Imagine for just a minute that you were given $86,400 on a debit card. The money is yours to do with whatever you want. The only catch is that the balance does not carry over to the next day. Whatever money you don’t spend is lost. Whatever is left at the end of the day is simply deleted from your account. Then, the next morning your account is again credited with $86,400. So, what would you do? Would you buy a car? Would you get new clothes every day? Would you give it away...maybe to your best friend, your family, your school, your favorite priest? Maybe you would give it to the poor and those most in need. My guess is that you would quickly figure out what to do with the new wealth you would have each day. Remember, you would have to spend the whole thing each day. I guess there would be endless ways that you come up with to spend the money.

Having that much money every day could be an overwhelming thing. We would have to figure out how to spend it all. 86,400 is a big number. It also happens to be the number of seconds we are given each day to live. God invests 86,400 seconds in each one of us every day. Every night, God writes off as loss whatever of this time we have wasted or not used well. There are no balances of time that get carried over from one day to the next. Time cannot be saved for a rainy day. Each day a new 86,400 seconds is poured into our account. Each night what remains is lost and gone forever. If we fail to make use of today’s deposit, the loss is ours.

The lesson is that we have to spend our time wisely. We need to spend our time on “things” that will hold their value from day to day, month to month, year to year. Regardless of what we have to do day in and day out, we need to spend our time wisely.

My dear members of the Cardinal Gibbons community, we gather today for the annual Stewardship Mass. We come together as a community each year to reflect on the common call that we have to be good stewards of the gifts given to us. Today we also recognize those members of our school community who have served this institution in extraordinary ways. Some are teachers who have given 30-25-15 years of their life to the betterment of students through Catholic Education. We also recognize alumni who have stood out since their time at Gibbons and continue to contribute to the betterment of our local community and this school. We recognize too parents who have given completely of themselves in service to our school and its mission. It is about looking at who you are and what you have and what you can do and placing those gifts at the service of others.

We celebrate this mass in the season of Lent this is a time of year that calls us to reflect on our individual selves. We are asked to look and see how we can be better people. We are asked to get rid of things like selfishness and pride in our lives so that we focus on the other and recognize that we are not the most important thing in the world and that our lives are not about us.

Today in the gospel Jesus talks about accepting human praise all of the time. He talks about how people look a lot of times for the recognition of other people for the work they do. He then goes on to talk about just accepting the praise that comes from God alone. This is the praise that you and I too must seek. We must do what we do in the church, in this school and on behalf of others not so that we will be recognized by others but by God. But you are
probably thinking that one of the reasons we have this mass is to recognize people. True. But these folks did not seek this recognition. We decided to recognize them. Why? Because of their selfless service. Because they have done good on behalf of others. We recognize them simply because of who they are and because they freely give of themselves without seeking anything in return save the satisfaction of knowing they have helped and inspired someone else.

I think today is a day for us to think about how we use those 86,400 seconds we have each day. And in Lent we should take time at the end of each day to see if we have wasted the time given to us. We need to look back and see if we have been good stewards of God’s many gifts to us. How we use our time and what we do with our lives is important. Perhaps that is a goal that all of us can set for our self this Lent...thinking about what we will do with what we have been given. Here are some practical things to think about in this area:

- First: Seize every opportunity to show God’s love through your random acts of kindness. We are in this building every day with 1300 other people. There are countless ways to commit random acts of kindness...helping someone who drops a book, holding a door for someone, throwing out someone else’s trash, helping a teacher with something in class, doing simple things while expecting nothing back.
- Second: Be present with the people in your life, especially your family. Often we can run through life, through our day without ever stopping to appreciate the people in our life. We can become very caught up in the tasks in front of us or the work we have to do that fail to simply appreciate the people around us. Some things that we can do to better appreciate people like our family members is to simply offer to help. Practice saying “yes.” How many times a day do you say “yes” to your parents and how many times a day do you say “no.” Trying counting it up one day.
- Third: Seek opportunities to participate in your parish or in this school community. How can you become more involved at Gibbons? How can you be of greater service to your parish? Are there things that you have learned at Gibbons that could help your parish? On this note one great thing that has happened recently is that Mr. Rogosich has been taking students to their former middle school to talk to 7th graders about what they can expect at Gibbons. It is a way of giving back to our middle schools and strengthening our relationships with them.
- Fourth: Share Your Treasure. It is important that we give sacrificial gifts to those in need. Each year we as a school community do this through our support of the Penny Challenge which supports various charitable causes. Something like the cost of a movie ticket or a pizza can help to prevent a childhood disease or build a house for someone with nowhere to live.
- And finally: maybe choose to do some things to help your own spiritual life. Do you pray every day? How many times to walk by the chapel without simply stopping in to say a 5 second prayer? Maybe you could even things about coming to morning mass in the chapel once a week at 7:15. I am not the happiest person that early in the morning but I do my best to lead our worship at an early hour. Perhaps you can decide to come and see how God may inspire you that day.
We can spend our days on so many “things.” We can get caught up in all of the externals of life. We can just go through life trying to cross things off of our “to do” list. So maybe we need to look at some other “things” like the ones I mentioned. If we spend our time on these “things,” we will have no regrets. These “things” will hold their value. In fact, their value will increase and mean more and more to us as time passes. Someday we will look back on the time we spent on these “things” and say, “That was time well spent.”

So today we think about time what we do with it. We think about the time the honorees have given: time in the classroom, time in this community, time for the good of the school. We think about the time that we have each and every day to make a difference in our world. What will you do with those 86,400 seconds you have each day. Granted, some of it is scheduled for you but you have a good portion of each day that you can schedule for yourself. You can use that time to benefit others….and not so you will be praised but simply because it is what we are supposed to do. Life is not about us. Life is about what we do with “life.” So think about all of these things. I hope that this is what you can take from this Stewardship Mass today. 86,400 seconds….how will you use that time today?

Portions adapted from: Msgr. Michael Schleupner