

Stewardship Design (front cover)

Bread and wine were the sacrificial offerings of the Old Covenant, as the “first fruits,” offered to God with thankful acknowledgement that everything comes from him. Today bread and wine still signify the goodness of creation and all that God gives us.

Only through the Church are these gifts of the first fruits brought to perfection as they are offered in praise to the Creator – through Jesus – “through Him, with Him, and in Him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all glory and honor are Yours Almighty Father, forever and ever. Amen.” Any human attempt to offer sacrifice to God is pointless unless in union with our Lord’s perfect sacrifice for our redemption.

We offer God the gifts of bread and wine in thanksgiving – fruit of the earth and the work of human hands. In offering the first fruits, we offer God all that we have, our very lives, as we offer to the Father what he has given us. Our gifts are joined with the perfect and ever-present sacrifice of Jesus. By the power of the Holy Spirit and the words of Jesus, this common bread and wine truly becomes the physical presence of Christ. The celebration of the Eucharist makes Christ’s sacrifice on the cross perpetual.

The Church, the Body of Christ, is united with Christ himself and is offered to the Father in the Eucharist. The sacrifice of Christ is also the sacrifice of the members of his “Body.” In receiving the Eucharist, we receive Christ himself, who has offered himself totally for us; and lovingly unites us with him. Every member of the Church is united in Christ, and with each other, because of this sacrament of love.

Upon hearing, “Body of Christ” each receiving member responds, “Amen.” By that response and the act of receiving, we say that we believe it so. Our simple gifts of bread and wine have been transformed into the physical presence of God himself and are offered back to us. By giving the first fruits to God, in union with Jesus’ total sacrifice, our gifts become holy and perfect and are returned back to us. By receiving the Eucharist, Christ himself lives in us – we receive Christ to share him with the world.

The Liturgical Celebration of the Eucharist is referred to as the “Mass” (*Missa*), because it ends with the priest sending each member of the body of Christ into the world (*missio*) to “go in peace to love and serve the Lord.” **A stewardship way of life is the application of the command “to go in peace to love and serve the Lord.”** And as our response indicates, we “love and serve” because we are grateful for all that God has done for us, “Thanks be to God!”

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Introduction to Stewardship

What is Stewardship?

Stewardship is a biblically-based concept which implores Christians to use what they have – money, time, talent and service – in such a way that it honors God as the Creator of all things visible and invisible and contributes in a conscious way to the building of God’s kingdom on earth. In imitation of the wise steward of the Gospel (Lk 12:42; 16:2), Christians ought to exercise a responsible administration over resources, personal and corporate, because these resources are ultimately not theirs but the Lord’s. The practice of stewardship, then, means that Christians forsake a self-aggrandizement and prefer instead a glorification of the One Who is over all, and an ardent attention to the common good. This is especially true when the rich, in whatever sense it may be applicable, are getting richer and at the expense of the poor or poorer. (Encyclopedic Dictionary and Biblical Reference Guide, page 113)

“Stewardship—A Way of Life” is a way of participating in the Church through our parish, and a way of bringing God into the center of our daily lives. This vocation is rooted in our Biblical tradition which reveals our relationship with God. God is the Creator and Giver of all gifts.

We are called to be “disciples of Christ.” This means that we are called to respond to Jesus’ teachings and way of life. We are responsible to carry on his mission by placing our resources of time, talent and treasure at the disposal of God. Our gifts are not to be used solely for own benefit, but to be shared with the living community of faith. This community of faith starts with our family – the domestic Church – then parish, diocese and the universal Church.

When we share our gifts, we really give back to God rather than giving away, because to give we must first own. Truth is, we own nothing; all that we have has been given to us by God to be cared for. All that we have is God’s, entrusted to our care – we are stewards of God’s gifts. We came into this world with nothing and leave with nothing. All that we have is on loan to us from God. That is why we call this “stewardship” because we

are only caretakers for God and we will be held accountable for how we care and share God's property.

Stewardship has to do with trusting God the Father to the extent that we trust as Jesus trusts and live as Jesus lives. This is a philosophy, not a program. It is an understanding of the heart, not the head. None of us will ever be able to convince another person to live a life of stewardship because it is truly a conversion experience. We can, however, share the personal experience of joy from living a life of stewardship. We can also express how life takes on new meaning, a sense of mission, vocation and gives new freedom as we strive to live a life of stewardship.

In a practical sense, we can create an environment, a parish culture that promotes a life of stewardship. This resource manual is designed to assist parish leaders to promote a stewardship way of life within the parish. It can assist the parish stewardship effort as an effective approach to motivate parishioners by inviting and involving every parish family to participate in the work of the Church. By responding to this invitation and becoming more involved in the parish, parishioners prayerfully offer themselves to the parish in time, talent and treasure. The stewardship philosophy emphasizes that each of us is accountable for the gifts God gives us and we have a responsibility to share those gifts with others by participating in the building of God's kingdom.

Within this resource manual, you will find helpful samples of needed stewardship communication materials used for the annual stewardship renewal and the yearlong stewardship education. These samples include a parish survey, internal stewardship communication, ministry catalogue, pastor's letters and homilies, lay witness talks, parish reports, bulletin announcements, prayers of the faithful and Scriptural references. All samples within this manual are loaded on the attached CD (MS Word) so that you can easily personalize your parish stewardship materials. Please keep in mind that these communication materials are only samples and intended to be used as a starting point for you to personalize according to your parish needs.

Pre-printed annual stewardship renewal materials are also available from Our Sunday Visitor. These materials include a stewardship poster and intention card and may be ordered by contacting Our Sunday Visitor (page 176).

Experiences in countless parishes across the country show that “Stewardship – A Way of Life” works well if the plan is followed without diluting the basic stewardship message. It is a parish-based “effort,” not a program; stewardship education requires effort, continual yearlong effort, to promote a stewardship way of life. This manual is designed to uphold the uniqueness of each parish in implementing a stewardship way of life at the parish level.

Often the results of a sound parish stewardship effort are dramatic. People respond once they understand this reasoned approach with its sound theological basis and Scriptural doctrine; God is our generous Creator and we are his stewards. Like all Catechism, the stewardship message needs to be frequent and continual. The annual stewardship renewal and ongoing yearlong efforts reinforces the message and assists continued growth in the number of people reached and the level of their response.

Parishioners who commit themselves to stewardship as a way of life experience a sense of increased ownership in parish life through the prayerful response of giving time and talent. This in turn leads to a greater awareness of responsibility, resulting in the parishioners’ planned, proportionate and generous commitment of treasure. The parish that is committed to stewardship as a way of life is likely to be more prayerful, more hospitable and more dedicated to serving others.

Theology of Stewardship

Stewardship is a fairly new term in the vocabulary of the modern American Catholic. Yet, the term, and concept, of stewardship is older than Christianity itself—dating back to the creation of the world in the book of Genesis. God is the source of all things and God gives his creation to human beings, who are made in his image and likeness. We are not made to be passive recipients, merely accepting and consuming God's gifts. To take these gifts for granted is an extreme misinterpretation of our role in a relationship with a loving Father. We are made, however, to be like God and share the gifts of his creation, just as God shares.

Stewardship defines our relationship with our Creator. Stewardship is an invitation to each of us to draw closer to God our Father with a prayerful response to ask: "What does God want to do through me?" The focus of stewardship is on the Giver—our loving Father, not on the gifts.

Jesus is the ultimate example of a Christian steward. Jesus lived a life one with God, living and acting as he kept his focus on God and God's will moment to moment. We, too, as Christian stewards are called to collaborate with God in his work of creation and re-creation throughout all of history.

Jesus shows us how to live as the image and likeness of God. To be like God is to be like Jesus—Christ-like. Jesus spent his entire earthly existence reliant on the Father and seeking to do the will of the Father. Are we not called to live the same?

Stewardship is an invitation, a call to vocation that is rooted in our Biblical tradition, which reveals our relationship with God. God is the Creator and Giver of all gifts. We are the caretakers, "the stewards," placed here to care for God's gifts. A good steward takes on the same Spirit of Jesus and lives as Jesus—always concerned about pleasing the Father. Always asking, "What would God have me do?"

Those who give of themselves to the building of God's kingdom, to the life and mission of the Church, are "disciples of Jesus." Being a disciple of Jesus means that we respond to the call of Jesus to follow his examples

and teachings. His way of life becomes our way of life. Stewardship constitutes a way of life that is both privileged and challenging. Becoming a disciple of Jesus leads naturally to a life of stewardship and results in intense joy.

Our American Bishops communicated this understanding of stewardship in their 1992 pastoral letter Stewardship: A Disciple's Response. "The life of a Christian steward models the life of Jesus. It is challenging and even difficult, in many respects, yet intense joy comes to those who take the risk to live as Christian stewards."

We are called to use our own gifts to participate in and support the Church's mission of proclaiming, teaching, serving, sanctifying; there are many opportunities to serve through God's Church. Each of us has the fundamental obligation that originates from our Baptism. The U.S. Bishops point out even Jesus' self-emptying is unique; it is within the power of disciples and a duty that they be generous stewards of the Church giving freely of their time, talent and treasure.

The U.S. Bishops' Pastoral Letter, Stewardship: A Disciple's Response, does not provide a formal definition of the word stewardship. Instead, the Bishops pose the question, "Who is a Christian steward?" Then they provide us with four characteristics that describe a Christian steward. The Bishops' pastoral letter on stewardship expresses a Christian steward as "one who receives God's gifts gratefully, cherishes and tends them in a responsible and accountable manner, shares them in justice and love with others, and returns them with increase to the Lord."

The first characteristic of a Christian steward is one who lives with gratitude. A Christian steward is "one who receives God's gifts gratefully." Gratitude presumes that we first acknowledge God as the Giver of all gifts – the true owner of all that we have and all that we are. A profound sense of gratitude to God provides us a true perspective of our reliance on God – as children of God and as Disciples of Christ.

The second characteristic of a Christian steward is one who lives with accountability. A good steward is "one who cherishes and tends God's gifts in a responsible and accountable manner." A true disciple knows that he, or she, will be held accountable for how all God's gifts have been managed or used. We are not solely responsible for what we do, or fail to

do, with the gift of life - our time, our talent, and our possessions. As disciples of Jesus, we are also very much responsible for proclaiming his Gospel and for building up his kingdom, and we will one day render an account of our stewardship of this awesome responsibility.

The third characteristic of a good steward is one who lives with generosity. The Bishops describe a Christian steward as “one who generously shares God’s gifts with others out of a profound sense of justice and love.” Generosity may be the most powerful attribute of a Christian steward because it impels us to live outside of ourselves – often in ways that seem to contradict our own interests. The Scriptures and the lives of the saints give us countless examples of disciples who lived a radical life of selflessness. Their lives were counter-cultural, and they pushed the extreme in following Christ by living generously and won true spiritual freedom and lasting joy.

The fourth characteristic of a Christian steward is one who gives back to the Lord with increase. Jesus’ parable about the stewards makes it clear that God wants us to take the gifts that we have been given and develop them – not just for our own sake, but also for the common good and the building of the kingdom. A Christian steward is called to be productive and to make a profound difference in the world.

Stewardship promotes a way of life that is both privileged and challenging. A stewardship way of life is one that identifies us as disciples of Christ, and being a disciple of Christ leads naturally to a life of stewardship. Stewardship is how we live after we claim to be a “Christian.”

The U.S. Bishops’ pastoral letter on stewardship invites all Catholics to invest themselves - time, talent and treasure - in the mission and ministries of the Church. This invitation is a challenge for each of us to live a life of gratitude, accountability, and generosity. A stewardship way of life is a way that truly seeks to live as a disciple of Jesus.

Stewardship is a conversion process to which all baptized Christians are called to experience. It is a lifestyle based on prayer and the recognition of how we are blessed by God throughout our lives. Stewardship calls each of us to commit ourselves to God and to live that commitment by becoming personally involved in the mission of God, through his Church, to the world. Stewardship challenges us to make conscientious decisions about our lives. Stewardship calls each of us to account for what God has given us,

not only for the sake of knowing how much we have and how God has blessed us, but also to know how much God is calling us to share what he has given us with others, and to invest his gifts in the building of his Church. In the end, as good stewards, we recognize that we must give God an accounting of how we cared and shared for the gifts that he has given us.

The U.S. Bishops underline three convictions in the pastoral letter on stewardship:

First, each baptized Christian is called to be disciple of Christ. This calling is challenging, it's difficult, and it requires a daily struggle. We cannot do it on our own and we need God's help; therefore, we must pray.

Second, we are called to a change of heart through an entire way of life. It is not just tithing. It is not just giving ten percent of our earnings; rather it is giving a proportionate amount and then being held accountable for what we do with the other proportion. This change of heart – conversion – requires us to be involved with the mission of Jesus. It is not just giving a percentage of our time; it is involving us completely in the mission of Jesus. We simply cannot spend time on a worthy parish project and then not be accountable with how we spend our relaxation, or entertainment, time. Stewardship identifies God as the source of all that I have, even every momentary breath. The Christian steward recognizes that each breath is a gift from God. All that we have in life results from God's abundant generosity and we need to recognize our reliance on him and thank him.

Third, God calls us to look at who we are and what we do with the gift of life. To ask: "what do I own, and what owns me?" Prayerfully consider - on the day you die, are you leaving your treasure or going to it?

There is more to living as Christians, than just calling ourselves Christians. To live as Christians means that we have responded to the call of Jesus to follow him and imitate his way of life. The imitation of Jesus is a stewardship way of life. Our Catechism teaches, "The ownership of any property makes its holder a steward of providence... Those who hold goods for use and consumption should use them with moderation, reserving the better part for guests, for the sick and the poor." (Catechism of the Catholic Church 2404 and 2405) In other words, we are caretakers of something that does not truly belong to us, and we have a responsibility

for how we use these gifts. In the end we must give an account to the One Who Provides – God.

The Bishops talk about a number of destructive “isms”: materialism, relativism, hedonism, individualism, consumerism, all of these exert a power influence on our society and make it more difficult for us to grow as disciples and good Christian stewards as we struggle to live out our lives according to God’s will.

The Bishops see themselves, and us, as Catholic citizens of a wealthy, powerful nation facing many questions about its identity and role in this century. We are members of a community of faith blessed with many human and material resources, yet often uncertain about how to sustain and use them.

A Christian steward has a deep understanding, an insight of a certain way of seeing life and all that life holds. This insight is a grace in which we can see God present and active in the works of creation, not only at the beginning of time, but moment to moment, throughout our lives in the here and now. This outlook of life is the outlook of a Christian steward.

A stewardship way of life is a set of values, a spirit that affects our entire life, not based on what we have, or do not have, rather, based on gratitude to God for what we have, and awareness that God expects something of us.

Scriptural References on Stewardship

Old Testament

“The land is the Lord’s, you are my tenants” (Lev 25:23).

“All Tithes of the land, whether in grain from the field or in the fruit from the trees, belong to the Lord, as sacred to Him” (Lev 27:30).

“Each year you shall tithe all the produce that grows in the field you have sown...so that the Lord, your God, may bless you in all that you undertake” (Dt 14:22, 14:29).

“The measure of your own free will offering shall be in proportion to the blessings the Lord, your God, has bestowed on you... No one shall appear before the Lord empty handed, but each of you with as much as he can give, in proportion to the blessings which the Lord, God has bestowed on you” (Dt 16:10, 16-17).

“When you have come into the land which the Lord, your God, is giving you as a heritage, and have occupied it and settled in it, you shall take some first fruits of the various products of the soil which you harvest from the land which the Lord your God gives you, and putting them in a basket... you shall go to the priest... (who will) set it in front of the altar of the Lord, your God” (Dt 26:1-4).

“But who am I, and who are my people, that we should contribute so freely? For everything is from You, and we only give You what we have received from You...O Lord our God, all this wealth that we have brought together to build You a house in honor of Your holy name comes from You and is entirely Yours” (1 Chron 29:14-16).

“God the sole owner of all of creation, the earth is the Lord’s and all its contents” (Ps 24:1).

“For every animal of the forest is mine and the cattle on a thousand mountains” (Ps 50:10).

“Honor the Lord with your wealth, with first fruits of all your produce; then will your barns be filled with grain, with new wine your vats will overflow” (Prov 3:9).

“One man is lavish yet grows still richer; another is too sparing; yet he is the poorer. He who confers benefits will be amply enriched, and he who refreshes others will himself be refreshed” (Prov 11:24).

“He who shuts his ears to the cry of the poor will also cry himself and not be answered” (Prov 21:13).

“He who gives to the poor will never want, but he who shuts his eyes will have many curses” (Prov 28:27).

“He who loves money shall never have enough” (Eccl 5:9).

“In generous spirit pay homage to the Lord, be not sparing of freewill gifts. With each contribution show a cheerful countenance, and pay your tithes in a spirit of joy. Give to the Most High as he has given to you, generously, according to your means. For the Lord is one who always repays and he will give back to you sevenfold” (Sir 35:7-10).

“The silver is mine and the gold is mine declares the Lord of hosts” (Hg 2:8).

“Dare a man rob God? Yet you are robbing me! And you say, ‘How do we rob you?’ In tithes and offerings! You are indeed accursed, for you, the whole nation, rob me. Bring the whole tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house, and try Me in this, says the Lord of Hosts. Shall I not open for you the floodgates of heaven, to pour down blessings upon you without measure?” (Mal 3:8-10).

New Testament

“Do not lay up for yourselves an earthly treasure. Moths and rust corrode; thieves break in and steal. Make it your practice instead to store up heavenly treasure, which neither moths nor rust corrode nor thieves break in and steal. Remember, where your treasure is, there your heart is also (Mt 6:19-21).

“No man can serve two masters. He will either hate one and love the other or be attentive to one and despise the other. You cannot give yourself to God and money” (Mt 6:24).

“I warn you, then: do not worry about your livelihood, what you are to eat or drink or use for clothing. Is not life more than food? Is not the body more valuable than clothes? ...The unbelievers are always running after these things. Your heavenly Father knows all that you need. Seek first his kingship over you, his way of holiness, and all these things will be given you besides. Enough then, of worrying about tomorrow. Let tomorrow take care of itself. Today has troubles enough of its own.” (Mt 6:25-34)

“Repay to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God” (Mt 22:21).

“Give them something to eat yourselves” (Mt 14:13-21).

“Anyone who has ears to hear ought to hear. The measure with which you measure will be measured out to you, and still more will be given to you. To the one who has, more will be given; from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away” (Mk 4:23-25).

“If a man wishes to come after me, he must deny his very self, take up his cross, and follow in my steps. Whoever would preserve his life will lose it but whoever loses his life for my sake and the Gospel’s will preserve it” (Mk 8:34-35).

“...Anyone among you who aspires to greatness must serve the rest; whoever wants to rank first among you must serve the needs of all. The Son of Man has not come to be served but to serve-to give his life in ransom for the many” (Mk 10:43-45).

“Give, and it shall be given to you. Good measure pressed down, shaken together, running over, will they pour into the fold of your garment. For the measure you measure with will be measured back to you” (Lk 6:38).

“When much has been given a man, much will be required of him. More will be asked of a man to whom more has been entrusted” (Lk 12:48).

“Avoid greed in all its forms. A man may be wealthy, but his possessions do not guarantee him life” (Lk 15:12).

“They devote themselves to the apostles; instruction and the communal life, to the breaking of the bread and the prayers. A reverent fear overtook them all, for many wonders and signs were performed by the apostles. Those who believed shared all things in common; they would sell their property and goods, dividing everything on the basis of each one’s need” (Acts 2:42-45).

“You need to recall the words of the Lord Jesus himself, who said, ‘There is more happiness in giving than in receiving’” (Acts 20:35).

“We have gifts that differ according to the favor bestowed on each of us. One’s gift may be prophecy...It may be ministry...a teacher...the power of exhortation. He who gives alms should do so generously...he who performs works of mercy should do so cheerfully” (Rom 12:6-8).

“Men should regard us as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God” (1 Cor 4:1).

“About the collection for the saints...On the first day of each week everyone should put aside whatever he has been able to save whatever one can afford...” (1Cor 16:1).

Paul's instructions about the collection for the Church in Jerusalem (1 Cor 16:1-4).

"He who sows sparingly will reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will reap bountifully. Everyone must give according to what he has inwardly decided; not sadly, not grudgingly, for God loves a cheerful giver. God can multiply his favors among you so that you may always have enough of everything and even a surplus for good works" (2 Cor 9:6-8).

"We brought nothing into the world, nor have we the power to take anything out...Those who want to be rich are falling into temptation and a trap...The love of money is the root of all evil, and some people in their desire for it have strayed from the faith and have pierced themselves with many pains" (1 Tim 6:7-9).

"Tell those who are rich in this world's goods not to be proud, and not to rely on so uncertain a thing as wealth. Let them trust in the God who provides us richly with all things for our use. Charge them to do good, to be rich in good works and generous, sharing what they have. Thus will they build a secure foundation for the future, for receiving that life which is life indeed" (1 Tm 6:17-19).

"My brothers, what good is it to profess faith without practicing it? Such faith has no power to save one, has it? If a brother or sister has nothing to wear and no food for the day and you say to them, 'Goodbye and good luck! Keep warm and well fed,' but do not meet their bodily needs, what good is that? So it is with the faith that does nothing in practice. It is thoroughly lifeless" (Jas 2:14-17)

"You ask and you do not receive because you ask wrongly, with a view to squandering what you receive on your pleasures" (Jas 4:3).

"Above all, let your love for one another be constant, for love covers a multitude of sins. Be mutually hospitable without complaining. As generous distributors of God's manifold grace, put your gifts at the service of one another, each in the measure he has received" (1 Pet 4:8-10).

“The Lord knows your tribulations and your poverty, but you are rich”
(Rev 2:9).

“Because you say, ‘I am rich and have become wealthy and have need of nothing’ and yet you do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked” (Rev 3:17).

Other Scriptural References Dealing with the Stewardship Message

Old Testament

Genesis

- 1:2-4 God created the world
- 2:5-25 God created man and woman
- 12:2-3 God’s promise and challenge to Adam
- 22:1-19 God’s promise that through Isaac all the nations of the earth would find blessings

Exodus

- 19:5 We own nothing
- 23:9 Help the poor
- 23:19 Tithe: The choicest first fruits of your soil and you shall bring to the house of the Lord, your God
- 30:11-16 Census tax for the rich and poor-proportionate giving

Leviticus

- 22:21 Sacrificial giving-Tithe: When anyone presents a peace offering to the Lord from the herd of the flock in fulfillment of a vow, or as a free-will offering, it is to find acceptance, it must be unblemished; it shall not have any defect.

