

October 21, 2008

To the Editor:

The lead article in the October 16 issue of The Georgia Bulletin, “Archdiocese Impacted by Year 2 of Strategic Planning: Working Groups Advise Archbishop in Four Key Areas,” contains the following comment under DISCIPLESHIP, “. . . the people of the archdiocese make it vibrant, but along with that comes challenges. What is being called discipleship encourages Catholics to support the future of parishes, schools and the archdiocese. And after months of review, the committee reported the mantra of ‘time, talent and treasure’ is out of date and ‘is not resonating with people today.’ “

As a member of the Stewardship Council of St. Thomas the Apostle Church in Smyrna, this comment makes me wonder where we go from here, given that the Archdiocese “2009 Parish Stewardship Resource Manual” contains the words “time, talent and treasure” and exhorts us to use this theme as we create informative printed material, pulpit announcements, and other publicity to energize our annual parish stewardship drive and support the Archbishop’s Annual Appeal. If nothing else, it seems to be poor timing to publish an article which denigrates the time-honored phrase of “time, talent and treasure” at the very moment that we are launching our annual appeal to our parishes for financial support and active participation in our ministries. What would the Archdiocesan Planning Committee have us substitute for “time, talent and treasure” in order to create “resonation” amongst the faithful at this important time in our year, especially in view of the recent upheaval in banking and the stock market and the associated financial uncertainty? It is one thing to be critical of an existing process, but quite another to offer constructive alternatives with known value or effectiveness.

Are we now entering a new era of “political correctness” when it will no longer be fashionable to actually dare to ask Catholics to support our Church with their time, skills and financial resources? What would be an acceptable substitute for key words or phrases? Are we still to advocate “stewardship” or is the new buzz-word to be *discipleship*? Tithing, in particular, has not always been a popular tenet of our Catholic faith. That does not mean, however, that it should not exist, nor be denied the support of those who wish to promote stewardship among the faithful. One of the strengths of the Church through the ages has been that it has not sought to adopt what is easy or popular, but has steadfastly adhered to what God wants for us. Let’s not “throw out the baby with the bath water.” This report makes me wonder who are the members of the Archdiocesan Planning Committee and upon what facts or evidence did they base their above statement about “time, talent and treasure”? What are their alternative suggestions for effectively promoting stewardship in good times, as well as bad (as exist currently)?

Let us hope they know what they are talking about and will be able to come up with a new statement about stewardship/discipleship that will “resonate” throughout the Archdiocese of Atlanta.

Yours in Christ, Roger A. Meyer, M.D.

