

# The Dimensions of Paulinian Stewardship

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## ABSTRACT

**In this treatise, the dimensions of Paulinian stewardship as a way of caring for God's creation are expounded and analyzed. This is ensued by a critical review on the Epistles of St. Paul in explaining the concept of stewardship as a calling, leading by example, and a way of life. Moreover, as stewardship is equated with the Paulinian core value of community, the attitude, and the action of a steward's life of service to others and God are highlighted.**

**Keywords:** Calling, Caring God's Creation, Leading by Example, Paulinian, Stewardship, Way of Life

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Man is the summit of God's creation (Genesis 1:27, NIV). However, this implies that man is deemed not equal with God. Man, being an image God means that he is given the capacity to think and to will. God has also gifted man with the gift of creation. Thus, these make human beings accountable and responsible to God. They are expected to steward or manage them for God, who owns and has given them with purpose. This is a sacred trust and responsibility.

## II. PAULINIAN STEWARDSHIP AS A CALLING

Being stewards of creation is a calling. In his letter to the Romans (8:19-21, NIV), St. Paul relates the connection of creation to man. Moreover, in Galatians (5:13, NIV), St. Paul points out that the relation of man to creation is grounded on responsibility.

Community is one of the Paulinian core values. It calls every Paulinian to be a *"responsible family members and citizens concerned with building communities, promotion of people, justice and peace and the protection of the environment"* (SPUP Student Handbook, 2011). It is the vision of every Paulinian that as one of their core values, it affirms their being, their call, and their fulfillment. It always impels them to *"action working through love"* (Galatians 5:6, NIV). Thus, stewardship is a calling directed to the Paulinian community, as a whole. St. Paul explained that each one has the responsibility and a role to play – like the human body (Corinthians 12:20, 25, NIV). This leads to a collective awareness that everything belongs to God and human beings are called to be stewards.

## III. PAULINIAN STEWARDSHIP AS LEADING BY EXAMPLE

What is Paulinian Stewardship? Paulinian stewardship anchors itself on the idea that men are to do good not only for themselves but also for others (1 Corinthians 10:23-24, NIV). St. Paul recognizes the fact that the purpose of doing everything is always for the good – not only for oneself but for others as well (Richardson, 1994). Thus, it is essential to consider that one's action characterized by goodness is relevant to the importance of others. Man's development and fulfillment always take place in the presence and with others. St. Paul when he heeded to God's call for him to be his apostle totally changed his life from being self-centered to others centered (Eastman, 2017). His concern and love for others is manifested in the way he suffered for them, yet he says: *"it makes me happy to suffer for you"* (Colossians 1:24, NIV). St. Paul knew in his heart, that love is always the basis for doing everything that is good (1 Corinthians 13:7, NIV). Thus, Paulinian stewardship springs from goodness that is born out of love.

How does a Paulinian practice Care for Creation? St. Paul gives some advice on the importance of leading by example: *"We work to take care of ourselves so we would be an example to follow"* (2 Thessalonians (3:9, NIV). Care for creation is already imbedded in man's hearts. It is preserving and conserving the gift of God to humanity. God has given the best gift of nature to his best creation, with the command to subdue

it. However, God's command to subdue the earth is not to dominate it. The notion to subdue the earth is not on the pretext of willful egoism because the destruction of creation is also man's destruction.

What can Paulinians do? St. Paul gives an answer however, it really requires sustained strength and grace to do it as he encouraged everyone to be an example (1 Timothy 4:12, NIV). Through concerted efforts, Paulinians become models for all. Paulinians care because they have been cared. Their assurance is St. Paul's very own words: "*Be steadfast and persevering... You know that your toil will not go fruitless*" (1 Corinthians 15:58, NIV).

#### IV. PAULINIAN STEWARDSHIP AS A WAY OF LIFE

Everything belongs to God. Thus, every that man owns is entrusted by God. He permits the use of His creation as a means for the benefit of all. St. Paul affirms when human beings did not bring anything into the world and will not bring anything out from the world (1 Timothy 6:7, NIV). It is the manifestation of the manner man live his life of stewardship (Sanders, 2015). St. Paul describes that the heart of the stewardship is servanthood of which being trustworthy characterized a true servant and steward (1 Corinthians 4:1, NIV).

A steward serves God. As God's servant, the steward's life and loyalty belong to God. He is responsible within the family of God and a vital part of loyal stewardship including the usage of all the gifts of God in service to one another (Sanders, 2015). St. Paul in Ephesians (1:6, NIV) provides an assurance that God's bestows the necessary grace to the steward.

All Christians are called to stewardship – a life reflective of God's goodness. According to St. Paul, God's grace enriches the life of a steward (2 Corinthians 8:9, NIV). To fully appreciate being steward, it is necessary to anchor one's life to the truth of faith to continually live in appreciation of God's grace (Titus 1:7, NIV).

#### V. CONCLUSION

Paulinian stewardship finds fulfillment when priorities in life are changed and take on a new perspective. It is the recognition a life of service – for God and for others (Galatians (2:20, NIV). For St Paul, stewards need to keep on living and teaching by examples so that others may emulate them in life (1 Timothy 4:15-16, NIV).

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