Numbers

- 18:21-24 Tithes due to the Levites
- 18:25-32 Tithes paid by the Levites
- 18:29 From all the gifts that you receive and from the best parts, you are to consecrate to the Lord your own full contribution

Deuteronomy

- 8:6-20 Danger of prosperity-warning of not giving

10:10 God promised He would give us land
15:7-11 Give to the poor
18:4 Tithing
24:17-22 Justice, equity and charity

II Samuel

24:24 Sacrificial giving: The king, however, replied to Araunah, “No, I must pay you for it, for I cannot offer to the Lord my God holocausts that cost nothing.”

Nehemiah

10:36-40 Tithing – first fruits
12:44 Tithing first fruits

Job

1:21 We are not owners from birth to death. Naked I came from my mother’s womb and naked shall I go back again. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.

Psalms

100:1-5 A psalm of thanksgiving
116:12, 14 Tithe: How shall I make a return to the Lord for all the good He has done for me

Proverbs

31:10-13 Living as a steward

Isaiah

25:4-6 The Lord will provide

Malachi

1:14-22 Sacrificial nature of gifts: Cursed is the deceiver, who has in his flock a male, but under his vow sacrifices to the Lord a gelding.

New Testament

Matthew

3:2, 8 “Reform your lives...Give some evidence that you mean to reform.”

- 5:1-12 The Beatitudes
- 5:16 “In the same way, your light must shine before men so that they may all see goodness in your acts.”
- 7:1-3 Judging others: The measure with which you measure will be measured out to you
- 10:8 The commissioning of the twelve
- 10:37-42 The conditions of Discipleship; “You can be sure that whoever gives even a drink of cold water to one of the least of my followers, will certainly receive a reward.”
- 13:1-9 The Parable of the Sower
- 13:24-30 The Parable of the Weeds among the Wheat
- 13:31-32 The Parable of the Mustard Seed
- 13:33-35 The Parable of the Yeast
- 16:24-28 The conditions of Discipleship. Vs27 “...He will repay each man according to his conduct.”
- 18:10-14 The parable of the Lost Sheep
- 18:21-35 The Parable of the Unforgiven Servant
- 19:21-24 The rich young man: Amen, I say to you, it will be hard for one who is rich to enter the Kingdom of God.
- 20:1-16 The workers in the vineyard
- 21:28-32 The cursing of the fig tree: Whatever you ask for in prayer with faith, you will receive
- 21:33-46 The Parable of the Tenants
- 22:34-40 The greatest Commandment; vs27 “You shall love the Lord your God...You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”
- 23:23 Planned, proportionate and sacrificial tithes
- 24:25 Faithful and prudent steward
- 25:11 The Parable of the Ten Virgins
- 25:14-30 The Parable of the Talents; Parable of the Silver Pieces
- 25:31-46 The judgment of the nations: Whatever you did for the least of my brothers, that you did unto me
- 28:19 The commissioning of the Disciples

Mark

- 4:24-25 The Parable of the Lamb
- 6:7-13 The conditions of Discipleship
- 10:17-31 The rich man; vs21 “Go and sell what you have and give to the poor; you will then have treasure in heaven.”
- 12:1-12 The Parable of the Tenants

- 12:41-44 The poor widow's contribution – Widow's Mite; vs44 "They gave from the surplus wealth, but she gave from her want, all that she had to live on."
- 13:34 "He leaves home and leaves his servants in charge, each with his own task."

Luke

- 3:11 "Let the man with two coats give to him who has none. The man who has food should do the same."
- 6:24-25 But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation. But woe to you who are filled now, for you will be hungry.
- 6:43-44 "A good tree does not produce decayed fruit any more than a decayed tree produced good fruit. Each tree is known by its fruit."
- 9:1-6 The conditions of Discipleship
- 9:25 The conditions of Discipleship: What profit is there for one to gain the whole world and lose or forfeit himself
- 9:60-62 "Go and proclaim the kingdom of God..."
- 10:25-28 The greatest Commandment
- 10:29-37 The Parable of the Good Samaritan
- 11:5-8 Parable of the Friend at Midnight
- 11:28 True blessedness: Blessed are those who hear the Word of God and observe it
- 12:13 Greed
- 12:16-22 Parable of the Rich Fool
- 12:22-23 Dependence of God
- 12:32-48 "...much will be required of the person entrusted with much and still more will be demanded of the person entrusted with more; vss34,48 "Wherever your treasure lies, there will your heart be...When much has been given a man, much will be required of him."
- 13:6-9 The Parable of the Barren Fig Tree
- 14:25-30 Sayings of Discipleship
- 14:33 "...none of you can be my disciple if he does not renounce all his possessions."
- 15:3-7 The Parable of the Lost Coin
- 15:11-32 The Parable of the Lost Son
- 16:1-13 The Parable of the Dishonest Steward; vs13 "You cannot give yourself to God and money."

16:19-31 The Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus
 18:1-8 The Parable of the Persistent Widow
 18:9-24 The Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax collector
 18:25 For it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the Kingdom of God
 19:8 "I give half my belongings, Lord, to the poor."
 19:11-27 The Parable of the Ten Gold Coins
 20:9-19 The Parable of the Tenant Farmers
 21:1-4 The poor widow's contribution – Widow's Mite

John

4:34 "My food is to do the will of the one who sent me and to finish His work."
 6:27 You should not be working for perishable food but for food that remains unto life eternal.
 9:4 "We must do the deed of Him who sent me while it is still day."
 12:26 "If anyone would serve me, let him follow me."
 14:15-21 The Advocate; vs21 "He who obeys the commandments he has from me is the man who loves me."
 15:1-8 The vine and the branches
 15:12, 16 "This is my commandment: love one another as I have loved you....it was I who chose you to go forth and bear fruit."
 20:21 "As the Father has sent me, so I send you."
 21:15-17 "Jesus said, 'Tend my sheep...Feed my sheep'."

Acts

4:32 Life in the Christian Community
 4:34 "...to be distributed each according to his needs."

Romans

13:8-10 Love fulfills the Law
 14:12 So then, each of us shall give an account of himself to God

I Corinthians

2:12 God has freely given gifts to us
 10:17 Eucharistic stewardship
 12:4-11 Unity and variety of blessings and gifts
 14:12 "Seek to have an abundance...for building up the church"

II Corinthians

- 8:1-9 Generosity in giving
9:1-15 God's indescribable gift – His life

Ephesians

- 4:1-6 Live in a worthy manner
5:15-16 Duty to live in the light

Philippians

- 1:27-29 Steadfastness in faith
2:1-11 Plea for unity and humility

I Thessalonians

- 2:13 Thanksgiving

I Timothy

- 3:15 Being a steward of the church
6:17-19 The right use of wealth...Be generous, sharing what you have

Titus

- 3:14 But let our people, too, learn to devote themselves to good works to supply urgent needs, so that they may not be unproductive

Hebrews

- 4:13 No creature is concealed from him, but everything is naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must render an account
13:5 Let your life be free from love of money, but be content with what you have for He has said "I will never forsake you or abandon you"

James

- 1:16-18 God's gifts to us
1:22-25 Doers of the Word
5:1-3 Excess wealth

I John

- 3:17 Love for one another – worldly needs

Stewardship Related Parables of Jesus

The Sower (Mt 13:1-23; Mk 4:1-20; Lk 8:4-15)
The Weeds Among the Wheat (Mt 13:24-30; 13:36-43)
Treasure (Mt 13:44-50)
The Unmerciful Servant (Mt 18:23-35)
The Generous Employer (Mt 20:1-16)
The Two Sons (Mt 21:28-32)
The Tenants (Mt 21:33-26; Mk 12:1-12; Lk 20:9-17)
The Faithful and Unfaithful (Mt 24:45-51; Lk 12:37-48)
The Talents (Mt 25:14-30)
The Sheep and Goats (Mt 25:31-46)
The Lamp (Lk 8:16-18)
The Good Samaritan (Lk 10:25-37)
The Friend at Midnight (Lk 11:5-8)
The Rich Fool (Lk 12:16-21)
The Barren Fig Tree (Lk 13:6-9)
The Mustard Seed (Lk 13:18-19)
The Yeast (Lk 13:20-21)
The Tower Builder (Lk 14:28-30)
The King Contemplating a Campaign (Lk 14:31-33)
The Lost Sheep (Lk 15:3-7)
The Lost Coin (Lk 15:8-10)
The Prodigal Son (Lk 15:11-32)
The Unjust Steward (Lk 16:1-7)
The Rich Man and Lazarus (Lk 16:19-31)
The Persistent Widow (Lk 18:1-8)
The Pharisee and the Tax Collector (Lk 18:9-14)
The Ten Coins (Lk 19:12-27)

Church Teaching on Stewardship

“Do not turn your back on the needs, but share everything with your brother and call nothing your own. For if you have what is eternal in common, how much more should you have what is transient” (Didache 4:8).

“Possessions are gifts from God and are more for the sake of the brethren than one’s own soul. The Christian should not carry them about in his soul, nor allow them to bind and circumscribe his life. He is able with cheerful mind to bear their removal equally with their abundance” (St. Clement of Alexandria 200 A.D.).

“For whatever is of God is common in our use, nor is anyone excluded from his benefits and his gifts, so as to prevent the whole human race from enjoying equally the divine goodness and liberality ... In this example of equality, as a possessor in the earth, shares his returns and his fruits with the fraternity, while his is common and just in his gratuitous bounties, is an imitator of God the Father” (St. Cyprian, Carthage 250 A.D.).

“Tell me, how is it that you are rich? From whom did you receive your wealth? And he, whom did he receive it from? From his grandfather, you say from his father. By climbing this genealogical tree you are able to show the justice of this possession? Of course you cannot; rather its beginning and root have necessarily come out of injustice...Do no say, ‘I am spending what is mine; I am enjoying what is mine.’ In reality it is not yours but another’s” (St. John Chrysostom 400 A.D.).

“Charity consists in loving rather than being loved” (St. Thomas Aquinas).

“Mercy is heartfelt sympathy for another’s distress, impelling us to help him if we can” (St. Augustine).

“When someone steals a man’s clothes we call him a thief. Should we not give the same name to one who could clothe the naked and does not? The bread in your cupboard belongs to the hungry man; the coat hanging unused in your closet belongs to the man who needs it; the shoes rotting in your closet belong to the man who has no shoes; the money which you hoard up belongs to the poor. You are not making a fit of your possessions to the poor man. You are handing over to him what is his” (St. Basil the Great).

“God willed that this earth should be the common possession of all and he offered it fruits to all. But avarice distributed the rights of possession” (St. Ambrose).

“Be not anxious about what you have, but about what you are” (St. Gregory the Great).

“You, who have the kingdom of heaven, are not a poor little woman, but a queen” (Blessed Jordan of Saxony).

“A detached man should always be looking to see what he can do without” (Blessed Henry Suso).

“Do something good for someone you like least, today” (St. Anthony of Padua).

“Remember that nothing is small in the eyes of God. Do all that you do with love” (St. Therese of Lisieux).

“If everyone would take only according to his needs and would leave the surplus to the needs, no one would be rich, no one poor, no one in misery” (St. Basil).

“Be diligent in serving the poor. Love the poor. Honor them, as you would Christ himself” (St. Louise de Marillac).

“Make yourself a seller when you are buying, a buyer when you are selling, and then you will sell and buy justly” (St. Francis de Sales).

“Of what use are riches in eternity?” (St. Aloysius Gonzaga).

“God destined the earth and all it contains for all men and all peoples so that all created things would be shared fairly by all mankind under the guidance of justice tempered by charity” (Vatican II, Modern World, 69).

“In his use of things man should regard the external goods he legitimately owns not merely as exclusive to himself but common to others also, in the sense that they can benefit others as well as himself” (Vatican II, Modern World, 69).

Gospel Cycles

Stewardship Gospels – A Cycle 2008, 2011, 2014

Sunday	Gospel	Stewardship Message
2 nd Sunday of Advent	Mt 3:1-12	“Reform your lives...give evidence.”
3 rd Sunday of Advent	Mt 4:12-17	“Reform your lives.”
8 th Sunday of the Year	Mt 6:24-34	“No man can serve two masters.”
4 th Sunday of Lent	Jn 9:1-41	“We must do the deeds of him who sent me.”
2 nd Sunday of Easter	Jn 20:19-31	“As the Father has sent me so I send you.”
6 th Sunday of Easter	Jn 14:15-21	“He who obeys the commandments is the one who loves me.”
Pentecost Sunday	Jn 20:19-23	“As the Father has sent me so I send you.”
13 th Sunday of the Yea	Mt 10:37-42	“You can be sure that whoever gives even a drink of cold water to one of the least of my followers, will certainly receive a reward.”
18 th Sunday of the Year	Mt 14:13-21	“Give them something to eat yourselves.”

22 nd Sunday of the Year	Mt 16:21-27	“...he will repay each one according to his conduct.”
30 th Sunday of the Year	Mt 22:34-40	“You shall love the Lord your God and your neighbor as yourself.”
Feast of Christ the King (34 th Sunday of the Year)	Mt 25:14-30	Parable of the silver pieces

**Stewardship Gospels – B Cycle
2009, 2012, 2015**

Sunday	Gospel	Stewardship Message
1 st Sunday of Advent	Mk 13:33-37	“The master leaves his servants in charge, each with his own task.”
3 rd Sunday of the Year	Mk 1:14-20	“Reform your lives and believe in the good news.”
2 nd Sunday of Lent	Mk 9:2-10	“This is my son, my beloved. Listen to him.”
5 th Sunday of Easter	Jn 15:1-8	“He who lives in me, and I in him, will produce abundantly.”
6 th Sunday of Easter	Jn 15:9-17	“This is my commandment: love one another as I have loved you...it was I who chose you to go forth and bear fruit.”
10 th Sunday of the Year	Mk 3:20-35	“Whoever does the will of God is brother and sister and mother to me.”

15 th Sunday of the Year	Mk 6:7-13	“Jesus called the Twelve and sent them out two by two...They worked many cures.”
18 th Sunday of the Year	Jn 6:24-35	“You should not be working for perishable food but for food that remains unto life eternal.”
25 th Sunday of the Year	Mk 9:30-37	“If anyone wishes to rank first, he must be servant to all.”
28 th Sunday of the Year	Mk 9:17-30	“Go and sell what you have and give to the poor; you will then have treasure in heaven.”
32 nd Sunday of the Year	Mk 12:38-44	“They gave from their surplus wealth, but she gave from her want, all that she had to live on.”

**Stewardship Gospels – C Cycle
2007, 2010, 2013**

Sunday	Gospel	Stewardship Message
3 rd Sunday of Advent	Lk 3:10-18	“Let the man with two coats give to him who has none.”
3 rd Sunday of the Year	Lk 1:1-14; 4:14-21	“He has sent me to bring glad tidings to the poor.”

7 th Sunday of the Year	Lk 6:27-38	“Give, and it shall be given to you...For the measure you measure with will be measured back to you.”
8 th Sunday of the Year	Lk 6:39-45	“A good tree does not produce decayed fruit any more than a decayed tree produces good fruit.”
2 nd Sunday of Easter	Jn 20:19-31	“As the Father has sent me, so I send you.”
3 rd Sunday of Easter	Jn 21:1-19	“Jesus told them, ‘Tend my sheep...Feed by sheep.’”
Pentecost Sunday	Jn 20:19-23	“As the Father has sent me, so I send you.”
15 th Sunday of the Year	Lk 10:25-37	Parable of the Good Samaritan.
19 th Sunday of the Year	Lk 12:32-48	“Wherever your treasure lies, there your heart will be.”
25 th Sunday of the Year	Lk 16:1-13	“You cannot give yourself to God and money.”
26 th Sunday of the Year	Lk 16:19-31	Parable of the rich man and Lazarus.
31 st Sunday of the Year	Lk 19:1-10	“I give half my belongings, Lord, to the poor.”

Preparation for Annual Stewardship Renewal

- Pastor forms a stewardship committee
- Conduct a parish survey
- Expand prayer and ministry opportunities
- Design a parish ministry catalogue
- Plan a ministry fair
- Order stewardship materials

Role of the Pastor

The pastor will be successful in fostering stewardship in his parish if he is committed to the spirituality of stewardship as a way of life for himself and for each member of the parish. To foster stewardship as a way of life, the pastor should:

- **Teach parishioners to pray** and provide as many prayer opportunities in the parish as possible. Prayer is the most important component of a stewardship life. Prayer is what leads each person to understand one's true role as God's stewards.
- **Pray that the members of the parish will grow spiritually** as a result of embracing stewardship as a way of life.
- **Focus on being faithful to living God's way.**
- **Promote hospitality in the parish**, invite all members of the parish to follow the teachings and examples of Christ by welcoming the newcomer to the parish.
- **Be enthusiastic about stewardship.** Share with the parish a personal commitment to a stewardship way of life by using an envelope at each Mass, as an example to parishioners.
- **Select prayerful parishioners to serve on the Stewardship Committee** who are good stewards of time, talent, and treasure and will nurture all aspects of stewardship in the parish.
- **Utilize lay witnesses** during Week Two (time and talent) and Week Three (treasure) who will testify to the benefits of living a life of stewardship.
- **Conduct Annual Stewardship Renewals** of prayer, time, talent and treasure.
- **Creatively use all resources** to encourage growth of faith and involvement in parish life and the community.

- **Be accountable** by providing adequate reporting of the gifts of time, talent and treasure offered by parishioners for the work of the parish. Reports can be presented in the weekly bulletin, also an annual report of parishioner involvement, and parish income and expenses.
- **Personally participate**, and encourage parish leadership to participate in stewardship conferences and various stewardship events.
- **Encourage ongoing parish outreach** and offerings to the poor.
- **Thank people** for their investment of time, talent and treasure in the parish.
- **Preach the full Gospel**, incorporating the appropriate stewardship message, according to the Scriptural readings in homilies.
- **Help parishioners** honestly discern between their wants and their needs.

The stewardship timeline is categorized in four sections:

- Preparation
- Annual stewardship renewal
- Annual stewardship renewal follow-up
- Yearlong stewardship effort

Preparation for a Stewardship Effort

The most important step in the preparation phase is forming a parish stewardship committee. Once the stewardship committee is formed and educated about stewardship, the first task of the stewardship committee is to develop a realistic timeline.

The best way to establish a timeline is for the pastor and stewardship committee to decide which weekend should be designated as “Intention Weekend.” Intention Weekend is the weekend parish families will submit their stewardship intention cards. Once this weekend is decided, then schedule the three weeks leading up to Intention Weekend. This four-week period is the annual stewardship renewal.

While a number of planning activities must take place well in advance of any of the public activities of the annual stewardship renewal, as far as parishioners sitting in pew are concerned, the annual stewardship renewal is conducted over a four week period. This four-week renewal will maximize the time and effort of the stewardship committee and other volunteers and will also give parishioners ample opportunity to give prayerful consideration to their stewardship decision.

The work of the stewardship committee, preparing for the annual renewal will take place over approximately three months. This includes preparation, implementation and follow-up. However, the effort is actually ongoing and continues yearlong since there are tasks the stewardship committee will have throughout the year.

Some parishes may determine that a parish survey is needed. A parish survey could be designed and distributed to every parish household. The survey inquires about parishioner’ opinions regarding parish services and ministries. The survey will serve to communicate to every parishioner that each is an important person in the parish because you are asking for their

opinion. Also it will identify the needs of the parishioners and whether the parish ministries are meeting those needs. For example, if several elderly parishioners expressed a need for transportation to Mass on Sundays, a ride-share ministry could be formed and volunteers sought during the annual stewardship renewal.

Once information is tallied from the survey results, coordination with the parish ministry chairs should be established and a parish ministry catalogue designed, listing all opportunities to be involved in the parish.

Plans for a ministry fair should begin for Week Two.

Stewardship intention cards and posters may be ordered through Our Sunday Visitor (page 176). Personalized edits to the parish ministry opportunities (back of the intention card, page 104) should be made on the sample copy then sent to Our Sunday Visitor via fax or mail.

Need for an Annual Stewardship Renewal

It is important that the annual stewardship renewal is conducted each year. A one time effort appears as a simple offertory increase program.

The annual stewardship renewal is necessary for a number of reasons:

- The message of stewardship, like Scripture and the teachings of the Church, should be frequent and perpetual. Without regular reminders and encouragement to live as a good steward, one may have a tendency to revert back to old ways.
- Stewardship, like conversion, is an on going process needing regular nourishment for growth and development. Renewing our commitment to life a stewardship way of life gives us the opportunity to grow closer to God each year.
- There are those current parishioners who, for one reason or another, were unable to participate in the previous year's stewardship effort. Renewal gives them another opportunity to become involved in stewardship.

- Parishioner's situation change. An annual evaluation will allow parishioners to recognize such changes and adapt their giving of time, talent and treasure accordingly. (i.e., pay increase, increased giving, more free time, more involvement in the parish, as well as the contrary.)
- New people arriving in the parish since the last effort will have an opportunity to commit to stewardship, some for the first time. New parishioners have a need to get involved in the parish life.

Implementation of the Annual Stewardship Renewal

The implementation phase starts with the introduction of stewardship. It begins by simply printing announcements in the parish bulletin for several weeks.

Several days prior to **Week One**, an introductory letter from the pastor and a generic stewardship brochure are mailed to each parish household.

On Week One, the pastor gives a stewardship homily, emphasizing the stewardship of prayer and our relationship with God. This weekend may be the first time parishioners hear their pastor speak about the annual stewardship renewal.

Many parishioners may not be aware of all that stewardship means in their lives, but through your stewardship education they will begin to understand. Once parishioners begin to understand stewardship more completely, they will begin to see that we are not owners, but only caretakers of our time, talent and treasure, and that is a fundamental expression of our faith as Christians to give.

On **Week Two**, the pastor speaks on the stewardship of time and talent. Also the pastor invites a lay witness to share a "witness talk" on time and talent at the end of Mass. When the stewardship message is presented in a personal way by a parishioner who has made his or her own commitment to this way of life, the parishioners in the pews will begin to understand that stewardship is not just a short-term program, but a foundation for a deepening sense of faith. The lay witness will invite all members of the

parish to attend the ministry fair, conducted after all Masses on Week Two weekend.

On **Week Three**, the pastor will speak of stewardship of treasure and gives a brief “state of the parish report.” A copy of the parish financial report should be included in the weekly bulletin. Also the pastor will invite a lay witness to share a witness talk on treasure at the end of Mass. The pastor should explain the process of the intention cards, as they will be sent to each household in the coming week. The intention cards are invitations to all parishioners to live a life of stewardship.

Prior to **Week Four** - “Intention Weekend,” intention cards are sent to every parish household with a cover letter from the pastor. The intention cards should be completed (including every member of the family – school aged and older). The intention cards should be placed in the offertory collection on Intention Weekend. There are several ways in which the stewardship intention cards can be presented to the parish. One method is to invite parishioners to come forward at the offertory (as they usually form a Communion line) and present their intention cards as a gift, by leaving it in front of the altar. Another way is for the users to collect the cards during a special second collection. The pastor should thank the parish family as a whole for their generous sharing of prayers, time, talent and treasure.

