

***Juicy Fruit Stewardship**
By Mark Roberti
Director of Stewardship, Heartland Parishes of Ellis County

One of the best stewardship homilies I've ever heard was given by Fr. Frank Grinko, OFM Cap, to the students at Holy Family Elementary School.

Fr. Frank, while he was in Hays, was the homilist most loved by the children at Holy Family. At each school Mass he celebrated, he selected one class -- by drawing from a deck of card -- to participate in a "question and answer" type homily. The treat for this day, a five-pack of Juicy Fruit, went to each one of the approximately eighteen kids in one of the third grade classes.

Fr. Frank explained that he had given the gum to them, it was theirs. They didn't do anything to earn it. He gave it to them simply because he loved them. He wanted them to have it.

The homily then turned into a little math quiz that impressed me immensely. "How many pieces are in each pack?" he asked. "Five," they responded. "Then, what percentage of each pack is one stick?" he asked. "Twenty percent! twenty percent!" they responded. My jaw dropped. In the third grade, these children knew percentages!

"Very good!" said Fr. Frank. "Now, fold one piece, and tear it in half. What percentage of the whole pack is one-half of one piece? "Ten percent," several kids yelled out. "Very good, I'm impressed!" said Fr. Frank. Now I have only one thing that I'm going to ask of you. I want you to give one-half of one stick, or ten percent of the pack of gum that I have given you, to someone else whom you don't know. It can't be a friend, it can't be a relative. It has to be somebody you don't know very well or, maybe, don't like very much. Will you do that?" he asked. Some said, "yes," others nodded. I sensed less enthusiasm.

Fr. Frank then went on to explain what stewardship was all about. Everything we have, God has given us... for free. But in his generosity, God also wants us to be generous to others. It is very pleasing to Him, that we would imitate Him in His generosity. Not only does He enjoy giving to us, He gets "extra" enjoyment out of seeing us give to others. "Do you understand that?" he asked. They nodded.

"Okay," he said. Is there anyone who would like to give the *other* half of that one piece to somebody who would want it? I have given you all five sticks free -- you didn't have to do anything to earn it -- and I'm only asking

you to give away half of one stick. But is there anyone here willing to give more than his or her ten percent?

One little girl raised her hand. The rest remained quiet.

Therein lies the human condition, I thought to myself. Due to original sin, we gravitate toward selfishness. Taking is so easy, giving can seem so hard.

Stewardship is for those who seek to rise above the human condition. It is for those who seek to truly understand, emulate, and share in God's loving and generous nature.

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