

## **Maureen Tippen Witness Talk January 2015**

Good evening. My name is Maureen Tippen. I have been a member of this parish community for 21 years. I am honored and humbled to be asked to speak about Christian Stewardship. Gifts and talents of stewardship can find you in many ways if you listen quietly, it can find you.

My quiet call began many years ago as a high school student at Pontiac Catholic High School. It was the 70's, a time of change in society and education. I was privileged to have a teacher and role model who decided to take our religion class out of the classroom. The elective religion class was called "The Beatitudes." Sr. Martha encouraged us to live the Beatitudes as we learned about them. Hence, my first real commitment to service. Our class of high school students provided service to different populations in need. I chose a placement in an inner city school tutoring reading to underserved children. Sr. Martha's risk taking idea of requiring students to get out of the traditional classroom did result in living the Beatitudes; I continued with tutoring well after the semester ended.

Service and social justice has remained part of my life since that first experience and I have much gratitude of my early exposure in life. This has enabled me to give and receive God's gifts in many ways through ministering to underserved populations.

I don't consider myself a person with many talents per se of special abilities. I am a registered nurse and teach nursing as my career choice where I have been blessed to be part of many people's lives in health, sickness, and death. The gift of my profession has called me to ministry in Christian service to provide health care to underserved populations internationally.

The gift of time has been my biggest sacrifice. For me, time, like health, is immeasurable in having and holding on to. It is truly a treasure. Life is busy, organizing medical missions abroad while raising a family and working is always exhausting. There are times when I say, how did I do all that? And continue to ask God for strength and fortitude to continue. My husband and children have also sacrificed: my time away from the family, financial resources, not to mention a chaotic and messy house full of medical supplies each mission.

Next month will be my 20<sup>th</sup> year travelling to the Dominican Republic. The parish has supported me every year and I am grateful beyond words. Reflecting on the time I have spent not only in the Dominican Republic but in India, Cambodia, Kenya, and Peru is the presence of God and God's work and how it has affected my life. I am again able to live the Beatitudes. I have been blessed to give my time and talent to the poor in spirit, the meek, and those who hunger and thirst.

While witnessing poverty, unmet health needs, and social injustice is very difficult, I have been able to witness God's work by seeing other people's time and dedication to providing for the underserved. I call it ordinary people doing extraordinary things. Last May I was in Peru working with the Jesuits to set up a medical mission for this May. I was working with a Jesuit priest to develop small community centers in rural villages so the elderly could have a meal daily. While Peruvian culture would normally provide this for their family members, the rural area he serviced was impacted by a terrorist group called "The Shining Path" in the 1970's, impacting the region as a whole generation of young people were either killed or disappeared. The impact of this a generation later is in no one is present to care for the elders.

As we visited these mountainous villages via Padre Juan Luis' pickup truck he stopped everywhere and picked up people who were walking; soon the truck could barely travel as there

were so many people. The impact on me though was something more than this simple act of kindness. It was in the eyes of an adolescent boy who tried to give Padre some money for the ride. Although I could not understand the conversation completely as it was in Spanish, I did not need to. God's presence was there in the eyes of the boy and Padre as they laughed and he thanked the boy but politely refused his money. I have many of these experiences of witnessing God in others; this is my joy and fulfillment I receive by ministering.

While not everyone can travel to international countries to do this type of work, I would urge you to think about something you may have never done before and take a risk. Many times we do not know our talents until we try something new, and out of our comfort zone. Check the bulletin on how you can get involved.

Twenty years ago when I decided to volunteer on a medical mission, I had no idea what I was getting into, or that I would still be doing this work twenty years later, or that I would have my two adult daughters traveling with me next month; one as a translator and the other a nurse to share in the joy of Christian service. God called me and for this I am thankful. Listen quietly and this can happen.

Thank you for listening to my testimony.