Annual Stewardship Renewal Follow Up

After Intention Weekend, the efforts moves into the follow-up phase. One of the most critical, and yet one that is often neglected by some parishes, is adequate follow-up. It is important that a follow-up effort start with those who have already made commitments.

Once intention cards are received, the pastor should mail a thank you letter to parishioners who have responded in some way to the stewardship effort. The pastor should acknowledge their gifts and thank them for their response. The letter should include a reference to the amount of giving by the parishioner. The amount can be presented on a weekly, monthly and annual basis, depending on what is stated on their treasure portion of the intention card. Another purpose for the letter is to acknowledge the gift and make sure the amount is correct.

On the weekend following Intention Weekend, the pastor should again thank the parish families for participating in the parish annual stewardship renewal and invite those who have not yet made their commitment to prayerfully make a commitment by completing an intention card, which can be found in the pews. For those members of the parish who do not respond, a follow-up letter from the pastor, ensued by a volunteer follow-up telephone call, would be appropriate.

The gift of treasure section of the intention cards should be turned over to the appropriate person, according to the pastor's direction, such as the finance council chair, or the person in the office who handles the offertory collections. The envelopes are opened and tallied, maintaining confidentiality. The time and talent portions of the intention cards are passed on to the stewardship committee.

The time and talent portion of the intention cards should be copied, corresponding to the number of ministries signed up for. Each ministry chair should receive a copy of every sign-up for their respective ministry. Each ministry chair is responsible to contact and involve those who signed up for the respective ministry.

It is very important that the ministries follow-up with those who have expressed interest in their ministries. An information meeting for each parish ministry receiving parishioner sign-ups should be scheduled within 30 days of Intention Weekend.

The stewardship committee should tally what has been committed and compare the respondents with the total parish registration list – this will identify non-respondents. The pastor should send a follow-up letter to those who have not responded, again asking for their response. A select group of volunteers should contact non-respondent parishioners by phone shortly after the pastor's follow-up letter is sent.

The stewardship committee should prepare a general summary of the commitments and a preliminary report of the results of the annual stewardship renewal. According to the pastor's direction, this information should be communicated to the parish, perhaps by posting in the parish bulletin.

Yearlong Stewardship Effort

The yearlong phase continues as new parishioners join the parish. They represent a significant opportunity for inviting and welcoming involvement resulting in additional gifts of time, talent and treasure to the ministries of the parish.

A member of the stewardship committee or pastoral council should be assigned the responsibility for contacting these individuals, as part of the welcoming committee, including making a presentation on stewardship and presenting an intention card to them. Often these individuals bring a new source of energy to parish life.

Accountability is an important communication element within the parish family. Monthly accounting for financial donations in the bulletin is key to building trust with the parishioners.

An annual report should include a parish financial report in broad expense categories along with a short explanation of how the funds were spent. Also include an activity report of parish ministries (committees, activities, programs and services). Other helpful report information would include the average household contributions to the operation of the parish, average volunteer time committed, planned gifts, average Annual Bishop's Appeal contribution and endowment growth.

The format of the annual stewardship renewal is suggestive and is easy to change. Annual stewardship renewal is designed so that it can be modified to fit the personality, goals and/or limitations of each individual parish.

For example, the parish may find the need to conduct a two-week renewal rather than a four-week renewal. Or perhaps the parishioners respond better to an in-pew signing process rather than a direct mail piece sent to their home. **Tailor your annual stewardship renewal process to the personality and needs of the parish.**

Sample Parish Survey

The purpose of this survey is to evaluate the effectiveness of our parish ministries in providing for the spiritual, educational and social needs of the parishioners.

Directions: Please circle the letter that corresponds to your choice.

Family Name: _____ Phone: _____

- 1.) Please indicate the number of people in your household: _____ (total)
- a. A single man _____
 - b. A single woman _____
 - c. A married man _____
 - d. A married woman _____
 - e. Number of high school students _____
 - f. Number of grade school students _____

Please list all members of your household:

2.) Age bracket(s) of each are:

- a) 0 to 5 years _____
- b) 6 to 13 _____
- c) 14 to 18 _____
- d) 18 to 25 years _____
- e) 26 to 39 years _____
- f) 40 to 49 years _____
- g) 50 to 59 years _____
- h) 60 years and over _____

3.) Is your family registered in this parish?

- a. Yes
- b. No

4.) If NO, are you registered in another parish in the Fort Wayne/South Bend Diocese?

- a. No
- b. Yes – Parish Name? _____

5.) If Yes to #3, how long have you been a member of this parish?

- a. 0-2 years
- b. 3-5 years
- c. 6-10 years
- d. 11-20 years
- e. Over 20 years

6.) Please rate each of the following aspects of the way Mass is celebrated at this parish:

	Excellent				Poor
Hospitality	5	4	3	2	1
Suggested ways to improve:					
<hr/>					
Ushers	5	4	3	2	1
Suggested ways to improve:					
<hr/>					
Lectors	5	4	3	2	1
Suggested ways to improve:					
<hr/>					
Music	5	4	3	2	1
Suggested ways to improve:					
<hr/>					
Homilies	5	4	3	2	1
Suggested ways to improve:					
<hr/>					

Offertory 5 4 3 2 1
Suggested ways to improve:

Prayerful Atmosphere (before/after Mass) 5 4 3 2 1
Suggested ways to improve:

Appearance of Church 5 4 3 2 1
Suggested ways to improve:

Sound System 5 4 3 2 1
Suggested ways to improve:

7.) Which of the following are, or would be, most helpful to your prayer life? (circle as many as apply):

- a. Parish Mission Week (a week long parish renewal)
- b. Perpetual Eucharistic Adoration
- c. Adult Education
- d. Spiritual Formation
- e. Bible Study
- f. Prayer Group
- g. Rosary
- h. Enhance Mass (How?) _____
- i. Other: _____

8.) Please rate how well you believe this parish is serving the needs of the following groups of parishioners: (If any of these areas do not apply to you, or you cannot assess them adequately, please circle the NA—Not Applicable)

	Excellent						Poor	
	5	4	3	2	1		NA	
Preschool children Suggested ways to improve:								

School Children (K-8) Suggested ways to improve:							
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High School students (9-12) Suggested ways to improve:							
---	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

Single Adults 5 4 3 2 1 NA
Suggested ways to improve:

Young married couples (no children) 5 4 3 2 1 NA
Suggested ways to improve:

Families 5 4 3 2 1 NA
Suggested ways to improve:

Single parent families 5 4 3 2 1 NA
Suggested ways to improve:

Ages 50 and over 5 4 3 2 1 NA
Suggested ways to improve:

Senior citizens (retired) 5 4 3 2 1 NA
Suggested ways to improve:

Persons with disabilities 5 4 3 2 1 NA
Suggested ways to improve:

Non-Catholic Spouses 5 4 3 2 1 NA
Suggested ways to improve:

9.) Would you be willing to volunteer for something that you may be qualified for, yet do not have much experience in? -You would receive training. (i.e. Lector, Usher or Religious Education Instructor)

- a. Yes
- b. No

10.) Which of the following best describes how you really feel about proportionate giving (percentage giving) of treasure?

- a. I follow the biblical concept of tithing by giving the "first fruits:" 10% of my gross income (8% to the parish and 2% to other charities).

- b. Follow the biblical concept of tithing by giving the “first fruits:” 10% of my gross income (5% to the parish and 5% to other charities).
- c. For me, tithing means giving a percentage of my gross income, but not 10%.
- d. I take care of my personal bills and then give to the parish from what is leftover.
- e. I make an occasional donation, but I do not give a percentage of my income.
- f. I do not believe in giving money to the Church or charity.
- g. Other _____

11.) If you do not believe in proportionate giving or the biblical concept of tithing, why not? (circle as may as apply):

- a. Giving money to the parish does not result in any direct benefit to my family or me.
- b. The money given to the parish is not spent well.
- c. There are too many other things my money goes for. If I were to give a percentage of my gross income, I would not be able to support my current lifestyle.
- d. Too much of the money contributed does not stay in this parish.
- e. This parish is relatively well off. I prefer to give to more needy causes.
- f. Other _____

12.) What is your perception of our current parish financial status?

- a. We are generating enough revenue to pay our operating bills, including facility upkeep, and to put money aside in savings to meet future parish needs.
- b. We are generating the revenue to pay our operating bills, including facility upkeep, but do not put money aside for future parish needs.
- c. We are generating barely enough revenue to pay our operating bills.
- d. We are having difficulty paying our operating bills.

13.) How are you informed about the parish finances? Circle all that apply.

- a. Weekly bulletin
- b. Annual financial report
- c. Conversations with other parishioners
- d. Not at all
- e. Other _____

- 14.) How would you describe your knowledge of Catholic doctrine and issues pertaining to the Catholic Faith?
- a. Knowledgeable
 - b. Knowledgeable, but some additional education would be helpful
 - c. Somewhat knowledgeable, but there are definitely issues that I need to learn more about
 - d. Not very knowledgeable
- 15.) Have you or would you attend any of the adult education sessions or bible study sessions?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
- 16.) If No, why not
- a. I was not aware of them
 - b. None of the topics have been of interest to me. I would attend session(s) on the following topics:

 - c. I do not have time
 - d. They are held at times that do not fit into my schedule. The best time for me to attend is:

 - e. I am not interested in attending adult education sessions
 - f. Other _____
- 17.) What do you like best about this parish?

- 18.) What would you like to see added or changed to improve this parish?

- 19.) How has the growth of the parish (or lack of) affected your own family?

- 20.) We do not send our child(ren) to the parish school or Catholic high school because:

21.) How do you feel you and your child(ren) are included in parish life?

22.) What should be done to improve the parish school?

23.) What improvements do you think we need to make to our Religious Education Programs?

- a. Strength of religious curriculum
- b. Discipline
- c. Atmosphere conducive to learning
- d. Other _____

Please complete this section only if you have a child or children attending a diocesan Catholic school

24.) What is your most important reason for enrolling your child(ren) in the Catholic Schools?

- | | | | |
|----|---------------------|----|---------------------|
| | <u>Elementary</u> | | <u>High School</u> |
| a. | Safe environment | a. | Safe environment |
| b. | Academics | b. | Academics |
| c. | Religious Education | c. | Religious Education |
| d. | Other _____ | d. | Other _____ |

25.) What importance do you think your child's school places on religious instructions and activities?

		High Priority				Low				
Elementary		5	4	3	2	1				
High school		5	4	3	2	1				

26.) Realizing that religious and academic education are of primary concern, please rank the following additional areas according to the importance you think they should have at the elementary or high school level (for families with school children only):

<u>Elementary</u>		High Importance				Low				
Sports/Physical Education		5	4	3	2	1				
Health and Substance Abuse Prevention		5	4	3	2	1				
Music and Art		5	4	3	2	1				
Computers and Technology		5	4	3	2	1				
Foreign Language		5	4	3	2	1				
Special Educational Services		5	4	3	2	1				

<u>High School</u>										
Sports/Physical Education		5	4	3	2	1				
Health and Substance Abuse Prevention		5	4	3	2	1				
Music and Art		5	4	3	2	1				
Computers and Technology		5	4	3	2	1				
Foreign Language		5	4	3	2	1				
Special Educational Services		5	4	3	2	1				

Thank you for completing this survey. This information will help the parish set priorities and goals for the future. Results of this survey will be available as soon as possible.

Ministry Catalogue

The purpose of the ministry catalogue is to inform the parish households of the different ministry involvement opportunities that are available to them in the parish.

The ministry catalogue includes a description of all parish ministries, listing the contact person and meeting dates. Smaller parishes may choose to design a simply ministry list rather than a “catalogue.”

The preparation of the ministry catalogue is a major step toward inviting parishioners to participate in the stewardship of time and talent. The catalogue should be as inclusive as possible and should include youth, singles, elderly, handicapped, as well as married couples. Be creative with your ministry catalogue.

The stewardship committee should update the ministry catalogue annually by providing a copy of last year’s catalogue to ministry chairs and ask them to make the necessary changes for the current year’s publication. Then ensure that the listed ministries in the catalogue equate with the intention cards “Opportunities for Ministry Service.” (page 105)

The “sample ministry catalogue information form” (page 48) can be used to obtain pertinent information from each parish ministry.

Sample Pastor's **Cover Letter**: Ministry Fair Coordination Meeting

Dear Ministry Chair:

One of the goals for the parish this year is to involve more parishioners in our parish ministries. For this reason we are planning an updated ministry catalogue and a ministry fair for [date]. The theme of the fair will be "Stewardship—A Way of Life." To make this a success we need to plan well. On [date, place] we will hold our first planning meeting. I am asking all parish ministry chairs to attend this meeting and help to make our ministry fair a success.

There are many different types of ministries within the parish, just as there are many different types of people in the parish. The goal for the ministry fair is to present all of the many ways we can be involved in the parish and to encourage involvement of all parishioners.

Thank you for your generosity in sharing of your own time and talents. If you have any questions, please call me. I am looking forward to seeing you or your appointed substitute at the meeting.

God bless,

Pastor

P.S. Please complete the enclosed ministry catalogue information form and bring it to the meeting.

Sample Ministry Catalogue Information Form

Please prepare a description of your ministry to be printed in the parish ministry catalogue. This catalogue will be distributed throughout the parish. The catalogue will be given to new parish members so they can become familiar with the parish ministries.

Based on information on the sheet below, we will prepare your entry in the ministry catalogue, please be accurate. If you have any questions, please contact the parish office.

Ministry Name

Contact Person

_____ Phone _____

Ministry mission/purpose:

Is training required for members in your ministry? Yes No

If yes, please describe the training/time involved:

What skills should a new member possess?

This ministry is open to members that are
(check all that apply)

- | | | |
|--------------------------------------|--|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Preschool | <input type="checkbox"/> Elementary school | <input type="checkbox"/> High School |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 20-30 years | <input type="checkbox"/> 30-60 years | <input type="checkbox"/> 60+ years |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Male/Female | <input type="checkbox"/> Female Only | <input type="checkbox"/> Male Only |

With the growth of your membership, what other parish or community services would be possible? _____

**Thank you for taking the time to fill out this Ministry Catalogue Information Form.
Further comments for additional suggestions may be written below.**

Sample Ministry Fair Chair **Coordination Letter**

Dear Ministry Chair:

The parish ministry fair is scheduled for [date, location] after all the Masses. We have made great progress in the planning stages for our ministry fair. Our pastor is very excited about how well everything has gone to this point and he is preparing a special homily on sharing our time and talent for Week Two of our annual stewardship renewal.

Here is what we have planned: At the end of each Mass, a lay witness will make a presentation on the value of giving one's time and talent to the parish. The lay witness will invite everyone to come to the hall/gym to have some refreshments and visit all of the ministry tables. Tables will be provided in the parish hall/gym for each ministry. Each ministry will be assigned a table and the tables will be clearly marked. Please creatively decorate your table; provide materials and photos of your ministry in action. Also, please keep your table staffed after each Mass.

Please do not solicit parishioners for volunteers, the primary purpose of this event is to share information about your ministry. If someone expresses an interest in getting involved with your ministry, by all means sign them up.
Yours in Christ's Service,

Ministry Fair Coordinator
Phone number
Email address

Sample Pastor's Cover Letter: Welcoming Page of the Ministry Catalogue (if sent separate from the intention card)

Dear Parishioners:

It is a great joy to present our new ministry catalogue to each family of the parish.

Our parish is very alive, thank God. This can be seen from the listing in this booklet. There are many people sharing their gifts with one another in the parish and our neighboring community – this is what makes us the body of Christ.

As the name indicates, this ministry catalogue lists all of the parish ministries (i.e. organization, services, or involvement opportunities). Please review this catalogue and know that these ministries are available in the parish if you are ever in need of assistance in any of these areas.

Also, know that there are many opportunities to be involved in the parish. There are so many gifts people in our parish and many are involved in various ways; there are also some parishioners who have “buried their talents.” Some wonder, “Where do I fit in?” “What can I do?” I hope this guide is a means of invitation for you to be involved with the building of God’s kingdom.

Please take a moment and review this ministry catalogue. If you are interested in being more involved with any of the parish ministries listed, simply call the contact person listed in the ministry of your interest.

You can also find a list of these parish ministries on our parish website by logging on to: www._____.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Pastor

Sample Ministry Catalogue

Administration

Stewardship Committee

Purpose: Develop and educate about the stewardship of prayer, time, talent, and treasure. Coordinate the yearlong stewardship effort and the four-week annual stewardship renewal.

Contact: Name, phone number, email

Bishop's Appeal

Purpose: Assist in planning and/or soliciting contributions to meet parish financial obligation to support needs of the diocese.

Contact: Name, phone number, email

Safety Committee

Purpose: Responsible for all parish buildings and grounds, including solicitation of bids for major projects.

Contact: Name, phone number, email

Parish Council

Purpose: Advisory board to assist the pastor and parish administration regarding the future direction of the parish.

Contact: Name, phone number, email

Christian Service

Christian Service Committee

Purpose: Parish outreach to those in need of food, clothing, shelter or financial resources.

Contact: Name, phone number, email

Bereavement Ministry

Purpose: To reach out to those parishioners who have experienced a death in the family.

Contact: Name, phone number, email

Peace and Justice

Purpose: Generate parish awareness of social issues. To bring parish members into solidarity with the poor, according to the teachings of Jesus.

Contact: Name, phone number, email

Giving Tree Program

Purpose: Coordinate the Christmas gifts donated by our parishioners to needy families and/or agencies.

November - December

Contact: Name, phone number, email

Visitation Ministry

Purpose: Volunteers bring Holy Communion to nursing home, hospital or homebound parishioners. Meet periodically throughout the year for prayer and renewal.

Contact: Name, phone number, email

Education

Faith Formation Committee

Purpose: Gather and publicize information about parish Christian educational activities.

Contact: Name, phone number

Catechist, Grades K-4

Purpose: Provide weekly faith formation classes for youth.

October - May.

Meetings/Training required

Contact: Name, phone number, email

Religious Education, Grades 5-8

Purpose: Provide religious education and faith formation to elementary students.

September - May

Meetings/Training required

Contact: Name, phone number, email

Religious Education, Grades 9-12

Purpose: To provide religious education and faith formation to High School students.

September - May

Meetings/Training required

Contact: Name, phone number, email

Evangelization Committee

Purpose: Share the Catholic faith personally by greeting new parishioners, coordinating events and information sessions for fallen-away Catholics or people with no Church involvement.

Contact: Name, phone number, email

Marriage Sponsor Couples

Purpose: An opportunity for an engaged couple to meet with a married couple in their home in order to have a fuller appreciation for Christian marriage. The role of the sponsor couple is to share their own experience of Christian marriage.

Contact: Name, phone number, email

Adult Faith Formation

Purpose: To create and provide Christian opportunities for adults to grow in the understanding of their faith.

Fall and Spring programs.

Contact: Name, phone number, email

Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults

Purpose: Assist non-Catholic adults who have presented themselves as having an interest in learning more about the

Catholic faith. It involves being a part of their journey that may lead them to the decision to embrace our Catholic faith with full reception of the Sacraments.

Meetings/Training required

Contact: Name, phone number, email

Youth Ministry

Purpose: Provide opportunities for young adults to come together for spiritual, social and service events.

Meeting/Training required

Contact: Name, phone number, email

Prayer of the Faithful Liturgists

Purpose: Plan and prepare intercessions for weekend Masses.

Contact: Name, phone number, email

Lector

Purpose: To proclaim the word of God at weekend Masses.

Meetings/Training required

Contact: Name, phone number, email

Ushers/Greeters—Hospitality

Purpose: Serve the parishioners by extending hospitality to those entering the church. The ushers assist in seating and take up the offertory collection.

Contact: Name, phone number, email

Traditional Choir

Purpose: Lead in song at the celebrations of specified weekly Masses.

Practice as scheduled.

Contact: Name, phone number, email

Contemporary Choir

Purpose: Instrumentalists and vocalists to lead in song and prayer during specified Masses.

Practices as scheduled.

Contact: Name, phone number, email

Ministry Fair

The ministry fair is a once a year parish event conducted on Week Two of the annual stewardship renewal. The fair is an opportunity to present all of the many ways parishioners can be involved in the parish. These opportunities are represented by tables in one location such as the parish hall or gym. The ministry fair is an event that focuses attention on the stewardship of time and talent.

The purpose of the ministry fair is to:

- Thank all volunteers who serve the parish ministries
- Highlight and showcase ministries available in the parish
- Inform parishioners about parish ministry opportunities

Planning an Effective Ministry Fair

Do's

- Do talk with your pastor and ask for his support.
- Do form a coordination team.
- Do set dates long in advance in order to prepare properly.
- (Fairs will take a great deal of time and planning)
- Do personally ask every organization in your parish to submit a brief description of their parish ministry.
- Do print a ministry catalogue (or list) describing each ministry.
- Do have ministry catalogues available at the ministry fair.
- Do include the names and contact information for each of the organizations in the ministry catalogue; be accurate.

- Do get the word out as soon as the date is set. (i.e., pulpit announcements, bulletin announcements and posters)
- Do invite each organization to set up a display table.
- Do make sure every table has someone available at all times during the fair in order to answer questions.
- Do have a contest between the organizations for the most creative display. Then publicize the winning display in your next bulletin.
- Do set your tables up in a manner that maximizes visibility for each ministry.
- Do provide some sort of food and beverage during your fair. (This is a must.)
- Do hold the ministry fair in the parish hall/gym after all the Masses on Week Two, stewardship of time and talent.
- Do take some pictures during the ministry fair. Photos can be used to promote, and make planning easier for, future fairs.

Don't

- Don't try to host a fair without significant planning; take the time to plan your fair well. Start early.
- Don't expect every organization to set up a display. Don't force any ministry into participating.
- Don't try to do it all yourself – enlist the aid of involved parishioners.
- Don't criticize any display – thank and encourage each.
- Don't allow soliciting to go on during the fair. Soliciting at this time will work against you. Make an announcement at the end of each Mass that clarifies the informational purpose of the ministry fair and

assures the parishioners that there will be no solicitation for involvement at the ministry fair. The purpose of the fair is to share ministry information, explore opportunities and ask questions. The time to commit time and talent will be in two weeks on Intention Weekend.

Sample Ministry Chair **Follow-up Letter**

Dear Ministry Chair:

Thank you for all you have done to make our ministry fair a terrific event.

Please be sure to follow-up with any parishioners who requested further information about your ministry. If we do not follow-up we will miss the opportunity to increase the good works of our ministries and risk having parishioners feel that our parish is not a welcoming place.

Attached is a ministry fair critique form. Please take a moment and provide us with your comments.

Gratefully in Christ,

Ministry Fair Coordinator
Phone number
Email address

Sample Ministry Fair Critique Form

Ministry Name

Contact Person

_____ Phone _____

About how many people stopped by your table? _____

How many people signed up for your ministry? _____

How can we get more people to come to the ministry fair? (i.e. ideas to attract those who left immediately after Mass)

Would you or someone in your ministry be interested in assisting in the planning for next year's ministry fair? Yes No

On a scale from 1 to 10, (ten = best), how would you rate this ministry fair?

