

STEWARDING OUR GIFTS: CHARITABLE ESTATE PLANNING



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I have only met one person who liked to think about death. Specifically, his own death.

My first pastor growing up — who we lovingly called "Fr. Rosy" — lived up to his cheerful name. Always smiling, he was a big presence as he entered the room. How surprised I was as a teenager to find out that he had a *coffin* in his office. Propped up in the corner, a simple wooden casket sat open. And not just any casket — it was *his* casket.

He must have seen my face many times as he once again laughed and explained that it reminded him that he is on this earth on God's time. His life, he said, was a gift, and staring at a reminder of his mortality every day kept him humble in the midst of pastoring one of the largest parishes in St. Louis.

So, with Fr. Rosy's great spirit in mind, I'd like to share with you today a bit about charitable estate planning, also known as planned giving.

First, I'd like to urge everyone — if you have not already done so — to create a will. If you do not want the state to decide who gets your assets and when, you need a plan for how your assets will be distributed upon your death. A will allows you to make those decisions in advance of your passing, allowing you to leave the legacy that you have created.

Through your will and related documents, you will leave a legacy for your family, in some way. Sometimes that is in family heirlooms or financial gifts. You can also leave a legacy for your favorite charity or charities.

Bequests

What are you passionate about? How can you leave a legacy after you are gone that enlivens those passions? Our community has had several parishioners over the years leave gifts to the Newman Center — either a specific dollar amount or a percentage of their estate.

Especially if you have minor children or other family members to care for, it may seem daunting to set aside some funds for charity. Talk with your attorney and financial planner as there are many ways to set up your estate where you can ensure that your loved ones are fully taken care of and the residuary estate can be gifted to a charity or charities of your choice. If you do choose to include gifts for nonprofits, it is very important to use the organization's legal name and FEIN number. For instance, instead of saying "Newman," you'll want to list "St. Thomas More Newman Center (non-profit corporation FEIN #43-0810541) in Columbia, Missouri."

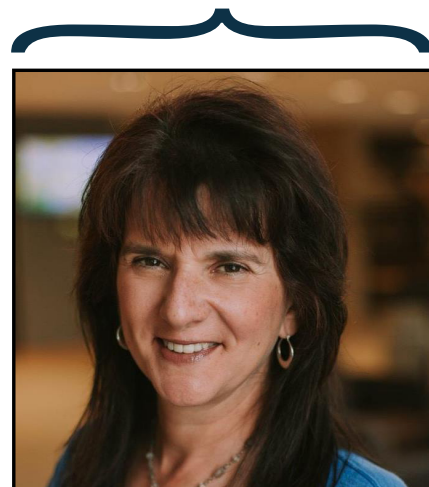
If you do decide to include the parish or any other organization in your will — even if it is on a contingent basis — it is very helpful to notify the charity in advance so that they can know of your intentions for the gift and thank you properly.

Beneficiary or Contingent Beneficiary

Another way to make a big difference is to name a charity as the beneficiary or contingent beneficiary on your life insurance, retirement plan, or IRA. Changing or adding a beneficiary is generally a very simple task and can be done by contacting the provider of your plan.

Although you may feel uncomfortable sharing your intentions with a charity prior to your passing, it is truly a gift to know that someone cares deeply enough about an organization to remember them in your estate. Regardless of the anticipated gift amount (which will most likely grow or diminish before your passing), the true gift is the legacy which you wish to leave. To acknowledge these gifts, Newman has established the "Cor ad Cor Circle" to recognize all those in our faith community who have decided to leave a legacy at the Newman Center. Although all members do have the option to remain anonymous, this giving circle not only recognizes the blessings of its members, but also stands as witness to others of the possibilities of leaving a legacy at Newman.

Like Fr. Rosy, I hope we can all remember and appreciate that our life is provided by the Lord and remain truly humble to our call to return our gifts to the Lord.



"St. Thomas More has been and continues to be "family" to me, as it was to my late husband, Dave Jonassen. I look forward to being at Mass during the week and on weekdays to take part in a liturgy I love, and to be fed not only by the Eucharist, but also by the Body of Christ in the Newman Community. I'm including St. Thomas More in my estate planning in the hopes my contribution will help support others as Newman has supported me and my husband."

Rose Marra
Newman Parishioner

For more information, contact the Development Office by calling 573.449.5424 x205 or by emailing joann@comonewman.org.