taken lightly. We and our three boys were immediately given an opportunity to be part of it. St. Peter's had all we needed.

Greg and I had a young family and had committed ourselves to starting a business from the ground up. The stewardship model of this diocese gave us the opportunity to give our talents and our time and treasure. That ratio changed from the beginning to, say, now, for our lives. And it will change over the course of everybody's lives. We encourage all to share your talents, your time, and treasure as your lives allow. You will be blessed.

Our two older sons, Adam in Texas, Blake in Virginia, have their children in Catholic schools, and they talk often of how this diocese and St. Peter's model of stewardship serves the parishioners and is one of a kind in the nation. They don't have it available where they are, but they strive to have their kids in the Catholic school systems where they are. Our youngest son, Garrett, is here with his family in St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish.

Diane and I continue our stewardship so the next generation has what we had for our family here at St. Peter's. This diocese and St. Peter's have benefited immensely from the talent and the time of our builders, our finance people, our teachers, all our parish organizations, from the Altar Society to the Knights of Columbus, and especially the volunteers that step up and help just to get it done.

Each generation's stewardship is primarily for the next generation. Those who have never lived outside the Wichita Diocese cannot really appreciate what the generations of stewardship in this diocese does for the Catholic faith of future generations. We thank you very much.