Thank you for sharing your information and comments. It will be used to improve next year's Ministry Fair.

Lay Witness Talks

An important element of stewardship education is the stories and testimonials delivered to the entire congregation by individuals whose lives have been changed as a result of stewardship. Lay witnesses are invited to speak about the stewardship of time and talent on Week Two and the stewardship of treasure on Week Three. These lay witnesses are necessary to the success of the parish stewardship annual renewal process. There are many reasons for this. Stewardship is a part of the internal change of heart, or conversion process, as we know so well from the Scriptures. The Old Testament, New Testament and Church history are filled stories of real people who became aware of the need to put their faith into action.

Lay witnesses send a strong message to the faithful about giving of oneself - time and talent, one's possessions - in gratitude for what God has given. People are moved to action by hearing other talk about their conversion, they can also relate to those who are most like them. Christians throughout history have been raised to a new level of awareness by hearing how a deeper sense of spirituality has taken over the lives of people just like them. We are always called to deepen our faith, intensify our response to Christ (both word and action) and draw closer to God. Lay witnesses can help to share the message of stewardship and describe how each of us can draw closer to God.

Essential Elements

The talk has two purposes: to motivate people to become good stewards of time, talent and treasure and to show how many opportunities exist for this kind of stewardship.

All too often, people receive the impression that stewardship of time and talent means only "lay ministry." Lay ministry is of major importance. However, it will only be a full-time pursuit for a handful of lay people. Even on a part-time involvement basis, lay ministry is not for all. Most lay people exercise their stewardship of time and talent in daily life and volunteer in the parish "periodically."

It is essential, therefore, to show people that their everyday work, at home and on the job, all week long is a genuine exercise of stewardship. Otherwise, we risk giving the impression that the laity's "real" task is to serve the Church. In reality, the Church exists to inspire and empower its members to fulfill their baptismal commission: to be the world's salt, leaven and light – the vital ingredients which, even when small in quantity, make all the difference in quality.

With the pastor's approval, lay witnesses can be selected by the stewardship committee. The lay witness should meet with the pastor and a designated member of the stewardship committee to discuss the message of stewardship and their role in the stewardship effort. Also they should read theology and various scriptural passages about stewardship (pages 6-28), also the respective witness talk samples included in this manual (pages 83, 91 and 94). The lay witness should write out a brief presentation about their personal experiences regarding how they relate their faith to their gifts of prayer, time, talent and treasure. The witness talk for Week Two should be focused on the gifts of time and talent. The witness talk for Week Three should be focused on the gift of treasure.

As a means of introduction, the pastor explains the stewardship concept and then introduces the lay witnesses to describe, briefly, their stewardship. There should be a good mix of daily life examples. The speakers should be able to speak with conviction and enthusiasm about their experiences, not the theology of stewardship – the pastor will preach on stewardship theology.

When planning your talk, try to...

- Motivate people to become good stewards of time, talent and treasure and show the many parish opportunities for the exercise of a stewardship way of life.
- Give examples of stewardship regarding everyday work at home and on the job during the week long.

- Show that the laity's task is to fulfill their baptismal commitment to be the world's salt, leaven and light.
- Include examples of how you balance your busy schedule – your job, family and parish involvement (or balance financial obligations).
- Give an example of how you shared your gifts and received an unexpected blessing because of your generosity.
- Review the Scripture references and witness talk materials in this manual.
- Challenge people to reflect on the priority of the Catholic faith in their lives.
- Challenge them practically. As they receive increases of time, talent or treasure do they, in turn, increase their gift to the Lord in thanksgiving?
- Give practical suggestions for filling out the intention card, when received. Explain the use of the intention card as a tool to evaluate our past giving habits and a means to allow our parish family to plan for the upcoming year.
- Remind them that their financial commitment is confidential and not a legal obligation.
- Remind that stewardship changes the lives of individuals and parishes.
- Remind that our gifts of prayer, time, talent and treasure should be given in gratitude for what we have received from God.
- Remind that we can give our personal gifts of prayer, time, talent and treasure to God through his Church as well as other charitable organizations.

When the emphasis is placed on giving because of gratitude to God, people begin to understand and give of themselves the way God wants them to give. This type of giving brings joy. Sharing your spiritual journey with other members of your parish family is a unique gift and a true statement of your commitment as a follower of Christ.

Annual Stewardship Renewal Outline

Week One

- Prior to Week One Weekend, all parish families receive a cover letter from the pastor and a general stewardship brochure.
- On Week One Weekend, the pastor gives a homily on the stewardship of prayer.

Week Two

- On Week Two Weekend, the pastor gives a homily on the stewardship of time and talent.
- At the end of Mass on Week Two Weekend, a lay witness speaks on the stewardship of time and talent and invites parishioners to the ministry fair.
- A ministry fair is conducted after each Mass.

Week Three

- On Week Three Weekend, the pastor gives a homily on the stewardship of treasure.
- At the end of Mass on Week Three, a lay witness speaks on the stewardship of treasure.

Week Four

- Prior to Week Four, Intention Weekend, all parish families receive a cover letter from the pastor, an intention card and envelope to be completed and returned on Intention Weekend.
- Parishioners offer their intention cards in the offertory collection.

Follow-Up

- Pastor sends a follow-up letter to all parish families that did not respond on Intention Weekend.
- Follow-up telephone calls are made to parish families that did not respond to the pastor's follow up letter.
- Pastor sends a thank you letter to all parish families that offered an intention card.
- All parish families receive a parish stewardship report.

Week One: Stewardship of Prayer

- Pastor's Sample Cover Letters for the Stewardship Brochure
- Stewardship Brochure
- Pastor's Sample Homilies on the Stewardship of Prayer

Week One - Sample Pastor's Cover Letter: Brochure (#1)

My dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ:

It is with great joy I share with you good news about our parish stewardship effort. I hope this worthwhile parish effort will be a source of renewed spirit and promise for the good of our parish families and our parish as a whole. I invite you to open your hearts to the call of Stewardship—A Way of Life.

Stewardship calls us to reflect on the many ways in which we have been blessed, as individuals and as a parish community. You will hear the call of Jesus to be God's caretakers or "stewards" of the personal gifts God has given to you. You will be asked to make a conscious decision about how you can prayerfully respond to his call by using your gifts of time, talent and material blessings. Together, as a parish family, we will gather our resources of time, talent and treasure to further Christ's mission on the earth through his Church.

Please take a moment to read the enclosed brochure entitled "To Be A Christian Steward." This is a summary of the U.S. Bishops' pastoral letter on stewardship. I will be speaking more about stewardship during our parish annual stewardship renewal in the coming weeks at all Masses. Then, you will be asked to examine your heart and reach a personal decision about your role in assisting with the building of God's kingdom.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Pastor

Week One - Sample Pastor's Cover Letter: Brochure (#2)

Dear Parishioners:

God has given us much, and we have much to share. The call of Christ given 2,000 years ago along the dusty streets of Jerusalem remains valid in today's fast-paced world, where super highways link our cities, satellites and cell phones and computers network our communications. In this complex world, we still have the same simple mandate from Christ that previous generations had: "Anyone among you who aspire to greatness must serve the rest."

In the Middle Ages, it took many hands to build the great Gothic cathedrals. Today, it still takes many hands - and hearts - to continue to build God's kingdom in our community. Every generation is invited to do their part.

As Christian stewards of God's gifts, we are accountable for the proper use of time, talent and income that we have received. Please take a moment to read the enclosed brochure entitled "To Be A Christian Steward."

In the next few weeks, I will speak of stewardship at all the Masses and ask you to prayerfully consider God's gifts to you, and then evaluate how you can share those gifts within our parish community.

May God bless you for your continuing generosity as you share in Christ's call of service others.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Pastor

Week One - Sample Pastor's Homily: Stewardship of Prayer (#1)

Stewardship is a way of life, a particular understanding of the Christian life. It involves a life-shaping change of mind and heart—a conversion experience. It is not about money. This is not a money pitch. It is not even about Church work, although we will talk about that next week. It is about acknowledging the fact that we are gifted by God, and raising the question about how we use those gifts. It is our giftedness that I want to talk about today.

We come into this world with nothing and depart with nothing. What we have between birth and death is given to us by God—as a gift. We are totally dependent upon God for everything we have. When we leave this world, we are divested of all our earthly things and only our spiritual gains go with us and are visible in the eternal life. We never truly have ownership of the things of this world since they all belong to God. We simply have the use of them.

Let us reflect on just some of the blessings we have received from God. Obviously, the first and most important gift is our life.

- God not only brought us into existence, but also holds us in existence each and every second. If he forgot about us for a moment we would simply cease to be. We are held up, kept in existence by the power and the love of God.
- We have others in our lives. Certainly in our families—our spouses, our children, our parents are great blessings to us; also friends.
- We have the gift of faith, the blessings that we receive from our baptism.
- Our community and nation that has been abundantly blessed. We enjoy so many rights and human dignities and so many people of the world are deprived of these rights and dignities.
- Our health, our ability to earn a living, our education... All is a gift!

A steward is somebody who watches over someone else's property. If you manage well and take care of the property, you are rewarded for your

efforts. If you do a lousy job in caring for the owner's property, you get fired. Is that not how Jesus describes the role of a steward?

In the book of Genesis, God put Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden to till it and tend it. Not to abuse it and use it and treat it like their own, but to care for it on God's behalf. That is really the theological foundation – we are not the owners of this world. We are stewards of it; to be good stewards is our Christian responsibility.

Most of us exercise our stewardship of time and talent in our daily lives. We are called through baptism to be committed to following the way of Jesus and embrace his mission.

To carry out his mission in our world, that is to do God's will, we are to use our personal gifts to live the fullness of the Christian life and to share our gifts with those in need and help others achieve wholeness and holiness. That is really the very heart of stewardship.

Be thankful to God for the gifts and blessings that he has bestowed on each of us. They are not to be taken for granted or taken lightly. I would encourage you this week to thank God as often as possible for your life and all that you have. Saying thank you to God is the start of stewardship.

Week One - Sample Pastor's Homily: Stewardship of Prayer (#2)

Recap of What Stewardship Is

We are in the process of our parish annual stewardship renewal from which each of us will be invited to grow spiritually. Stewardship is Christ's invitation to live your life as a wise steward of all of the blessings that God has bestowed upon you. When we live a life of stewardship, we bring God into the center of our lives because stewardship challenges us to constantly evaluate and account for our entire lives.

Making the Commitment

Stewardship starts with prayer. Like all good habits, the practice of prayer requires a commitment, a day-to-day commitment. Set time aside time each day to spend only with God.

Listen to God. In prayer, God speaks to us first. This fundamental truth makes it possible for us to pray to God. He has been concerned for each of us long before we became concerned for ourselves. He speaks to us continuously, revealing himself to us through Jesus, by various modes through:

- Holy Scripture
- the Church, the extension of Christ in the world
(Because we are joined together in the Eucharist, he speaks to us through others.)
- creation around us, the physical context of our lives
- the gifts and experiences of our lives
- the Sacraments
- the Holy Spirit

God invites us to listen

Either we are more important than God is, or he is more important than we are? The answer is obvious. If God's will for each of us is more important than our own desires, shouldn't our attention be on what God wants rather than what we want? What God has to say to is far more important than what we have to say to God.

When we pray we should spend a few moments quieting ourselves so that all else is tuned out and we focus only on God. Jesus would often go to a quiet place to listen to our Father.

There are three general aspects of prayer:

- Be aware of God's presence. If we are not aware of God's presence, it is like walking into a dark room and talking to someone who might be there.
- Be aware of God's outpouring. God is always loving, creative, sustaining each of us, always. This awareness leads one to be grateful to God.
- Respond to God with love. To say, God my Father, Christ my Savior, Holy Spirit my guide – I love you too, is just the beginning of our response. To trust God and live in his way is the next step.

Putting God as the center of our lives and living in his way is living as a good steward.

Week One - Pastor's Sample Homily: Stewardship of Prayer (#3)

During his journey through America, Pope John Paul II visited many cathedrals and churches supported and built by Catholics who were dedicated to the Lord and his Church on earth. Since the birth of our country and the first coming of Catholics, we have built a vast network of churches, schools, hospitals and charitable institutions.

In our own parish, we have certainly been part of that great heritage.
[Insert parish history.]

Members of our parish are born into God's family through baptism. Here we learn our Catholic faith, and nourish this faith from hearing God's Word and receive the Sacraments. We are drawn closer to God and put him at the center of our lives from baptism to our own funeral Mass and burial.

How has our parish sustained throughout its history? We can answer in one word: stewardship. Stewardship is the response to God's call to do His work on this earth. Stewardship is Jesus' description for how we care for God's gifts. We are only caretakers of God's property and we will have to give an account of how we cared and shared his property. Few of our ancestors knew what this word meant, yet they did indeed live and fulfill the meaning of stewardship.

Stewardship is found in the writings of Holy Scripture:

1. Creation tale—Genesis: "The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to till and to tend it." The garden did not belong to man—it belonged to God. Man was his agent, his caretaker, and his 'steward.' As long as man took cared well for God's garden—he would enjoy the fruits of this garden. Thus, we are in this world not as masters but as servants—we are the Creator's stewards, accountable to our Creator.
2. (Specific reference to today's readings or Gospel)

This past week, every household of our parish received a letter providing you with an introduction of Stewardship. We ask that you read the letter and brochure, describing the U.S. Bishops' pastoral letter on stewardship.

Begin to reflect prayerfully on the meaning of stewardship in your own life. Each one of us are accountable before God for the use of our time, talent and treasure because they are gifts from God.

Each of us has an internal need to give back to God in gratitude for all the many blessing received. In practice, some of us might be concerned with fulfilling the “minimal obligations” (attending Sunday Mass, avoiding serious sins, contributing in the offertory collection). But stewardship draws us closer to God beyond the minimal obligations. Stewardship asks us to prayerfully reflect on our relationship with God, to ask, is God at the center of our lives? Are we living as his stewards?

Jesus lived his life by a religion of love and not simply a religion of law. He always invites us to offer the first fruits, not the leftovers. Not what we have to give, but rather, what we desire to give as an expression of gratitude. Many of you do that already—you are already servants and stewards of the Lord. Others must be challenged to come forward to do the same.

Many people have discovered that when we decide to give God the first portion of our time, talent and treasure, we find that what seemed at first difficult, soon becomes easy. What is leftover for us is really enough, and few practices deepen our faith more effectively than this decision to really put God first in our lives. Good stewardship transforms the time, talent and treasure. We go from an exercise of worry to a cause for joy and a means to draw closed to God.

Once again, let us reflect on the mission of this parish—a place of worship, of religious education, of ministering to others in need. Those who have gone before us—good servants, good stewards of the Lord, have made all this possible. We have much to be grateful for in all that we have received because of those who have sacrificed for us.

Let us reflect on a stewardship way of life and let this way of Jesus bring about an interior change within our hearts—a conversion. If we have not made this discovery of stewardship in our lives, please prayerfully consider the Lord’s invitation to begin today—at this very moment!

Jesus asked five important questions of his disciples and those who sought favor of him. He asks each of us the same questions today.

Listen to each question that our risen Lord asks us. Let his words echo in our hearts and minds.

Who do you say that I am? (Matthew 16:15)

Do you believe me? (John 11:26)

What do you want me to do for you? (Luke 18:41)

What are you looking for? (John 1:38)

Do you love me? (John 21:15)

Week One - Sample Pastor's Homily: Stewardship of Prayer (#4)

Today, we are beginning our annual stewardship renewal. It is an important and significant event in our parish life. It is one that will change the lives of each of us as it will change the life of our parish.

The annual stewardship renewal takes place in a four-week time period. However, it is a life-long effort that is part of our faith and continues to grow throughout our lives. During the next four-weeks you will learn of a way to fully embrace and respond to the teachings of Jesus Christ. You will be asked to evaluate how Christ is reflected in your lifestyle. Over the course of our parish stewardship renewal, you will be asked to prayerfully make a commitment of your time, talent and treasure. Each week you will receive information in each area of stewardship. We ask for your commitment for each of these important elements of stewardship by completing an intention card and returning it in the offertory on the fourth week, Intention Weekend.

Over the course of our annual renewal, you will hear from some of our parishioners about stewardship and how their lives have been affected by a stewardship way of life. The simple act of these folks standing before our parish and sharing with us how stewardship affects their lives is in itself an act of stewardship.

We greatly appreciate their willingness to come forward to explain stewardship because their involvement assists the Church in teaching and inviting each member to follow Christ more intensely. This is one of the reasons why you received a mailing this week. Please read the letters and the brochures (summarizing the U.S. Bishops' pastoral letter on stewardship).

Stewardship is based on the spiritual principles of the Old Testament and the teachings of Christ. Stewardship is a way of life. It is a way of thanking God for all his blessings by committing a portion of the time, talent and treasure to the building of the kingdom.

I ask each of you to spend the next few weeks praying and reflecting about stewardship and how it can affect your live. For individuals, it means thinking about the commitments we make. For families it means having a discussion with family members about the family's total stewardship

intention. In either case, please look at stewardship as the joyful return to God of the first fruits of what he has bestowed upon us.

We look to Jesus for help in understanding what stewardship really is. Jesus points out that we reveal what is important by our actions, just as a tree reveals what kind of tree it is by the kind of fruit it bears. This is very similar to what our Lord says in the Gospel of St. Luke about the things we value: "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Lk 12:34).

Stewardship will make a difference. The difference is seen in several areas of our lives.

- First, the difference is in the focus of giving. Instead of focusing on the needs of the parish, the focus is primarily on God and our relationship with him, therefore, our gifts are proportional according to God's blessings. What we give is an expression of gratitude.
- Second, the difference is in the motivation for giving. Stewardship is an integral part of our spiritual life and we give because we are grateful to God for what he has given. We give freely because we want to, not because we have to.
- Third, the difference is in the result of the giving. As we practice stewardship, we find that we grow spiritually and our faith is deepened. In fact, we find that our lives are changed; this is the conversion.

Over the next few weeks, I ask that you listen carefully to the message of stewardship as a way of life. Then, please give prayerful consideration to your personal commitment of your time, talent and treasure to our parish.

Week One - Sample Pastor's Homily: Stewardship of Prayer (#5)

Based on Roman 12:6-8, we are called to be Christian stewards - managers of the gifts God has given us. These gifts take different forms, often times categorized as - time, talent and treasure - but whatever their form, God calls us to share our gifts, especially in our parish for the building of his kingdom.

Stewardship is not a new idea; it is rooted in early Christianity. St. Paul speaks of the faithful responding with "an abundant generosity." He wrote to the Corinthians:

We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us. Let us exercise them: whether prophecy, ministry, teacher, the power of exhortation. He who gives alms should do so generously. He who performs works of mercy should do so cheerfully (Rom 12:6-8)

Today, almost 2,000 years later, Christians still face the challenge of doing works and supporting the work of our parish. If we do not meet this challenge, we are failing to help bring Jesus to a world that desperately needs him. We will be judged by our inaction as well as by our actions or perhaps more directly expressed by our Lord, "For the measure you measure with will be measured back to you" (Lk 6:38).

We are already stewards. Each of us manages our time, talent and income carefully, so as to fulfill our individual and family responsibilities. Just as we provide for the material needs of our family, we also have a responsibility to help provide for our parish, our faith community.

When we support our parish through our gifts of time, talent and financial donations, we are helping to provide for our spiritual needs and the spiritual needs of others through the work of our parish. The parish gives us an identity that helps us live our faith and grow in it. The continued and effective function of our parish must always be a major concern of every parishioner.

For the next four weeks, we will consider our responsibilities as stewards and how that relates to our parish through our annual stewardship renewal.

We will examine the parish's needs, and what opportunities are available for prayer, Christian service and for financial support.

On the fourth week, our parish will hold an Intention Weekend, and we will each be asked to prayerfully consider how we might increase our prayer, level of service and financial support to the parish.

St. Paul was not giving a "money sermon" to the Romans, and that is not what our parish's stewardship effort is about, either. St. Paul always looked at giving as a joyful act offered in thanksgiving to God, as an opportunity and not a burden. Our annual stewardship renewal is an invitation to give thanks to God and recommit ourselves as his people.

Only by working - and giving - together can we build God's kingdom in today's world. Thank you for your gift of time this morning and I pray that God will continue to bless our faith community as we examine ways to share our gifts with others.

Week Two: Stewardship of Time and Talent

- Pastor's Sample Homilies on the Stewardship of Time and Talent
- Witness Talk Samples on the Stewardship of Time and Talent

Week Two - Sample Pastor's Homily: Stewardship of Time and Talent (#1)

Stewardship is the awareness that our resources of time, talent and treasure are gifts from God. As we manage these gifts and try to follow the teachings of Jesus, we realize that our lives cannot be lived in a vacuum. We are challenged by Jesus to love as he loves, by giving as he gave. As good stewards we are called to share our gifts with others to express our love for God, and for others, by giving as Jesus gives.

Our parish has taken on the mission of Jesus. Each day our parish depends upon the generosity of its people to build the kingdom of God in our community. Parish involvement assists with the mission of the parish in many different ways, and it takes all types of talents. Each one of us is called by Jesus to love and be involved in the work of his Church. This invitation to be involved in the mission of the Church is a special opportunity for our young parishioners.

Even in our own parish community we see various forms of people in need. See the need of others as opportunities to serve Christ; a neighbor that needs transportation, a hungry person needing a meal, a classroom that needs painting, a teacher needing volunteer drivers for a field trip. Every time you are asked to give of your time and talent you are invited to see the face of Christ and respond to his need.

Jesus said, "For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink. I was a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me. I was ill and you comforted me, in prison and you came to visit me." (Mt 25:35-40)

We have the chance to see the face of Christ in others everyday in various, common everyday encounters. We also have the opportunity to become more Christ-like by engaging more with his Church.

We really do not need to travel far to offer Christian service to those in need. We have unfilled needs right here in our own parish [list a few priorities for volunteerism]. Our parish depends upon the support of all of us, no matter what our gifts are. By carefully examining our talent and the needs of our parish, we can discover the way we can best serve our faith community.

As Christian, we are called to be good stewards of God's gift and to share those gifts with others. Please spend time reflecting on how you can become more involved in the mission of the Church through the ministries of this parish. All parishioners, whether young or old, have special gifts to share with this faith community. Your gifts of time and talent will help the parish bring Jesus' healing touch to the world. And you will not only be benefiting those in need - you will also be helping yourself, for Jesus promised, "Give and it shall be given unto you." (Lk 6:38)

Week Two - Sample Pastor's Homily: Stewardship of Time and Talent (#2)

We have all spent some time over the last couple weeks learning more about stewardship, gaining an understanding of how it is based on the spiritual principles of the Old Testament and the New Testament teachings of Jesus. Living as good stewards is the way we thank God for all his blessings by returning a portion of the time, talent and treasure given to us. Stewardship deepens our relationship with God and draws us closer to him.

