

# Your faith is part of your legacy

*Do not store up treasures for yourself on earth, where the moth and wormwood destroy them and thieves can break in and steal them. But store up treasures for yourselves in heaven, where neither the moth nor wormwood destroys them and thieves cannot break in and steal. For wherever your treasure is, there will your heart be too. (Matt 6:19-21)*



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When doing estate planning, I often find that it can be difficult to draft into a legal document a client's personal story which includes a client's growth and experiences in their the walk of faith. In part this is because estate planning has traditionally been concerned only with the distribution of property accumulated during life and not with the legacy of a person's faith.

As I reflect on the great legacies of mankind, the Saints' lives strike at my heart more than anyone else because of what it meant to them to leave a legacy after having lived a life of heroic virtue.

Clearly the lives of the Saints teach me quite a bit about estate planning. Some of the greatest assets the Saints, Martyrs, Blesseds, and Apostles, left us was their living faith in God — their assertion of a personal belief and relationship in Christ and the life-long actions that followed. I can't help but think about someone like *Blessed Teresa of Calcutta*. Certainly the world knows her legacy. Or, *St. Maximilian Kolbe*, whose sacrifice of his life at a Nazi concentration camp, gave life and freedom to a father of a family for years to come.

Today, we usually only consider these examples of faith from a perspective of theology; but shouldn't we consider them as well from an estate planning perspective? Indeed, the treasure of every saint was their love for God and for their neighbor.

#### Passing on our Treasure

If your treasure is your relationship with your family and neighbors, built on love, forgiveness, truth, and sacrifice, which comes from God, then your children will inherit much more from you than property; they will have a memory of you as a good steward of the gifts which God freely gave you out of love.

So, what do you want to give as a gift to your children, grandchildren, spouse, Church, and neighbor? What is truly important to you?

I can tell you that in my practice, a simple way to capture your legacy of faith is to write a letter to your children often called an *Ethical Will* (because it is not considered to be a legally enforceable document). This type of document includes personal words and messages or even admonitions to loved ones.

Perhaps as well, create a DVD of your life in pictures and video footage that can make a long-lasting impression on generations to follow. Or, share your life's story by writing a journal that captures the memories of life-changing moments.

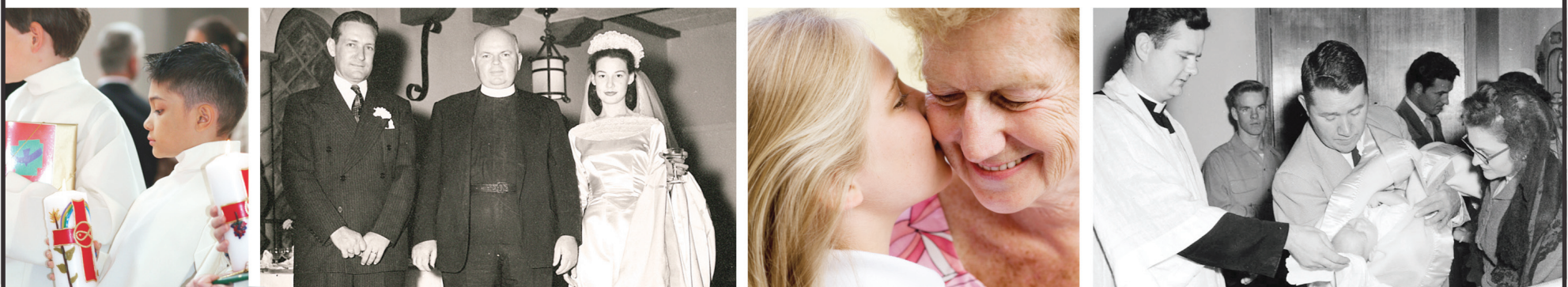
And when all is said and done, your faith will not be just a part of your legacy — it will be your only legacy.

*The Way Law Firm provides legal advice and representation in matters involving Estate Planning, Wills and Trusts, Probate, Elder Care, Special Needs Trusts, Business Succession Planning, Pet Care Guardianship, and End-of-Life Catholic planning. More information at [www.WayFirm.com](http://www.WayFirm.com).*



*The purpose of the Catholic Foundation is to build endowments that provide enduring resources to support the mission of the Church in the Diocese of Tucson.*

## Creating a Legacy Through Faith



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*Together we build an enduring legacy of faith.*