Everything we do, everything we say, everything we think, has to do with our relationship with God. We are either drawing closer or farther away from him by our actions, words, and thoughts. Even little actions can draw us closer to God. Jesus promises us that by being "good stewards," we will grow spiritually. There are many references in the Bible to stewardship. In one of those, Jesus tells us, "You can be sure that whoever gives even a drink of cold water to one of the least of my followers, will certainly receive a reward." (Mt 10:42)

I urge you to be aware of your gifts and how you are sharing those gifts with others and contributing to the building of the kingdom.

Our parish needs every member to contribute in some way to its mission. If each parishioner contributes in some way the load is lighter for all. Every parishioner is invited to participate in the work of the parish as it brings Christ's healing touch to our faith community and to those it serves.

At the end of Mass, we will learn how those who have adopted stewardship have had their lives blessed. Stewardship involves planned and proportional giving of our time, our talent and our treasure. Our lay witness will briefly share their personal experience of stewardship of time and talent. Then be sure to stop over to our ministry fair after Mass.

Week Two - Sample Pastor's Homily: Stewardship of Time and Talent (#2)

We all have gifts to share. Just as there are many different people within a parish, there are just as many different kinds of skills available to further the work of the parish. As Christian stewards, we are called to share the gifts God has given us - especially our gifts of time and talent. Each one of us is called by Jesus to love and serve his Church. This call is also a special opportunity for our young parishioners also.

We really do not need to travel far to offer Christian service to those in need. We have unfilled needs right here in our own parish [list a few priorities for involvement]. Our parish depends upon the support of all of us, no matter what our gifts are. By examining our talent and the needs of our parish, we can discover the way we can best serve our faith community and neighboring community.

Parish involvement should be looked at as an opportunity, an invitation. Jesus has promised to reward those who give generously of themselves to others. As St. Paul said, "He who sows sparingly will reap sparingly and he who sows bountifully will reap bountifully." (2 Cor 9:6)

Our parish family is blessed with many different members, each of whom has special talents and abilities that can benefit our parish. Today, we will be hearing from a member of our parish who will give some brief remarks regarding the practice of stewardship in their life. Please give your attention to our lay witness, who will talk about stewardship of time and talent. Then be sure to stop by our parish ministry fair.

Week Two - Sample Witness Talk: Stewardship of Time and Talent

In the total concept of stewardship of prayer, time, talent and treasure I believe that time and talent are the most important, yet the most difficult to share. It is much easier to reach into our pocket and give of our money than it is to give of ourselves.

Giving of ourselves is difficult, but if we are members of the Church, then we must have an active part in the Church. We are invited to participate in the Church by various parish ministry opportunities [list a number of parish ministries that parishioners can be involved in].

Stewardship of time and talent calls each of us to return to God a measure of what he has given us. [Share how your life is blessed and how you came to share your time and talent.]

In this, the second of our four-week annual stewardship renewal, we will examine ways we can share our time and talent with our parish. After each Mass this weekend all parishioners are welcome to our parish ministry fair in the parish hall/gym. This is an opportunity to see all of the opportunities to view all the ways a parishioner can be involved in our parish. There will be no solicitation of volunteers, however if you insist on signing up today you are welcome to do so. But, no one will ask you to sign up for any of the parish ministries. The purpose of this fair is to present our various parish ministries. Refreshments will also be served. Please take a few minutes to stop over after Mass.

You will have the invitation to sign up to contribute your time and talent on Intention Weekend, in a couple of weeks from now. Prior to Intention Weekend, you will be sent an intention card to your home. The intention card will list all the opportunities within the parish for you to share your time and talent with the parish ministries.

Please seriously consider how you can be a good steward and share yourself in the mission of the Church through our parish ministries.

Week Three: Stewardship of Treasure

- Pastor's Sample Homilies on the Stewardship of Treasure
- Witness Talk Samples on the Stewardship of Treasure

Week Three - Sample Pastor's Homily: Stewardship of Treasure (#1)

This week we reflect on the stewardship of our material goods, our treasure. All that we have our money, our homes, cars, furniture, clothes, food—are gifts from God, our generous Creator.

Some people in this world would argue that they have worked hard to earn all of their possessions and they have a right to them. That is really a shortsighted perspective. It is God who provides you with your existence, with loving parents who see that you are fed, clothed, cared for and educated. It is God who gives you the ability to swing a hammer or calculate a tax form, in order to make a living. It is God who provides sunshine and rain on the crops so that you and your family have food, clothing and shelter. All that we have is truly gifts from God our loving Father; we do nothing on our own without God's blessings.

Our possessions are not only gifts from God, but blessings from God. Nowhere in the Scriptures does Jesus condemn those who have many possessions. He does, however, pronounce very harsh words against those who use their possessions in a selfish way without paying attention to others people who are in need. As John Paul II has said, "it is not how much or how little people have, but how they use what they have that determines their destiny" (Pope John II).

In the Scriptures, Jesus says several times that our eternal destiny is contingent on the sharing of what we have with those in need. Jesus dwelt among in human form for 33 years to show us how to live, including his selfless example of total sacrifice to save you and me. Jesus did not choose to come and to die immediately. His life and death is an example for us of what it means to live the will of the Father and be his follower. When people said to Jesus, "Lord, I believe in you." Jesus' response was do not tell me you love me - show it, prove it!

"...pick up your cross daily and follow me... obey the commandments... sell all and give to the poor... leave your family and possessions and follow me... feed the hungry... give drink to the thirsty... clothe the naked... visit the sick and imprisoned... feed my sheep... love as I have loved... give and it share be given..."

Our response to be a follower of Christ must be a response of action not just words. Jesus also promises that if we act upon his teachings, and follow his example, we will have riches in heaven.

Every category of our lives can be an expression of our gratitude and love for God. Our possessions (and how we use them) are as much a part of us as our time and talent. How we respond to the needs of our Lord's Church, and people in need, either draws us closer to God or away from him.

Our gifts of money do not substitute for gifts of prayer, time and talent. Nor does prayer, time or talent substitute for sacrificial sharing of our financial resources.

As you consider your financial stewardship intention to our parish, I ask that you keep the following four guidelines in mind:

- Give prayerfully consideration to your response. Give back to the Lord in gratitude a portion of everything God has given you.
- Plan your gift according to your budget; give the "firsts fruits," not the leftovers. Make your gift a "sacrifice" in union with Jesus' totally sacrifice. (The word "sacrifice" means to make holy.)
- Please use your weekly envelope as a sign of your personal commitment to preserve and strengthen the Church in our world today.
- If possible, consider a proportionate giving plan. Proportionate giving is the Biblical practice of tithing in determining the amount of your sacrificial gift. A "tithe" means ten-percent of your gross income - ten cents of every dollar earned or received. That ten-percent is usually divided in half - five-percent to the parish weekly offertory, and five-percent to other charities such as the Annual Bishop's Appeal, Catholic Charities, foreign missions and other appeals for those in need.

To embrace stewardship as a way of life would be a tremendous act of faith and witness to Jesus in today's world.

Next week is Intention Weekend; at that time, each of us is invited to prayerfully offer up to the Lord a portion of our time, talent and treasure as an expression of gratitude to God. Together, we have prayed, we have

heard the word of God, and we have learned much. It is time to respond to the call to stewardship, the call to live and practice our faith. When you receive your intention card in the mail this week, I ask that you give prayerful consideration to your response, complete your intention card and place it in the offertory next Sunday.

Week Three - Sample Pastor's Homily: Stewardship of Treasure (#2)

Stewardship is a way of life. It is based on the Biblical view of God as Creator of the world in which he has placed us as caretakers, as stewards of this world. Each one of us will be held accountable to God for how we lived our lives and how we used all that we were given. In particular, we will be accountable for how we cared for each other and contributed to the building of God's kingdom. If we spent our life building our own kingdom, we will lose our eternal life. Build God's kingdom, then we will gain eternal life.

The paradox of Christian living, which Jesus proclaimed throughout his ministry, is that the more we give for the benefit of God's kingdom, the more we receive in this world and the next.

Why do we share our money or other financial blessings with the Church?

1. We are giving to the Church as means of giving back to God in thanksgiving for the blessings he has given to us.
2. We give to God as an act of faith, as a sign of our personal commitment to live in his name.
3. We give as an act of sacrifice in union with Jesus' sacrifice to save us.
4. We give so that his command to follow him can be more fully achieved in a world where finances do matter in keeping his presence visible - churches, schools, hospitals and charities - for the entire world to see.

Our parish, diocese, as well as the universal Church, operate in a society based on financial trade. We are in the world but not of the world; this is a reality. As a parish we are obligated to be responsible for the financial gifts received. We must also pay our bills, channel our funds into worthwhile enterprises, pay a fair wage to employees and reach out to help those in need. We need your financial support to continue the mission of our parish, which is the mission of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The practice of stewardship is the practice of discipleship. Out of pure love and gratitude to God, who is the Creator and Giver of all of our blessings, we are asked to share a portion - the first fruits - with him.

You and I together, are the Body of Christ in today's world. Each of us is called upon not only to say we believe, but also to live as though we believe.

I ask that each of us prayerfully examine what we are doing for our parish financially. Is our financial support what it should be? Has it kept pace with our increased income? Is it proportionate to our ability to give? Is it given gratefully, from a proportionate amount of the gifts God has entrusted to us? Are they the "first fruits" or the leftovers?

When we invest in our parish, we are helping our parish to be a just steward in its own right. When we invest in our Church we are truly helping to build the kingdom of God.

As you consider your financial stewardship intention to our parish, I ask that you keep the following four guidelines in mind:

- Give prayerfully consideration to your response. Give back to the Lord in gratitude a portion of everything God has given you.
- Plan your gift according to your budget; give the "firsts fruits," not the leftovers. Make your gift a "sacrifice" in union with Jesus' total sacrifice. (The word "sacrifice" means to make holy.)
- Please use your weekly envelope as a sign of your personal commitment to preserve and strengthen the Church in our world today.
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To embrace stewardship as a way of life would be a tremendous act of faith and witness to Jesus in today's world.

Next week is Intention Weekend; at that time, each of us is invited to prayerfully offer up to the Lord a portion of our time, talent and treasure.

When you receive your intention card in the mail this week, I ask that you give prayerful consideration to your response, complete your intention card and place it in the offertory next weekend.

Week Three - Sample Witness Talk: Stewardship of Treasure (#1)

I am here today because the parish stewardship committee has asked me to share with you some of my experiences regarding the stewardship of my financial blessings. At first I was apprehensive. I thought that they want me to stand in front of you and tell you how I calculate charitable donations. As I reflected, I realized that I would not be sharing just financial information, but more importantly, I would be sharing faith information.

When I am calculating what portion of my gifts I should give back to God, I simply reflect upon all of my blessings and how I am needed to help further Christ's mission through his Church.

All of the material things I have are all because of God. I am incredibly fortunate in this life. God blessed me with caring parents, a wonderful husband and many other special people to share my life with. He granted me the abilities to make a living. He has given me countless opportunities for enrichment, enjoyment and success. It is because of all these blessings that I cannot help but feel thankful. Although, to be truly thankful for all that I have, I cannot just verbalize my feelings and go on about my life. As a steward of these gifts, I must profess my thankfulness by living it, by my actions, everyday. I have a need to support the mission of the One who supports me—Jesus Christ.

It is because of stewardship that we are in this very building. Previous generations carefully planned it out, worked together, raised the needed money and built this church. They passed it on to us so that we could be enriched by it. It is our responsibility to pass it on to future generations. Our church is a gift. Thinking about that gives me a feeling of responsibility to carefully plan what I can do to keep our faith alive for the next generation. Just like past generations, it is through our generation's sacrificial acts that the Church can continue its mission and pass on a faith as strong as our ancestors gave to us.

My husband and I are not models for stewardship living. We have just recently made a stewardship commitment. I am only here to share with you our experience. When I am paying our bills, the first thing I do is set aside a portion of money for the Church and another portion for other

charitable causes. We have come to understand this as setting aside the “first fruits.” Then we pay the rest of my bills.

We did not always do this, we slowly worked toward this practice. At first we increased our weekly offering by a few dollars. One day when my husband and I were redoing our budget, we realized that we paid more money for our cable TV service than we do to our weekly offertory. In fact the percentage of money we spent on entertainment far exceeded our contribution to the Church. This did not sit well with us.

Because we do take our faith seriously, we felt an obligation to return to God in gratitude, a portion of what he has blessed us with. So we cut back on the entertainment and started setting that money aside. One half of our charitable funds go to our parish and the other half is contributed to other charities.

At the time, we did not know that what we were doing was called “stewardship.” We eventually learned about the concept of stewardship. We do not “tithes” at this time, although it is a goal that we are considering and working towards. In stewardship, we learned the importance of tithing and to offer up to the Lord a share of our blessings to help spread his kingdom here on earth.

Stewardship does not mean giving what is leftover, It means that we give to the Lord before we give to the cable company or anybody else. Stewardship is a matter of setting our priorities and trusting God more. After committing to stewardship, after taking that leap of faith, we have found that we have a greater, deeper relationship with God.

I do not believe that my gift of money makes me a better Catholic. Our relationship with God is much more complex than that. God loves me whether I give this gift or not. I need to be open to the things God wants to teach me, and I do not want my love for money or the things of this world to stand in the way of my love for God.

Finally, one last benefit of our stewardship planning is that it is easier for Father and the parish council to plan parish ministries for the coming year because they will have a more accurate idea of what the parish income will be based upon my commitment and yours. Determining God’s will for our

parish funds is a very difficult and serious task, requiring not only your financial support but also your prayers.

I ask that you please give prayerful consideration to the completion of your intention cards that you will receive in the mail this week. When completing your intention card, please reflect on the generosity of God and see the importance of returning to God the “first fruits” not just what is leftover.

Please bring your intention card to Mass next weekend and place it in the offertory as your stewardship offering. Even if you decide that you cannot increase your financial offering at this time, please be sure to return the intention card.

Week Three - Sample Witness Talk: Stewardship of Treasure and Completion of the Intention Card (#2)

Soon you will receive an intention card in the mail. As a spiritual renewal, one of the areas of stewardship, the intention card includes a commitment for prayer (to pray regularly) and presence (to attend Mass regularly). Also included is service (involvement in the parish), and financial gifts.

Everyone is important and everyone has something to give back to the parish, whether it is visiting the sick or ushering at Mass. Our parish belongs to us, all of us. The growth and vitality of this parish depends on us. Do not limit your parish involvement to simple attendance at Sunday Mass only.

The intention card will list all of the parish ministries available in our parish. We need parishioner involvement in everyone of our ministries. The list will help you understand all that we are involved in, within our parish, and assist you in making your choice of the ministries you would like to be involved in. If you have a special trade such as an electrician or plumber and would like to offer your talents there is also a place to do so.

If you are already involved in a parish ministry, simply note that by checking the renewal box. The intention card is a means of communicating your "intentions," it is not a contract. By completing the intention card you are expressing your interest in sharing your time and talent in the ministries you sign up for.

Please indicate your financial intent to the parish weekly offertory in the financial section. The intention card is confidential and is not legally binding. An envelope is provided for confidentiality if you desire to use it. You will not receive a bill or be bound to your commitment. The intention card will help our parish plan for the future.

Also, remember that our parish does not expect every penny of your charitable dollar. When you decide on a percentage you intend to give, allow half of this for our parish and half for other charitable causes such as the Annual Bishop's Appeal, Catholic Charities, St. Vincent de Paul Society, high school or college donations. The next time you balance your checkbook make sure that it reconciles with God as well as the bank.

We ask that you return the intention card on Intention Weekend by placing it in the offertory as your annual stewardship offering.

After the intention cards are collected they will be sorted and your name will be given to the appropriate ministry chair. A representative of the respective ministry will call you in the near future to invite you to an information meeting. If you mention a special talent such as carpenter or painter, your name will be noted and you will be contacted as your special talent is needed.

Please give a prayerful response to this invitation to assist in the building of God's kingdom through our parish.

Week Four: Intention Sunday

- Pastor's Sample Cover Letters for the Intention Card
- Intention Card
- Sample Pulpit Announcements

Week Four - Sample Pastor's Cover Letter: Intention Card (#1)

My Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ:

As we now bring to a close our parish annual stewardship renewal we are really just beginning to realize the tremendous challenge and opportunity we have to become a more vibrant parish. When we say that we love God, we must mean it: when we say that we believe in God, we must show it, and when we say that we will follow God, we must do it.

You and I, together, are the body of Christ in today's world. Each of us is called to live our faith in practice. We "practice" because we will never be perfect, yet we must try to follow our Lord perfectly. This is what stewardship is all about. Stewardship is trying to follow Christ, to live his way of life. It is a daily effort, which none of us can turn away from and still call ourselves Christians.

We are inviting all registered families of our parish to draw closer to God in prayer and actions. Enclosed you will find an intention card. I ask that you give prayerful consideration to your commitment of prayer, time, talent and treasure.

This is now the time for each of us, you and me, to express serious intention to be more committed to our Lord's Church through the practice of stewardship. Our intentions will be for the next twelve-month period.

Next weekend is "Intention Weekend." Please prayerfully reflect upon God's blessings in your life and how you can respond in gratitude. Complete the intention card and bring it to Mass this weekend and place it in the offertory as your stewardship offering.

Sincerely Yours in Christ,

Pastor

"He who sows sparingly will reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will reap bountifully." (2 Cor 9:6)

Week Four - Sample Pastor's Cover Letter: Intention Card (#2)

Dear Parishioners,

As members of our parish, we belong to a vibrant parish community. We are reminded that God is the giver of all gifts, and in thanksgiving we prayerfully return a portion of our time, talent and treasure for the service of our parish. The enclosed stewardship intention card is an invitation to become more involved in the parish community. This card provides an opportunity to identify how each member of your family can share themselves in the ministries of our parish.

Please give prayerful consideration to your intentions to be a more active member of the parish. Complete the intention card and place it in the offertory next Sunday.

Thank you for the prayerful, generous and sacrificial sharing of your time, talent and treasure in thanksgiving to the Lord.

Yours in Christ,

Pastor

Week Four - Sample Pastor's Cover Letter: Intention Card (#3)

My dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ:

Recently you were asked to consider the importance of prayer in your life, and in the life of our parish as a whole. Prayer is the one equalizing factor among us; it is the one gift that each of us can offer to our parish, in asking God's blessing upon us. All of our efforts in this life are useless unless blessed by God.

We were also asked to consider our commitment of time talent and treasure to the Church and those in need. So often I hear: "I have nothing to give," or "I do not have any special abilities." Very often it is not the special talents that we need, rather the willing hands to help build the kingdom of God. Even our Lord did not choose the smartest, strongest or most talented, he chose those who responded to his invitation to follow him.

Enclosed is an intention card for your family. I ask that you give prayerful consideration to your offerings of prayer, time talent and treasure. The card lists the various parish ministries, as well as proposed ministries that we hope to inaugurate in the near future. I hope that each member of your family will find something here of interest to be involved in. Please consider this letter to be a personal invitation to each of you. I sincerely invite you to be more involved in the parish, we need your participation.

When you look over the intention card, you will notice that, if you are already involved, simply check the "renewal box." If not, or if you would care to volunteer for a different ministry, print your name on the line next to the ministry of choice. In any case, I ask that you consider prayerfully a one year commitment of service to your parish family. At the end of the year, you may decide to continue in what you are doing or change your commitment to other ministries.

Also, please give prayerful consideration to your planned weekly financial offerings to the parish. Remember to plan your gift as a means of offering God your "first fruits," rather than what is leftover.

Next weekend, when you come to Mass, I ask that you bring your completed intention card and drop it in the offertory.

Thank you for your prayerful response to this invitation to become more involved in our parish. I look forward to your continued assistance in building up the kingdom of God here in our parish.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Pastor

Week Four - Sample Pastor's Cover Letter: Intention Card (#4)

Dear Parishioner:

In recent weeks I have asked you to prayerfully consider your level of parish support, in terms of both your offertory donation and your volunteer activities. As I have mentioned in my recent letters, mailings and homilies, we are all called to be stewards - good managers of the many gifts God has bestowed on us.

This week I am asking each parish family to fill out an intention card, included with this letter. The intention card is an invitation to help us make a firm decision regarding our level of parish support.

When you come to Mass next weekend, please bring your completed intention card and drop it in the offertory collection. If for some reason you are unable to attend Mass at our parish then I ask that you please drop it off or mail it to the parish office.

Our challenge as Christians is to build the kingdom of God in this world, as it is in heaven. We can accomplish this great task by giving of ourselves, as those who have gone before us gave.

May God continue to bless you as you share in the work of the Church.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Pastor

Week Four - Sample Pastor's Cover Letter: Intention Card (#5)

Dear Parishioners,

Our annual stewardship renewal is an opportunity for each of us to reflect on our call to be the living body of Christ. As St. Paul makes clear, the body has many parts and all are needed to do God's work in the world. Perhaps St. Teresa of Avila conveys the same thought in a more Eucharistic expression:

Christ has no body now on earth but yours;
No hands but yours;
No feet but yours;
Yours are the eyes through which he is to go about doing good;
Yours are the hands with which he is to bless people now.

It is time to consider how we will use God's many gifts in the coming year. I ask you to look over the enclosed intention card. Pray about your commitment to God. Talk with your family about how you plan to prayerfully commit your time, talent and treasure to our parish for the next twelve-months. Fill out the intention card and return it in the offertory next weekend on Intention Weekend.

Putting God first in our lives means being generous with God's gifts to his Church and those in need. Consider giving proportionately, if God has given you more, give more. If God has given you less, give less. But give back to God in gratitude.

God Bless,

Pastor

Week Four - Sample Pastor's Cover Letter: Intention Card (#6)

Dear Parishioner:

In recent weeks I have asked you to prayerfully consider your level of parish support, both in terms of your offertory donation and in your parish involvement. As I have mentioned in my recent letter and homilies, we are called to be stewards—good managers of the many gifts God has bestowed on us.

Stewardship is not something that we put on when we come to Mass on Sunday or when we participate in parish functions. It is the way in which we live each and every day of our life. It is an act of faith. A stewardship way of life is our testimony that we believe that God has blessed us with many gifts, and that these gifts are multiplied if we willingly share them with others. It is in sharing these gifts that we participate in building the kingdom of God.

This week, I am asking each household to fill out an intention card included with this letter, and then return it to the parish at one of our Intention Weekend Masses coming up this weekend. These cards are meant only as a guide to help us make a firm decision on our proper level of parish support.

Our challenge as Christians is to build the kingdom of God in our world and to bring Jesus' loving service to this world. That loving service starts in each parish household and extends to the parish community, then throughout the diocese and then the universal Church. We can accomplish this great task only by working and giving together and responding with generous hands and hearts. May God continue to bless you as you share in his work.

Sincerely yours in Christ:

Pastor

Stewardship Intention Card

Family Name _____

Phone Number _____

In prayerful thanksgiving for the many blessings from God, we promise to support God's work with our prayers, our presence, our service and our gifts. Here are the ways I/we intend to fulfill that commitment in the next twelve months...

- Prayer:** I/We plan to pray daily for God's work through our Church.
- Presence:** I/We will be faithful to our obligation to participate in Mass on Sundays and other holy days of obligation.
- Gifts of Time:** On the reverse side please list the family members' next to the ministries that they have chosen to participate. If this is a new area of commitment for you, a leader of that ministry will contact.
- Gift of Talent:** I/we would be willing to share my/our talents, skills or special abilities listed (by name of family member):



Gift of Treasure: I/we make a commitment to contribute \$ _____

Per Week

Per Month

Annually

Family Name _____

Phone Number _____

Opportunities for Ministry Service

Please print the family member's name next to the ministry of choice. Renewal—please check the box.

Administration

- Office Assistance _____
- Bishop's Appeal _____
- Pastoral Council _____

Finance

- Finance Committee _____
- Scrip _____
- Parish Events _____

Christian Service

- Holy Hour _____
- Moms Helping Moms _____
- Transportation to Mass _____
- Youth Ministry _____
- Newcomers/Hospitality _____
- Beautification of Grounds _____
- Funeral Luncheon _____
- Visitation Ministry _____

Family Life

- Marriage and Family _____
- Pro-Life _____
- Athletic Association _____

Faith Formation and Education

- Stewardship Committee _____
- Disciples in Mission _____
- RCIA _____
- Holy Name Society _____
- CCD _____
- Altar Server Instruction _____
- Altar and Rosary Society _____
- Knights of Columbus _____
- School Board _____
- HASA _____
- Rosary Leaders _____

Liturgical

- Usher/Greeter _____
- Music _____
- Lector _____
- Cantor _____
- New Harmonies _____
- Eucharistic Ministry _____
- Altar Server _____

Comments:



Step One Find your gross income.

Step Two Find the percent of your income that you are currently offering to God through the parish weekly offertory.

Step Three Prayerfully consider the weekly amount that you intend to offer God as the first fruits.

Annually	Monthly	Weekly	2%	5%	10%	15%
\$10,000	\$800	\$200	\$4	\$10	\$20	\$30
\$15,000	\$1,250	\$300	\$6	\$15	\$30	\$45
\$20,000	\$1,650	\$400	\$8	\$20	\$40	\$60
\$25,000	\$2,100	\$500	\$10	\$25	\$50	\$75
\$30,000	\$2,500	\$600	\$12	\$30	\$60	\$90
\$35,000	\$2,900	\$700	\$14	\$35	\$70	\$105
\$40,000	\$3,300	\$800	\$16	\$40	\$80	\$120
\$45,000	\$3,750	\$900	\$18	\$45	\$90	\$135
\$50,000	\$4,150	\$1,000	\$20	\$50	\$100	\$150
\$60,000	\$5,000	\$1,200	\$24	\$60	\$120	\$180
\$75,000	\$6,250	\$1,500	\$30	\$75	\$150	\$225
\$100,000	\$8,300	\$2,000	\$40	\$100	\$200	\$300
\$200,000	\$16,500	\$4,000	\$80	\$200	\$400	\$600

Week Four - Sample Pulpit Announcement before Mass

Today we will place our intention cards in the offertory. If you forgot to complete yours, there are extra ones in the pews for you to fill out. Please return your intention card today if possible. If you have completed your intention card and forgot it at home, please be sure to bring it next week or mail it to the parish office.

Thank you for your response to our stewardship annual renewal. We will be reporting our results throughout the year.

Follow-Up

- Pastor's Follow-Up Letters
- Telephone Follow-Up

Pastor's Follow-up Letter

The objective of Intention Weekend is to have all parishioners return their intention cards. There will be some parishioners, for whatever reason, who do not respond.

A letter sent by the pastor to those who have not completed an intention card could be instrumental in inviting additional participation in the annual stewardship renewal. This letter is to be prepared and sent about two weeks after Intention Weekend.

To properly execute the follow-up, the parish secretary or coordinator must have accurately recorded all returned intention cards. The follow-up letters should be sent to those parishioners on the list who have not yet returned their cards.

**Sample Pastor's Follow-up Letter
(#1)**

Dear Parishioner:

Last month you received an invitation to participate in our annual stewardship renewal. Many of your fellow parishioners have already responded. The faith-filled response of each parishioner to this invitation is the lifeblood of our parish community. For us to be most effective as a parish, I am asking all parishioners to complete a stewardship intention card. Enclosed is another intention card for your family, if needed.

I ask you again to complete at the stewardship intention card and bring it to Mass next weekend.

God has blessed us all in many ways. Will you make a thankful response to God's generosity to you?

God bless you,

Pastor

**Sample Pastor's Follow-up Letter
(#2)**

Dear Friend,

The response to our annual stewardship renewal has been very encouraging. A great many individuals and families have responded and committed their gifts of time, talent and treasure.

My thanks to all those who have made their commitment, but we need to welcome more of our households into the stewardship effort. If you have not received, or have misplaced, your stewardship intention card, enclosed is another copy for your use.

If you still have your stewardship materials and thought it might be too late, I would like you to know that it is never too late. Please complete the card and drop it in the offertory collection at the next time you attend Mass. Thank you for your commitment to our parish.

In the name of Christ,

Pastor

**Sample Pastor's Follow-Up Letter
(#3)**

Dear Parishioner:

Our recent annual stewardship renewal was very well received by the people of our parish. This generous response indicates two things to me. First, we are a prayerful parish and many of our people recognize their responsibility in relation to the resources God has given them. Secondly, we are aware of our parish ministries and are willing to work to continue Jesus' mission on this earth through them.

We have not received your intention card yet. Please consider this letter an invitation to become more involved in the mission of our Lord. I have taken the liberty of enclosing another card in the event you have misplaced yours. Please take a moment to complete it. You may return it in the offertory at Mass or mail it to the parish office.

Thank you for your prayerful response.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Pastor

Telephone Follow-Up

If properly trained, the people doing the telephone follow-up calls can be true ambassadors for your parish and accomplish much more than the completion of the intention cards. They can help build the parish community. They can invite people back to the parish. As our society becomes more impersonal, this personal touch is beneficial to the parish. This is the true value of telephone follow-up.

Two weeks following the pastor's follow-up letter, the parish secretary should generate a list of all parish household.

The names of those who returned intention cards should be removed from the list. (If using labels, remove these labels.)

The resulting list should be divided among the telephone committee volunteers. The parish stewardship committee may recruit volunteers individually or a parish organization may supply them from its membership as a service to the parish.

Two weeks following the pastor's follow up letter, a training meeting for telephone volunteers should be held. At this time, they receive their script, their assigned list, and their telephone follow-up slips to record information about each call.

All volunteers should complete their calls and return their lists to the parish office within a week.

Also, it should be understood that all telephone volunteers have demonstrated their commitment to stewardship by completing an intention card themselves prior to making calls.

Telephone Script

If the answer is yes to completion of intention card

Oh, I am sorry to bother you. Thank you. Your card must have been received after my list was updated. Your participation is very important to the parish.

If the answer is no to completion of intention card

The objective of this effort is to help the parish plan its ministries for the coming year through our gifts of time, talent and treasure.

Will you please fill out your intention card and return it to the parish office? You can place it in the collection at Mass this weekend, or mail, or drop it off at the parish office.

We can send you another intention card if you do not have one. Shall I send you one?

For a person asking how much to give

That's up to you. You know your situation best. Stewardship teaches us to give as the Lord gives to us. It also instructs us to give the first fruits - to put God first in our lives. Some people give proportionately, also referred to as a "tithe," returning the first dime of every dollar to the Lord - to be divided between our parish and other charities. They also try to do the same with their prayer, time and talent. Making a prayerful decision about your gift is most important.

Suggested closings

Thank you. I appreciate the time. Please let me know if you have any other questions or comments.

For a negative response

If you have decided not to participate at this time, just write it on your intention card, return it to the parish office by mail or in person. You may also drop your card in the offertory collection at Mass this weekend. The cards are important for the parish planning process.

For someone reluctant to participate because of a fixed income

Only you know of your situation. I can tell you that your intention card is not a legal obligation. It is just a statement of your intent to support our parish. If your circumstances change, due to illness or any other reason, your level of giving can be adjusted accordingly. Give only as the Lord gives to you. Is there anything we can do for you? Thank you for taking the time to talk to me.

For a busy person already involved in many organizations

The parish appreciates the time and talents that you have and are sharing with the parish.

The intention card is a statement of your intent to support our parish ministries. If you are unable at this time to commit yourself to new organizations or activities, please list the ones you are already active. We are happy to have you as an active parishioner. Thank you for the time you are investing in the parish.

For the person who objects to completing an intention card

That is something you must decide for yourself. But the card is not a legal obligation. It is simply a statement of your intention to support our parish ministries. Your decision is treated confidentially. But the total of all our commitments enables our parish to plan its ministries and utilize the most its resources. If you have decided not to participate at this time, simply write it on the intention card, sign it and return it to the parish office by mail or in person. Or you can drop your signed card in the collection at Mass this weekend.

Questions about parish finances

I am not up to date on the details of parish finances. I do know, however, that the intention cards will enable our parish to better plan its ministries for the coming year. If you have questions, you should talk to our pastor.

Some Helpful Hints

- **Be considerate.** Avoid calling at mealtime or late hours. The best time to call seems to be weekday evenings from 6:30 to 9:00 p.m. Let the phone ring at least five times before hanging up. (It is not advised leaving messages on the answering machine.)
- **Be personal.** Your list of names is a list of people, not a list of telephone numbers. They will be more attentive to what you have to say if you call them by name and be courteous. Thank each person whether or not they participate in the annual stewardship renewal.
- **Be confident.** You are performing a service for our Lord's Church. You are helping make good things happen. You are putting stewardship into practice.

For Those Who Give Nothing

In every parish, some people are not involved. They remain on the fringe of the parish, not sharing prayer, time, talent, or financial support for the Church.

Who knows why these people are out of the mainstream of the Church? Who can tell what has gone on in their lives? How can we assume that whatever pain they have endured, or separation they have felt, can easily and quickly be repaired?

Nonetheless, because we know that we need the Church ourselves in order to stay close to Christ and to know his love in our lives and families, we can confidently approach those who have gone away and invite them back home to the Church.

We can offer the invitation to become part of parish life again. We need them to share in our faith because it gives us strength. We can invite them to be part of the community once again. That is the most important message for us to share because it is our responsibility to share Christ's invitation to follow him.

Sample Telephone Follow-up Worksheet

(Attach Mailing Label)

Hello, _____

My name is _____

From _____

I am calling about our Annual Stewardship Renewal.

Have you received the stewardship material from our pastor? _____

Have you returned the intention card? _____

Record the following information about each call:

1. Date/time called _____

2. Person spoken to _____ unable to reach

3. Response:

Did Will Might not participate Will not participate

4. Questions/comments requiring parish action:

Pastor's Thank You Letter

It is imperative that all parishioners who return the intention card receive a thank you letter from the pastor. A personalized postscript gives acknowledgement that the individual parish member is not forgotten. This will make a personal connection with the parishioner and will benefit the parish in the years to come. This effort may take time, but it is time well spent. It is also important that the thank you be sent as soon as possible after receiving the parishioner's intention card.

Sample Pastor's Thank You Letter
(#1)

Dear Parishioner:

I want to thank you for your generous response to our annual stewardship renewal for our parish.

More than half of our parish households responded by completing their intention cards. This is an excellent response for a first-time effort. We are now in the process of contacting those from whom we have not heard.

Thank you for your generous commitment of prayer and involvement in the ministries of _____, also for your financial commitment of \$____ per week. Your commitment of time, talent and treasure indicates your strong support to our Lord and the work of his Church through our parish.

Again, thank you for your response to our annual stewardship renewal. You have been a great help to our parish as we do our best to build the kingdom of God.

In the name of Christ,

Pastor

Sample Pastor's Thank You Letter (#2)

Dear Parishioner,

You have no idea how heartwarming your thoughtful response to our parish annual stewardship renewal means to me. I am grateful to you for your generous response to prayerfully give of your time, talent and treasure. You are a most important member of the Body of Christ.

Please continue to pray for the success of our parish stewardship effort. I am sure God will bless you and all those who have made a commitment to support the parish. For my part, I assure you that we will always try to be wise and prudent in managing the parish ministries and financial affairs of our parish.

The tremendous response to our annual stewardship renewal has truly been a confidence booster to all of us who serve in various leadership positions at the parish. It will also enable us to properly plan for the future.

Thank you and may God bless you.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Pastor

**Sample Pastor's Thank You Letter
(#3)**

Dear Friend:

Thank you for generously responding to our parish's recent Intention Weekend. Through your thoughtful commitment to support our parish ministries and your financial pledge of \$_____ per week to the parish offertory, you are helping to build the kingdom of God in our community.

Living our faith is a great challenge in today's world. As a Christian steward of God's many gifts to us, we are called to share those gifts with others. The value of your time and talent to our parish ministries and financial support cannot be measured in just hours or in dollars. Your investment in our parish will pay lasting dividends in the hearts and minds of present and future followers of Christ.

It takes many hands to build the kingdom of God. Thank you for joining in this vital work. May God bless you, and your family, for your generosity.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Pastor

Year Long Stewardship

- Stewardship Evaluation
- Seven Signs of a Stewardship parish
- Stewardship Goals
- Stewardship Events
- Stewardship for Children
- Stewardship Reporting
- Stewardship Quarterly Reports
- Stewardship Communication
- A Welcoming Parish

Stewardship Evaluation

The effectiveness of the stewardship effort cannot be judged on the basis of financial results and volunteer commitments alone. The increase of funds received or volunteer time tallied is only the results of a response to draw closer to God by participating more in the work of his Church. Stewardship is spiritually based; the results will be in the hearts of those who have responded to the stewardship message. It is sometimes difficult to see the evidence in quantitative terms because the real stewardship results are qualitative – more enthusiasm, increased joy, deeper individual commitment and a different outlook on the gift of life.

Commitments of time, talent and treasure are results of the conversion process. These results of time, talent and treasure can be measured. Offertory giving should be analyzed by looking at comparable periods in previous years particularly of the year before. Review of the numbers should include factoring in or out special situations such as a month with five Sundays. The results should also compare the number of volunteers participating from year to year.

It is important that the stewardship committee meet with the pastor to formally evaluate the results of the stewardship effort. The pastor may also want to include members of the finance council and pastoral council when evaluating the stewardship results.

The Seven Signs of a Stewardship Parish

Bishop Robert Morneau, Auxiliary Bishop of the Diocese of Green Bay, Wisconsin, has been actively speaking about Stewardship as a way of life for many years. Speaking at the Conference on Evangelization and Stewardship in April 1997, Bishop Morneau listed the following signs of a good stewardship parish.

- **Hospitality:** Parishes need to welcome warmly all members. Everyone has something to contribute. Everyone is needed. Communities known for the vitality of their faith and for the quality of their service to people in need invariably inspire others to participate in ministry and to be generous in financial support.
 - How do we welcome visitors as well as new parishioners?
 - Is there a process in place to welcome and orient new parishioners to the parish?
 - How do we involve current and new families?
 - Do we communicate that all gifts are welcome and appreciated?
 - Are the children and youth of the parish invited to share their gifts and to participate at Mass and in parish activities?
 - How do we thank those who do share their gifts freely and generously?

- **Prayer:** The authentic steward must be rooted in the sanctifying presence of Christ, which, when recognized, embraced and celebrated in prayer and in the sacraments, becomes spiritual nourishment and a bond of unity. The steward needs to be sustained, above all, with constant contact with the Christian community, the parish, and with the opportunities that it offers for the nourishment of the faith.
 - Are prayer opportunities present?
 - Do our activities, events, meetings begin with, and conducted in, prayer?
 - Do we hold up prayer as a gift that is valued?

- **Leadership:** Parishes need a systematic way of infusing the theology and practice of stewardship into the life of the parish, identifying opportunities for members of the parish to share their time, talent and financial resources, and establishing an ongoing

process to recruit, recognize and thank volunteers in all parish ministries.

- Do we have a parish leadership structure in place that facilitates, models and encourages stewardship?
- Is there a process in place to form the lay leaders of our parish community?
- **Recommitment:** Stewardship is expressed not in a single program, but rather in a constant reminder to commit one's very self to the Lord. Annual recommitments inform, and form, in order to transform individual lives and the life of the parish.
 - Do we offer an opportunity of annual recommitment that informs, and transforms, individual lives and the life of the parish?
 - What are the opportunities available to invite parishioners to prayerfully consider intentional, planned and proportionate gifts of time, talent and financial resources to their parish?
- **Outreach:** The parish as a whole needs to set aside a portion of its resources to serve persons in need in the parish, the community, the diocese, and the universal Church. Ideally, parish outreach programs involve parishioners at the human level and create opportunities for human interaction.
 - How do we share our parish resources with the community and greater Church?
- **Lay Witnesses:** A key ingredient is the personal witness of parishioners who have experienced a change of heart as a result of their commitment to stewardship. Personal witness is essential to building a solid foundation for parish stewardship.
 - Do we have an atmosphere that welcomes and calls forth our parishioners to witness their call to stewardship?
 - Is personal witness an ongoing component of the annual renewal effort?

- **Accountability:** Constant accountability is fundamental to good stewardship. Parish stewardship efforts require a visible commitment to accountability for the full range of parish activities - from the way decisions are made and carried out to the way resources are collected, managed and used.
 - How do we care for the gifts of our parish community?
 - Do we create communication pieces that reflect how we have used our parishioners' gifts?
 - Have we shared the decision-making process with our parish community?
 - How do we show we are responsible stewards for the gifts shared with our parish community?

Stewardship Goals

Goals can help the parish increase parish involvement and build community spirit and morale, also increase the funds needed to carry out the mission of the Church and the parish. A parish stewardship goal should be projected based on an increase of the previous year's performance. A five to ten percent increase of time, talent and treasure from the previous year is considered to be a reasonable projection.

Typical goals deal with:

- the number of intention cards completed and returned,
- the number of families who increased their time, talent or treasure commitments,
- the total ministry opportunities offered,
- the number of volunteers participating in parish ministry annually,
- the number of hours given by volunteers,
- the amount of funds donated to the parish annually.

Sample Parish Stewardship Goals

- succeed in encouraging 400 families to complete and submit an intention card,
- have a total of 200 parishioners increase their annual volunteerism,
- have a total of 250 parishioners increase their annual gifts of treasure,
- collect \$400,000 in total annual stewardship donations (Sunday and Holy Day offerings),
- have a total of 50 parish ministry opportunities of time and talent.

Stewardship goals can be listed in the parish bulletin during the annual stewardship renewal as a bulletin insert. Also, these goals can be tracked on a poster.

Stewardship Events

Parish events are opportunities to invite parishioners to be more involved in the parish. Make sure the ministry catalogues are available at all parish events. Through out the year, the parish could:

- Host an award dinner and present certificates of appreciation to parishioners who have contributed their time and talent in exceptional ways in the parish.
- Organize home visits by a group from the parish. Visit parish household who may be homebound or uninvolved in parish life at this time.
- Contact parish families that have not been actively attending Mass and invite them to a special Mass, followed by a reception event.
- Bring families a ministry catalogue and invite them to be involved in the parish.
- Celebrate a child-centered family weekday evening Mass followed by a theme supper (Irish, Polish, Mexican, Italian, Chinese). This could take place monthly.
- Create a parish DVD. If your parish has someone with the talent to write and produce a DVD on parish life, this would be an excellent communication tool for new parishioners as well as the homebound.
- Give opportunities for fellowship such as pancake breakfasts, potluck dinners or open house.
- Organize a sharing session between your stewardship committee and other parish stewardship committees in your area. This is an excellent way to brainstorm and create new ideas for your parish. Also, the stewardship committee could meet with neighboring parish stewardship committees to find out what works in other parishes.

Stewardship for Children

If parents practice stewardship, they are not only fulfilling the words of the Gospel and giving meaning to our lives, but are also living examples of Christ to our children. We are called – both adults and children – to see Christ in others and to act Christ-like to others. We are called to feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, clothe the naked, practice hospitality and care for the sick and lonely. We are challenged to be a blessing to others.

Studies have indicated that the largest amount of disposable time and income in the United States is in the hands of the youth, especially teenagers. Children and young adults should be encouraged to be involved in their parish ministries. Young people should be taught to give the first fruits of their allowances or paychecks, rather than to give what is leftover after spending on their own entertainment.

Parents should discuss with their children how they decide what to give back to the Lord each week. Parents and pastors should encourage them to set aside a portion of their money for a special collection at school or a charitable cause that may be of particular meaning to them. Families could focus on a special need in the parish or community and contribute a portion of their donation to it.

Many parishes have incorporated a children's corner in the parish bulletin. Each week, their gift of time, talent and treasure are reported.

Recent research demonstrates that if giving begins at an early age, it tends to become a lifelong habit. Pastors or designated persons could visit religious education classrooms every fall to give a brief teaching about stewardship prior to the distribution of children's envelopes.

Children tend to do what parents do, not what parent say; parents must be an example of what a good steward is if the children are going to live as good stewards.

Annual Stewardship Renewal for Children

Once a parish has conducted successful stewardship efforts for their adult parishioners, they may want to consider adding the element of children's stewardship to their annual renewal effort. The following are suggestions for including children in the parish-wide stewardship effort.

Support – It is vital to enlist the support of the pastor, pastoral council, director of religious education, school principal and teachers and youth group minister.

Education – Include a four week mini-lesson on stewardship in your faith formation classes during the parish annual stewardship renewal. Feature children's activities such as posters or essay contests during the weeks proceeding Intention Weekend.

Children's Ministry List – Compile a list of children's time and talent opportunities that are available in the parish and community. Be sure to include adult ministries that would welcome participation on the part of children (such as housecleaning, lawn and garden care, hospitality, choir, visiting the elderly or helping at a soup kitchen). Make the list available to the children.

Children's Intention Card – The family intention card is designed for participation of each member of the family. However, some parishes could consider using a specially designed children's intention card for children to record their intentions to give their time, talent and treasure.

Communication – Introduce the idea of children's stewardship early through bulletin announcements, parish newsletter articles and bulletin board materials. In your parish wide mailings, include a note from the pastor to the children explaining the stewardship effort.

Children's Envelopes – Consider using a children's envelope that includes a space for sharing their weekly gifts of time and talent, as well as treasure.

Lay Witness – Ask a young person who is involved in ministry in your parish to share with the other children and adults what stewardship means to them.

Follow-up – Take the proper measures to ensure that the appropriate ministry chair contacts those children who complete an intention card.

Ongoing awareness – Keep children’s stewardship alive on a year-round basis through bulletin announcements, articles in parish newsletters, faith formation classes, prayers of the faithful and homilies for Masses celebrated especially for children.

Stewardship Reporting

Reporting is absolutely necessary for stewardship to flourish in a parish. Parish accountability can be demonstrated by:

- **Monthly bulletin reports** for funds and volunteer time donated compared to the same month the preceding year. Occasional mention of what was accomplished through parishioner's generosity is very helpful.
- **An annual parish stewardship report** including treasure, time and talent, expressed in broad expense categories along with a short explanation of how the funds were spent. A bar graph or a pie chart is sometimes helpful in reporting expenses and income. It could be inserted in the bulletin or mounted on a poster. Time and talent could be reported by number of volunteer hours donated.
- **An annual comparison report** showing what the average household contributes in the weekly offertory and what each average envelope holder contributes compared with the average contribution by people who do not use envelopes. Also the number of families participating in the annual stewardship renewal and the average amount of volunteer time donated to the parish compared with families who do not participate in the annual stewardship renewal.

Every parish report should include a word of thanks and encouragement from the pastor and mention that the generosity of the parishioners make the results possible.

Sample Parish Stewardship Report

Our Parish Population:

1035 households, 3045 individuals

76 new households registered in the past year

Sacramental Preparation Programs

- 48 parents prepared by 8 Baptism Team Members
- 7 catechumens and 12 candidates prepared by 10 team members in the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA)
- 132 confirmation candidates by 10 catechists and 11 facilitators, administered by 9 confirmation core team members
- 78 second graders prepared for First Reconciliation and Holy Eucharist by 16 people
- 22 couples prepared for marriage in a Pre-Cana Day by 10 Couples

Sacraments Celebrated

525	Masses
44	Funerals
72	Baptisms
132	Confirmations
78	First Eucharist's
1	Vocations to the Priesthood/Religious Life
4	Professions of Faith
78	First Reconciliations
23	Marriages
125	Anointing of the Sick

Education and Faith-Formation Programs

- 1100 students (Pre K-8) taught by 22 teachers and 20 aides
- Home and School Association (HASA) 42 parent club members met monthly, made a donation to the school of \$167,422.
- 268 religious education students (grades 1-8) taught weekly by 11 religious education teachers

- 65 students (grades K-4) met weekly for Children's Liturgy of the Word led by 8 catechists
- 83 Vacation Bible School students taught for a week by 10 teachers and 10 aides
- 6 prayer groups with 48 participants met and prayed monthly

Liturgy Assistance

- 21 Lectures
- 36 Altar Servers
- 28 Ushers
- 48 Choir Members
- 12 Cantors
- 32 Eucharistic Ministers

Parish Outreach

- 76 home visits to new parishioners
- 41 home visits to the homebound and nursing homes
- 2,640 service hours performed by 132 confirmation candidates
- 50 Hope for the Divorced and Separated meetings held with 10 regular participants, 30 workshop participants were led by 6 team members in 5 sessions
- 8 Welcome Home members attended 3 sessions with 4 team members
- 30 boys and 45 girls were led by 20 leaders in scouting programs
- 650 students participated in school sports, 21 coaches
- 16 widows and widowers attended 6 New Beginnings meetings

Administrative Programs

Pastoral Council met monthly with 9 parishioners and 2 staff members
 Finance Council met monthly with 8 parishioners

Stewardship Quarterly Reports

Many successful stewardship parishes provide their parishioners with personalized quarterly stewardship reports. Most people want to get credit for their financial gifts for tax purposes, therefore are hesitant to drop significant, anonymous cash gifts in the collection basket when they have forgotten their check or envelope. The quarterly report gives a statement of their financial gifts and reminds them of their parish involvement.

The quarterly reports are beneficial in a number of ways.

- **Increase Average Donation.** It has been proven in thousands of parishes throughout the country that parishes that provide quarterly stewardship reports to the parish families experience a significant increase in their offering.
- **Absenteeism.** Research has shown that as many as one-half of registered parishioners are absent from Sunday Mass on a typical weekend. This means that a parish that only provides a communication system of receiving and tracking gifts from the people who are in attendance at Mass is under utilizing its potential resources. When people say that they will give \$20 per week, they usually mean \$20 per week when they are at Mass and remember their check and envelope. The quarterly report may help to gradually bring these parishioners to a practice of giving \$20 every week, whether they are on vacation, a business trip, or forgot their check or envelope.
- **Track Offertory Gifts.** People want to fulfill their stewardship intention but sometimes lose track of their progress. Parishioners will generally “get back on track” if a parish initiates the conversation. Many parishioners think no one has noticed that they have fallen behind. Some may conclude that an offertory gift does not make any difference. Most parishioners who are falling behind are not experiencing personal financial difficulty, rather are missing Mass or forgetting to write a check prior to the collection. The stewardship reports will help to remind them to continue good habits.
- **Thank Parishioners.** The quarterly report offers the parish a chance to affirm and show appreciation for their parishioners’ generosity.

- **Provide Financial Updates.** Parishioners are usually not aware of the general status of parish finances. When appropriate, a parish status report could accompany the personal stewardship quarterly report.
- **Ministry Success.** Inform parishioners about how the parish ministries are fulfilling the work of the Church through the generosity of time and talent.
- **Accountability.** People benefit and respond to instruments of accountability. This quarterly report is a tool that helps parishioners responds to the stewardship message of using our gifts in an accountable way.

Stewardship Communication

- **Pamphlet Rack** – Make sure that pamphlet racks are complete with available stewardship brochures and intention cards for those who may have missed the annual renewal.
- **Posters** – In appropriate places, posters and other visuals such as bar graphs or pie charts should be used to continue to keep parishioners aware of stewardship throughout the year.
- **Bulletin Announcements** – Short ongoing stewardship reminders in the bulletin will contribute to your stewardship education effort.
- **Prayers of the Faithful** – Enhance the stewardship education effort as the parish prays for the work of the Church throughout the year.

Newsletters

More and more parishes, in an attempt to reach all parishioners, send a monthly or quarterly newsletter to all homes in the parish. This provides parish leadership a means to share what is going on in the many ministries in the parish. It may also include informative articles encouraging spiritual growth.

Some parishes include an article on stewardship in each issue of the newsletter. Sending out an attractive and informative newsletter to all household continues communication with every family. Even if a family does not attend Mass regularly, it could serve to reach out to send the message that we care about you and miss you when you are not here.

A Welcoming Parish

Many parish stewardship committees find that after the initial establishment of stewardship education, they begin looking at other aspects of the parish that affect the stewardship effort. One major area that affects parishioner involvement and investment in the parish is whether the parish is a welcoming parish.

Our parishes should be warm and welcoming communities. There are several ways in which we can make our parish more inviting:

- Every parishioner is responsible for extending a warm welcome to newcomers in the parish. A welcome from the pastor is important to inform the new parishioners of the ways to be involved and to reinforce the importance of everyone sharing time, talent and treasure to continue to build the parish community.
- A parish welcoming committee could be established and should personally welcome new parishioners within six weeks of registering in the parish.
- Providing new parishioners with a packet of information that includes a brief history of the parish, its mission statement, a calendar of events, a ministry catalogue, stewardship materials and intention card.
- Welcoming new parishioners to a breakfast after Sunday Mass or an evening dinner. This could be held annually, semi-annually or quarterly as numbers dictate.
- Parish ministry chairs and staff could attend to meet the newcomers and to invite them to become involved in the parish.
- Welcoming parishioners by announcing newcomers in the bulletin or from the pulpit at Mass, also their pictures could be placed in the vestibule or parish hall.
- Some parishioners assign ministers of hospitality for every Mass. These ministers should be selected because they are warm, cheerful

and outgoing people. They serve an important Liturgical function by knowing people's names and offering a warm smile and a word of welcome as they enter the church on Sundays. (These ministers of hospitality may serve well on the welcoming committee also.)

- Regular offering of fellowship opportunities – refreshments after every Mass enhance hospitality by encouraging informal socialization among parishioners.
- Providing nursery and child care during parish meetings and activities, when needed.
- Ask parishioner's opinions, via survey, telephone or home visits. Are the Masses at a convenient time for parishioners? Do the ministries offered within the parish fit the needs of the parishioners? Do parishioners have an opportunity to comment or make suggestions about parish life?
- Remembering parishioners' special days by sending birthday or wedding anniversary cards, announcing baptisms and weddings on a regular basis in the bulletin, announcing those who make their First Communion, First Reconciliation and Confirmation.

Liturgical Stewardship

- Stewardship Prayer
- Stewardship Songs
- Stewardship Prayers of the Faithful
- Stewardship Bulletin Announcements

Stewardship Prayers

Stewardship prayers reinforce the concept that God is the source of all things and we are responsible to receive from God gratefully, cultivate responsibly, share lovingly and return to the Lord with increase.

Lord God, you alone are the source of every good gift, of the vast array of our universe and the mystery of each human life. We praise you and we thank you for your great power and your tender, faithful love. Everything we are, and everything we have, is your gift. Fill our minds with your truth, and our hearts with your love, that in your spirit guide our community of faith. In the name of Jesus, we commit ourselves to be good stewards of the gifts entrusted to us, to share our time, our talent and our material gifts as an outward sign of the treasure we hold in Jesus. Amen.

O Divine Giver of all gifts, grant us the daily graces we need to follow closely in the footsteps of Jesus. May we renew with you our small part of the world by allowing your will to be accomplished in and through us. Help us to trust in your love for us and to grow in our faithfulness with you. We thank you for the trust you place in us as stewards of our personal gifts. May the Holy Spirit guide us in placing our gifts at the service of each other so that together we may faithfully live the Christian message and become your holy people. All this we pray in the power of Jesus' name. Amen.

O God, our loving Creator and Giver of all good gifts, bless our parish. Strengthen our faith and grant us the spirit of Christian stewardship. We pray that you will guide us so that we may give generously of our time, talent and treasure to the spreading of your kingdom - here in our Church and throughout the world. This we ask through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Loving God, we come to you in gratitude, knowing all that we are, and all that we have, are gifts from you. We offer you this day in gratitude. Help us to realize our need to gratefully share the first portion of our gifts with your Church and those in need. Help us to be grateful and generous stewards. We offer our gifts of time, talent and treasure to you as an act of faith and love for you. Give us the wisdom and insight to understand your will for us, and the fervor to carry out our intentions to please you. We ask this through Jesus Christ your Son and our Lord. Amen.

All powerful and ever living God, we do well always and everywhere to give you thanks. All things are of your making. All times and seasons obey you. You chose to create us in your own image and set us over the whole world in all its wonder. You made us the stewards of creation, to praise you everyday for your wisdom and power fulfills our purpose of existence. May we imitate your Son, Jesus, in his life of service. May we be faithful stewards of all your gifts. Amen.

Oh Lord, the Psalmist reminds us that you are "the earth and its fullness; the world and those who dwell in it." We know that it is from your hand that we have received all we have. Gracious and loving God, we understand that you call us to be the stewards of your abundance, the caretakers of all that you have entrusted to us. Help us always to use your gifts wisely and teach us to share them generously with others. May our faithful stewardship bear witness to the love of Christ in our lives. We pray with grateful hearts in Jesus' name. Amen.

Lord Jesus, you came to tell us that the meaning of life consists in giving. You told us that those who cling too tightly to what they have – without thought for you, or others – end up losing everything. You gave us new values by which to measure the worth of a person's life.

Help us to realize it is not temporal success, or riches, or fame that gives life meaning. Rather, it is the service rendered in your name that brings fulfillment and makes our lives pleasing to you.

May all of our activity help build God's kingdom and lead us to eternal life. Amen.

Lord God, you know the secrets of our hearts. Come now and fill us with your Spirit.

We offer a life of service and worship of you. May a song of praise be the constant melody of our hearts.

Lord God, bless us now with your love as we promise to be your servants and your ministers. Amen.

O God, creator of the universe, who graciously bestow all good gifts upon us. You have made us stewards over the world so that in honoring your creation we may honor you. Grant that we may use your gifts gratefully and that we may have generous hearts and minds. Help us return to you, in gratitude, all the good thing you have given us. We ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

“Christ has no body now on earth but yours; no hands but yours; no feet but yours. Yours are the eyes through which he is to be about doing good. Yours are the hands with which he is to bless people now.”

- St. Teresa of Avila

Almighty Father, we thank you for all the gifts you have given us: our lives, our loved ones, in short, all that we are and all that we have. Most of all, we thank you for Jesus, your Son and our Redeemer, who came among us to show us the way to eternal life.

Jesus was the perfect steward of your gifts, showing us that complete trust in you is necessary, and the giving of ourselves is an important part of following him.

Please help us to grow in your love and in the strength to give of ourselves to others.

May our every offering of our prayers, our talents and our material resources be made in the same spirit of sacrifice that Jesus taught us by his life and death for us.

We ask this through Jesus Christ your Son and our Lord. Amen.

Bless us, O Lord, as we thy humble servants come before you this day in our stewardship journey to grow in your likeness. May we be ever mindful of the blessings that you have bestowed upon us.

Help us to understand that, as we grow in stewardship together, we grow because of your benevolence. May we use this time on earth to build your kingdom. When we accept the challenge of stewardship, we know it is only because of your grace that we are able to accept that challenge.

Dear Lord, thank you for our earthly sustenance that gives us the strength of body to do our work. But more so, thank you for your spiritual food that fills us with the grace and knowledge that we are indeed your people. Be with us, touch our hearts, invigorate our minds and give us the courage to go forth without fear. Amen.

Stewardship Songs

In choosing music for the celebration of the Mass, priority should be given in correspondence with the Scriptural readings and the Liturgical season. Stewardship songs can be used throughout the year. They are also every effective during the annual stewardship renewal.

Let All Things Now Living	Lord, When You Came (Pescador de Hombres)
Lord, You Give the Great Commission	Pan d Vida
We Have Been Told	We Are Called
Gift of Finest Wheat	I Say "Yes, Lord" (Digo "Si, Senor")
Bring Forth the Kingdom	This Little Light of Mine
Christ is the King	City of God
Gather Us In	The Harvest of Justice
Here I Am, Lord	At Evening
One Bread, One Body	Come to Us, Creative Spirit
Go Make of All Disciples	Seek Ye First the Kingdom of God
Lord, Whose Love in Humble Service	This is My Commandment
I Heard the Voice of Jesus	O God, Empower Us
Sent Forth by God's Blessings	Help Us Accept Each Other
We Are Many Parts	What Is This Place
Blest Are They	Earthen Vessels

Great Things Happen

Take, Lord, Receive

All That We Have

All the Ends of the Earth

Beginning Today

Sent Forth by God's Blessing

Christ's Peace

In Christ There is No East or West

I Heard the Voice of Jesus

Sing of the Lord's Goodness

Make Us True Servants

All the Earth

Let There Be Peace on Earth

All That I Am

God's Blessing Send Us Forth

Prayer of St. Francis

Stewards of Earth

God of Day and God of Darkness

Happy Are Those Who Hear the
Word of God

Prayers of the Faithful

Stewardship is a vital part of our Catholic heritage and our challenge to live a Christian life. We can utilize stewardship oriented Prayers of the Faithful to serve as a constant reminder of our gratitude and commitment to live as good stewards. These prayers not only reflect our beliefs during the stewardship annual renewal, but through the entire year. The following are examples of Prayers of the Faithful that can be used as written, adapted to fit the needs of the parish, or create your own.

In thanksgiving for the many stewards throughout the history of the Catholic Church. Because of their efforts, we enjoy the wondrous heritage of our existing network of parishes, schools, hospitals and other institutions that serve the ministries of our Lord...we pray to the Lord.

For the many individuals who serve our parish ministries, that their example of selfless service will inspire others to be dedicated to living a life of stewardship in everyday faith...we pray to the Lord.

That stewardship may become a way of life with God as Creator and us as his servants, accountable to him for our use of time, talent and treasure....we pray to the Lord.

That we return to the Lord, the Giver of all our gifts, a truly grateful share of our time, talent and treasure...we pray to the Lord.

For conversion in our lives as we become good stewards; that God will enable us to carry the stewardship message to our sisters and brothers in the Catholic Church...we pray to the Lord.

That we obey God's call and place ourselves at his disposal to become people who act, not for our own glory, but for God's glory...we pray to the Lord.

That we find true happiness, joy and peace by putting God first in our lives...we pray to the Lord.

That we remember God reserves his richest blessings for those who respond to carry out his work...we pray to the Lord.

Lord, you are the giver of every gift, including the most precious and holy gift of your Son, Jesus Christ. Help us to remember how important it is for us to also be generous givers of gifts so we can carry on Christ's mission for his Church on earth...we pray to the Lord.

Lord, instill in our hearts a spirit of charity and compassion. Help us to be open to ways that can make a difference in our parish and community by being generous with our abilities and treasures...we pray to the Lord.

Lord, grant us the ability to honestly evaluate our lifestyle, help us to walk closer with you...we pray to the Lord.

Lord, help us to wisely use the gifts you have entrusted us to steward...we pray to the Lord.

Lord, we offer up a prayer of thanksgiving for the abundance of treasure and abilities you have blessed us with. Give us the desire to joyfully share our gifts for the good of our Catholic community...we pray to the Lord.

O God, our loving Creator and Giver of all good gifts, bless our parish, strengthen our faith and grant us the spirit of Christian stewardship so that we may give generously our time, talent and treasure. For this...we pray to the Lord.

For all members of our parish, that through our stewardship of time, talent and treasure, we will become more and more Christ-like in our efforts to serve others...we pray to the Lord.

For all of our parish members, that we practice a life of stewardship as a grateful expression for what God has given us...we pray to the Lord.

For all families of our parish, who make an intentional, planned and proportionate gift of time, talent and treasure, that our offerings will be a blessed and accepted by God...we pray to the Lord.

For all members of our parish who share their gifts of time, talent and treasure with the parish, that their faith be deepened and their lives become further enriched...we pray to the Lord.

Bulletin Announcements

Use bulletin announcements every week throughout the year. Also place stewardship prayers and other stewardship references in the bulletin. It is important to give information about stewardship in as many parish communications as possible. The stewardship message can be best communicated in the following ways:

- Reserve a regular space in the bulletin for the stewardship messages.
- Use the prewritten bulletin announcements or create new ones.
- Thank parishioners for their generosity. Affirmation is important to the long-term educational effort and may encourage those who have not embraced a stewardship way of life to try it.
- Print brief human interest stories two or three times a year about individuals who have experienced the blessings of stewardship. This will support parishioners who are committed stewards, also it will encourage those who are fearful about taking this step in faith.
- Several times through the year, use the bulletin to print the letters of appreciation from beneficiaries of a parish ministry. Ask recipients to write a short note about what the ministry means to them.
- In addition to letters in the bulletin, some parishes invite a representative of an organization which has received parish funds to give a short report on what was accomplished through the parish's financial generosity.
- Printing an occasional human interest story about someone who has become "converted" to stewardship and shares the effect it has had on their life is also helpful.

Preparation for Annual Renewal

Our parish will begin our Annual Stewardship Renewal on [date]. Stewardship is based on the spiritual principles of the Old Testament and the teachings of Jesus. It is a way of thanking God for all the blessings he has given us by returning to him a portion of time, talent and treasure. Stewardship can change our spiritual lives of both individually and the parish as a whole. The practice of stewardship is essential to the continued vitality of our parish.

Stewardship is based on your need to give, not on the Church's need to receive. It is based on the premise that all that we are, and all that we have in this life, comes from God. As a way of thanking God for all our blessings, we return a portion of the time, talent and treasure. Soon we will begin our annual stewardship renewal. Please be generous in giving a prayerful response to this invitation to join in the building of the kingdom of God through his work in our parish.

Our annual stewardship renewal begins this weekend. In this, the first of our parish's four week stewardship effort, we ask that each of us reflect on God's many blessings. As Christian stewards, we are called to generously share our gifts with our parish to bring Jesus' hope and healing to our community.

Share the gifts God has blessed you with – be a Christian steward. Beginning next Sunday, our pastor will begin a four week annual stewardship renewal to help each of us recognize our challenges and opportunities as Christian stewards.

Week One Sample Bulletin Announcements: Stewardship of Prayer

As Christians, we are called to follow Jesus' example of loving service – to live as he lived, to serve as he served. In this, the first week of our parish's four week annual stewardship renewal, we are asked to recognize God's many gifts to us. As Christian stewards, we are called to generously share those gifts with our parish as it brings Jesus' hope and healing to our community.

The first step of stewardship is prayer. We are called upon to make prayer a priority over all the other activities of our lives. In a few weeks, you will receive a stewardship intention card in the mail. That card asks you to make a commitment of prayer. We ask that you fill out the prayer commitment in the privacy of your home and bring it with you to Mass on Intention Weekend.

Week Two Sample Bulletin Announcements: Stewardship of Time and Talent

As Christians, we are called to follow Jesus' example of loving service – to live as he lived, to serve as he served. In learning to become better stewards of the gifts, we are called to share those gifts with our faith community. There are countless ways to serve the Lord and one another. Choose a ministry that uses your gifts and talents and will also draw you closer to the Lord.

In this second week of our parish's four week annual stewardship renewal, we reflect on how our parish depends upon our parishioners to bring Jesus' hope and healing to our community. All of us have gifts to share with our parish, please give prayerful consideration to how you can be more involved in the building of God's kingdom through our parish ministries.

Week Three Sample Bulletin Announcements: Stewardship of Treasure

In this third week of our parish's annual stewardship renewal, we reflect upon how our parish depends upon our financial support to bring Jesus' hope and healing to our community. Our giving should be proportionate to our ability to give. Stewardship recognizes our need to give as an act of gratitude to God.

Week Four Sample Bulletin Announcements: Intention Weekend

This is Intention Weekend for our parish's annual stewardship renewal. Today we invite you to offer your intention cards in gratitude to God. We are invited to offer our hearts to our parish and hands to our parish as we join in carrying out the mission of Jesus. Your gifts will pay lasting dividends to others and to your eternal life. Please give prayerful consideration to your stewardship renewal.

Today is Intention Weekend, the final part of our parish's four week annual stewardship renewal. All are asked to offer our hearts and hands to our parish as it builds the kingdom of God in our community. Your gifts will pay lasting dividends in the hearts of the people our parish ministries.

Annual Renewal Follow Up Sample Bulletin Announcements

Last week was Intention Weekend for our parish annual stewardship renewal. Each of our parish families were asked to make a prayerful commitment of time, talent and financial support to our parish. If you have not yet make your commitment, please prayerfully consider your commitment to the parish by completing your intention card and place it in the offertory.

Yearlong Bulletin Announcements

Your first responsibility is to take care of your needs and the needs of your family – not necessarily wants, but needs. In looking at what we need versus what we want, we end up placing material things and money in the proper perspective.

All too often stewardship is presented only with the support of financial funding as a goal. Stewardship is much more, it involves a prayerful response including time and talent. Stewardship involves a willingness to give from the very core of who we are and what we have from substance rather than abundance.

“None of those who cry out ‘Lord, Lord’ will enter the Kingdom of God, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven.” (Mt 7:21) Jesus made clear that being a wise and prudent steward of all God’s gifts is part of living his will for us and we will be judged by our actions, not words.

Stewardship of treasure asks only a percentage of income. Many people find that when they trust God and return a certain percentage of their income to the Church and other charities, they can live adequately on the rest of their income. God knows what we need even before we ask; trust in the Lord.

A good steward realizes all we have comes from God and we must use our gifts as wise stewards to help others by sharing them with our parish, our diocese, our world Church.

Sharing our time, talent and treasure brings us closer to God. Here I am Lord, I have come to do your will.

Stewardship is a life style which involves a deeper understanding of our relationship to God and to others. It is a free and joyful response to the Gospel invitation to recognize our responsibility to be good stewards of God's many gifts.

Good stewards strive to be Christ-like by emptying ourselves of all pride and placing ourselves at the service of others in the name of Jesus.

Stewardship must become a way of life with God as Creator and us as his servants accountable to him.

Stewardship is a way of living our faith that expresses our willingness to be partners with Jesus by carry out his work in this world.

To be a steward, one must have faith. Faith enables us to look beyond ourselves and recognize that what we have is a gift from God which we must share with others.

The three main components of stewardship are time, talent and treasure. We see each as God given and these gifts are opportunities to show gratitude to God by using them for his glory.

Only hands opened to give can be opened to receive. God cannot give to us when our hands are clenched to what little we possess at this very moment.

We are stewards in the sense that all we have comes to us from God. Stewardship is an understanding that gives proper thanks for our life's blessings. We can properly thank our Creator by prayerfully giving back to his Church a portion of our time, talent and treasure.

The meaning of money is attached to its use. God never condemned the possession of money, as such, but rather insisted that it be used to further the kingdom of God.

Our stewardship – our giving of ourselves and our resources – binds us together as a community which lives out God’s love in the world.

Living the concept of stewardship allows us to more fully comprehend the benefits of a Christian life.

Stewardship is motivated by the love of God, and one another, through prayerful giving of our time, talent and treasure.

Stewardship is an act of service to God and to others. Teach young people the value of sharing.

Stewardship calls us to recognize our gifts as God-given. To use them in a way that will acknowledge God’s generosity giving. Our response, therefore, should be gratitude.

Stewardship calls us to share what we have with others generously. Stewardship focuses on our dependence on God, which goes against society’s focus on independence. We really can never be “self-sufficient” since we are totally reliant on God.

A steward sees his offering as an act of love to God for his many blessings. Giving then becomes an act of worship, a faith stance, a spiritual way of life because the motivation for giving is spiritual – giving back to God a portion he has given to us.

Our stewardship commitment tells us that success in the eyes of God is not placed in the amount of our material goods, but rather, in how we make use of material goods to carryout his will.

What we give, we give to Jesus ... what we do, we do for Jesus. As Christian stewards, we receive God's gifts gratefully, cultivate them responsibly, share them lovingly in justice with others and return them with increase to the Lord.

A steward recognizes that all treasures received from God are to be used for the glory of God. Jesus is the perfect steward – watch Jesus and follow his way.

The Christian steward returns to the parish a portion of God's gifts as an act of faith, commitment and love. Your generous support to our parish contributes to the mission of Jesus.

Christian stewardship tells us to become aware that God is the ultimate Giver of the gifts we have. To give to God should be first fruits, not what might be leftover.

A Christian steward asks, what does God want to accomplish through me?

Stewardship is an important concept for our spiritual growth as Catholics. It is a way of thanking God for all his blessings by prayerfully returning to him a portion of the time, talent and treasure we have received. Giving of our time starts by being with God in prayer and worship.

As we practice stewardship, we grow spiritually and our faith deepens.

Stewardship of our time, talent and treasure is not limited to just our parish involvement. Many people give time and money to others in need in throughout our community.

We are all stewards – managers of the many gifts God has bestowed upon us. Our challenge as Christians is to make good use of those gifts.

Stewardship is a humble acceptance of the fact that none of what we have is truly ours but God-given.

Giving of ourselves ... our prayers, time, talent and treasure ... mainly involves a change of attitude, a conversion process. Think in terms of giving in gratitude to God and considering how blessed we are to draw closer to God by giving of ourselves for the sake of the kingdom.

A stewardship way of life opens our spiritual eyes and ears to gain an understanding that our gifts can be given away without asking, “What will I get in return?”.

Each one of us is talented in some way. Stewardship encourages us to recognize our gifts of talent and to use our gifts to benefit the building of the kingdom.

Jesus asks us to love as he has loves, to demonstrate our love for him through generosity to others. In our everyday lives, he calls us to share our gifts of time, talent and treasure with others. Please be generous.

Jesus asks us to commit ourselves to be good stewards of the gifts entrusted to us, as an outward sign of the love and gratitude for God.

How many of your free hours are spent doing things for yourself rather than for others?

Giving of time, talent and treasure is not about giving until it hurts, rather it is about giving until you feel Christ-like.

God pursues you as though you were his only child; you are important to God. Be faithful as though you are his only child; seek him as he seeks you.

Stewardship is based on the spiritual principles of the Old Testament and the teachings of Jesus. Living a life of stewardship results in fulfillment and blessings from God.

Stewardship engenders a spirituality that connects us with Jesus. Stewardship involves prayerful, intentional, planned and proportionate giving of our time, talent and treasure.

Have you ever taken a moment to calculate how much time, on average, you spend a week involved in your parish?

Stewardship is planned giving and does not leave giving to chance. It challenges us to plan. It asks us to prayerfully and deliberately appraise what we are doing with our time, our talent and our treasure.

Stewardship is not job oriented or project minded. It is a way of life that draws us closer to God.

Stewardship takes a positive view on money. It sees money not only as a medium of exchange, but also, as a symbol of the person who has it. The way we acquire it, use it and share it reveals our faithfulness to God, the Giver of all things.

Stewardship requires us to be grateful to God for the gifts we have received. Being grateful means that we share our time, talents and treasure with those in need. Each of us is called to use our gifts of time, talent and treasure to proclaim God's kingdom.

As Jesus said of himself “..the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve.” (Mt 20:28) Service to others is the way of Christ. Follow him.

Stewardship is prayer elevated to action. Weekly contributions to our parish express our gratitude to God and support the mission of Jesus Christ. Support the work of the Church as a faithful steward.

In a world in which materialism and individualism are dominant, there is often a sense of selfishness and no sense of responsibility toward others. The needs of others do not always figure into the world's thinking. As followers of Christ, we are our brother's keepers; we are called to share what we have with others through stewardship.

Generosity travels in an ever-widening circle, returning a hundred-fold to those who give of their substance. Christian generosity means giving more than we should because we are doing it for Jesus. Weekly, we are commanded to “Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.” What are you doing during the remainder of the week?

That which sustains our life – indeed, our very life itself – comes to us from a generous God who keeps the promise to provide for us always. Many times, God's gifts come to us through others: the people who lovingly give us time, talent and treasure. Have I returned to God even a portion of the gifts that have been given to me?

Stewardship Resources

Questions and Answers

Is “stewardship” another word for fundraiser?

No, stewardship calls us to reflect on all our gifts including our time and talents. Our financial resources represent only a part of who we are. The stewardship effort invites us to reflect upon our relationship with God, our loving Father, and make a personal decision, in prayer, about how we can return a portion of our gifts to God in gratitude.

I give to my parish already. What does giving of the “first fruits” mean?

Giving of the “first fruits” means letting God be the top priority in our lives. Many of us give to God, by giving to the Church, out of what is leftover, after we take care of our own needs. Giving of the “first fruits” means we give off the top, in proportion to how we have been blessed.

What portion should I give?

The Old Testament suggests a “tithe,” the first ten cents of every dollar go to God through gifts to his Church. The New Testament asks that we model our life, and giving habits, after Jesus’ example and teachings. The tithe can serve as a guide to planning our giving habits according to giving proportionately.

Prayerfully determine a percentage that you will give from the top; then, examine your heart. When you are at peace about the size of your gift, when you do not find yourself making excuses, when you know in your heart that you have been completely honest with God and yourself, then your gift is the proper proportion.

How much money will that mean each week?

It will vary with every person and family. What is a sacrifice for you may be easy for another; what is a small amount to you might be an enormous,

even impossible sum for another. Remember the widow's mite in the Gospel was more significant to Jesus than a larger sum from the others because she gave from her substance, and Jesus even pointed that out to his followers. (Mt 12:41-44; Lk 21:1-4)

What are the benefits of proportionate giving?

Great peace of heart, a sense of satisfaction, and an assurance that God's word in the Scriptures is truth: "Bring the whole tithe...that these may be food in my house, and try me in this, say the Lord...Shall I not open for you the flood gates of heaven, to pour down blessing upon you without measure? (Mal 3:10) God will bless all who live his commands.

What about all of the other demands made on me for charitable causes?

A common way of working this out today is to divide five-percent for the offertory collection and five-percent for other charities. That second five-percent includes charities like the Annual Bishop's Appeal, Catholic Charities or foreign missions.

Does the Church talk about money too much?

Individual parishes may, or may not, talk about money. Reality is, God's work requires money; it takes money to make money. In fact, it is a duty of the Church to ask for money, not only for its work, but for the work that is done in the name of the Church. The Church has a responsibility to help those needs in the name of Christ.

Why do we talk about money in our Church?

Because Jesus talked about money a lot. Over half his parables dealt with money and possessions. He knew from his experience as a carpenter just how much labor is required to earn a fair wage. We, too, know how hard we need to work to earn our pay. In his day and today, Jesus knows that we tend to measure values in terms of money and that money is in many ways, our "easiest language." When Jesus spoke of trusting God, he always related our trust in God with the use of material needs. So, when we illustrate the role of stewardship in our lives, the use of our material goods (including money) plays an important role in our trusting God.

Why is the offertory of the Mass important?

The message of stewardship as the summary of discipleship is central to the Eucharist and is engrained throughout the scriptures.

The offertory collection, according to early Church documents, is an important part of the Mass, therefore, collections must not be disguised. It deserves its own time, must not be cut short, hurried, nor needlessly prolonged. Studies show the passing of the basket from one person to the next, with each actually touching it, is the most effective invitation to respond with a gift. Also, it is recommended that the congregation not sing during this time, a solo or instrument tune will serve better and avoid distractions or missing of prayer expressions.

The collection basket holds the gifts of the congregation, the fruits of their work; completely connecting each individual's lives, prayers, faith, love, sacrifice and worship. The offering should be treated as our collective sacrificial offering in union with Jesus' perfect sacrifice. Our offering of the first fruits of bread and wine and treasure is presented. The priest should receive them with gratitude, bless them with reverence and present them to the Lord with respect. The priest should receive the gifts of bread and wine and the collection basket placed near the altar.

Why an intention?

An intention enables the parish leaders to plan a budget for this year and years ahead. It helps each family take a step and prayerfully promise the Lord a definite part of the income. It gives support to other members of the parish family. It serves as a reminder throughout the year of a promise we made earlier to God.

Why should I complete an intention card?

The intention card expresses our prayerful decision to return to God, out of gratitude a definite first portion of time, talent and treasure God entrusts to us as his steward. The intention card provides the parish with a valuable tool for planning the work of the parish ministries and the annual budget.

How long is the commitment?

For twelve-months, until next year's annual stewardship renewal, when you will be invited to re-evaluate your commitment and prayerfully commit time, talent and treasure to the parish for another twelve month period.

What if I cannot meet my intended gifts?

If your circumstances change, so should your offerings. Give only as the Lord gives to you. If God is generous with you, so you should be generous with God.

How does stewardship work with planned giving?

Stewardship is grounded in the belief that God gives us everything we have and God calls each of us to use our gifts for the building of God's kingdom, not ours. Stewardship involves prayerful, intentional, planned and proportionate giving of time, talent and treasure. As good stewards of God's gifts, we have a responsibility to pass on to future generations the blessings we have received in this life, as previous generations have done for ours. Our first concern should be taking care of our loved ones. Then consider leaving a portion of our estate to our parish, diocese or charities.

In order to raise the consciousness of Catholics about the possibility of making a major gift to the Church or charity, many dioceses conduct planned giving and estate planning seminars.

Are there diocesan planned gift services available?

Informational planned giving seminars are offered by the Director of Planned Giving. A planned giving seminar can be arranged at your parish by calling (260) 422-4611, ext. 3312.

Donor visits are also available. These visits provide information about planned giving. Visits do not presume that the gift will be made. The donors should be informed of how their needs can be matched through one of our planned giving programs.

Training of parish staff is also available to help donors learn the best way to give a planned gift to the parish. Or, you can have the donor deal directly with the Development Office to facilitate a gift to the parish.

For more information on planned giving, donor visits or questions about planned gifts, contact the Diocesan Planned Giving Office at (260) 422-4611, ext. 3312.

How does stewardship work with the Annual Bishop's Appeal?

The Annual Bishop's Appeal is an annual appeal conducted by each parish within our diocese. The funds raised within goal are used to provide needed diocesan ministries that are more effectively offered by the diocese, rather than attempted by each individual parish. Funds raised beyond the parish goal are returned to the respective parishes.

Once a year, every parish family is asked to join with the work of the Church in our diocese by making a prayerful and proportionate gift to the Annual Bishop's Appeal.

How does stewardship work with capital campaigns?

A capital campaign is an intensive effort to raise a significant sum of money for nonrecurring parish needs, such as the construction of a building. True "stewardship parishes" may never have the need to conduct a capital campaign since most parishioners are giving a proportionate amount of their income resulting in the parish income far exceeding its expenses. Stewardship parishes have long-term plans and set aside funds to see those plans through. Parish leaders are responsible to see that the parish makes decisions according to the stewardship way of life.

Even a parish that has had a stewardship effort in place for a number of years may find it necessary to conduct a capital campaign. When a capital campaign is necessary, parishioners are encouraged to pledge an additional prayerful gift typically within a three-year pledge period.

The Diocesan Development Office, with the Bishop's approval, can provide capital campaign consulting services for a parish conducting a capital campaign.

How does stewardship work with twinning?

If a stewardship way of life were really understood, the parish would plan, not only for its own benefit, but also to reach out to other parishes in need. Sharing a small percentage of time, talent and treasure with another parish helps parishioners understand the true concept of stewardship.

Each parish is called to go beyond its borders as a member of the universal Church. The twinning program is an opportunity for each person to reach out to another parish in the diocese.

How does stewardship work with tuition?

Catholic school tuition is not the true cost to educate the student. Parish subsidy and development efforts cover the difference between the tuition payment and actual cost to educate.

Tuition payment cannot be considered a donation. Although any payment made above the listed tuition cost is a donation.

The parish may have two different tuition scales – a parishioner rate and a non-parishioner rate. A parishioner is a parish family that is registered, active and supportive in the parish community. Living a stewardship way of life would exemplify the meaning of an active and supportive family. Therefore, the completion of a stewardship intention card and active participation in the parish is a good measurement of those families eligible for the parishioner tuition rate.

Further Reading

Books

A Bibliography of Christian Stewardship and Development. A thirty page bibliography compiled by the International Catholic Stewardship Council (1275 K Street, NW, Suite 980, Washington, D.C. 20005).

Bassler, Jouette M. God and Mammon: Asking for Money in the New Testament. (Nashville: Abingdon, 1991) An examination of what the early Christian documents say about asking for money and the circumstances in which to do it. Provides insight into modern stewardship practices.

Block, Peter. Stewardship. (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler, 1993) Block shows how integrating the principles of stewardship into the business world revolutionize modern management practices by creating a sense of ownership among the work force.

Burkett, Larry. What the bible Says About Money. (Brentwood, Tenn.: Wogelmuth & Hyatt, 1989) Reference guide to virtually every Scriptural text dealing with money.

Bryon, William J. "The Idea of Stewardship," The Priest (September 1992) Excellent article describing the overview of the concept of stewardship.

Clements, C. Justin. Stewardship – A Parish Handbook. (Missouri: Ligouri, 2000) A comprehensive guide to implementing a parish stewardship effort. To order call (636) 464-2500.

Conway, Daniel. The Good Steward: Taking Care of and Sharing All God's Gifts. (Archdiocese of Indianapolis, 1994) A collection of stewardship articles.

Conway, Daniel. "*The Move to Stewardship*," Church (Summer 1993) Responses to frequently asked questions about stewardship.

Conway, Daniel, et al. The Reluctant Steward. (Indianapolis, IN. Christian Theological Seminary and Saint Meinrad, IN: Saint Meinrad Seminary, 1992) The published results of a research project designed to study the ways that churches in the U.S. and Canada prepare their current and future

leaders to be better stewards of the human, physical and financial resources entrusted to their care.

Earth Works Group. 50 Simple Things Kids Can Do To Save The Earth. (New York: Scholastic Inc., 1990) Just as the title states, a basic introduction to stewardship of the environment for children.

Haughey, John C. Converting 9 to 5: A Spirituality of Daily Work. (New York: Crossroad, 1989) Father Haughey confronts the lack of fulfillment that exists in the workplace and delves into the question of the spiritual dimension of work in order to find ways to enrich one's personal life as well as benefits one's community.

Haughey, John C. The Holy Use of Money: Personal Finances in the Light of Christian Faith. (New York: Crossroad, 1992) A Jesuit theologian conducts a faith audit of personal finance. "Father Haughey challenges Christians to see money not as a reward, or protection, or even a necessity, but as something quite simple and utilitarian – a means of expressing their love of God."

Kavanaugh, John Francis. Following Christ in a Consumer Society: The Spirituality of Cultural Resistance. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1981) Emphasizes the counter-cultural aspect of Christian stewardship in a society that increasingly values persons by the criteria of marketability and consumption.

Lawson, Douglas M. Give to Love: How Giving Can Change Your Life. (LaJolla, CA: Alti, 1991) Offers you a different way of looking at your life, based on starting new information about the benefits you can gain from giving. Researchers are finding that giving can also lower your stress level, strengthen your immune system, extend your life and – literally as well as figuratively – give you a stronger heart.

Lenahan, Phil, 7 Steps to Becoming Financially Free. (Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor, 2006) To order, call (800) 348-2886. A challenge for Catholics to live within their means. Provides common sense steps to a stewardship lifestyle.

Michael, Chester P. and Marie C. Norrisey. Prayer and Temperance: Different Personality Types. (Charlottesville, VA: The Open Door, 1994)

Prayer is the sustaining element in trying to live a life of stewardship. This book compliments the widely used Meyers-Briggs Temperament Indicator. If you have taken the MBTI, this book matches your temperament with a particular style of prayer.

Morris, Jamie, Karen O'Connell and Diana Oechsli. Good Things Are For Sharing: Stewardship as a Way of Life for Children. (New Rochelle, NY: Don Bosco Multimedia, 1993) A curriculum handbook for elementary school teachers and religious education instructors to introduce children to the concept of stewardship by a practical, hands-on approach through various activities and projects.

National Conference of Catholic Bishops, Ad Hoc Committee on Stewardship. Stewardship and Development in Catholic Diocese and Parishes Resource Manual. (Washington, DC, 1996)

National Conference of Catholic Bishops/United States Catholic Conference. Stewardship: A Disciples Response. (Washington, DC, 1993) A pastoral letter on stewardship published by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops. Highly readable format with discussion questions after each section. To order, call (800) 235-8722.

St. Francis of Assisi Parish. Stewardship: Living Life as God Intended: A Program for Your Parish. (Wichita, KA.).

Vallet, Ronald E. Stepping Stones of the Steward. (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1989) Examines the biblical notion of the good steward.

Westerhoff, John J. Building God's People in a Materialistic Society. (New York, NY: Seabury Press, 1983)

Zech, Charles E. Why Catholics Don't Give...And What Can Be Done About It. (Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor, 2000) To order, call (800) 348-2886.

Periodicals

The Creative Steward. Newsletter on environment stewardship published by Genesis Associates. (207 E. Buffalo St., Suite 211, Milwaukee, WI 53202).

Grace In Action. Newsletter on stewardship published by Our Sunday Visitor. (200 Noll Plaza, Huntington, IN (800) 348-2886).

Hueckel, Sharon. The Disciple as Steward. A six-week small group study of the U.S. Bishop's pastoral letter, Stewardship: A Disciple's Response. Published by Sheed and Ward (115 E. Armour Blvd., Kansas City, MO 64141, (800) 333-7373).

Journal of Stewardship. An annual journal concerned with all aspects of stewardship. Publishes by the Ecumenical Center for Stewardship Studies (1100 W. 42nd St., Indianapolis, IN 46208, (317) 926-3525).

Stewardship. Monthly newsletter of anecdotes, stories and sermons on the theme of stewardship. Published by Parish Publications. (32401 Industrial Dr., Madison Heights, MI 48071, (800) 520-4486).

The Wise Steward Series. Inspiring series of Script-graphic booklets and children's activities books that help make stewardship a way of life for parishioners. Published by Channing L. Bete Company. (200 State Rd., South Deerfield, MA 01373, (800) 628-7733).

Spanish Material

El Significado Espiritual de la Administración de Nuestro Tiempo, Talento y Tesoro como Bienes de Dios (International Catholic Stewardship Council).

La Corresponsabilidad: Los Discípulos Responde – Una Guía Práctica para Orientadores Pastorales, (Spanish edition of “Stewardship: Disciples Response – A Practical Guide). (International Catholic Stewardship Council).

Manual Sobre la Administración de los Bienes de Dios para Niños (Spanish edition of “Children’s Stewardship Manual).

Ora Siempre y no te Desanimas – San Lucas 18:1 – Un Tesoro de Oraciones Privadas para el Administrador Cristiano de los Bienes de Dios (Spanish edition of “Pray Always and Never Lose Heart – Luke 18:1 – A Treasure of Prayers for the Christian Steward”). (International Catholic Stewardship Council).

Stewardship Organizations

Catholic Stewardship Consultants, Inc.
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Augusta, GA 30907
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info@catholicsteward.com

International Catholic Stewardship Council, Inc. (ICSC)
1275 K Street, Suite 980
Washington, DC 20005-4006
(202) 289-1093
www.catholicstewardship.org

National Catholic Conference for Total Stewardship
1633 North Cleveland Ave.
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(773) 363-8046

National Conference of Catholic Bishops (NCCB) /
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Ordering Stewardship Materials

To order:

Stewardship Intention Cards
Stewardship Posters

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Fax: (800) 442-0669

Email: abickel@osv.com

To order:

To Be A Christian Steward, A Summary of the U.S. Bishops' Pastoral Letter
on Stewardship

Contact:

USCCB Publishing
Washington, D.C.
Phone: (800) 235-8722