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## WHAT IS STEWARDSHIP?

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- ◆ Stewardship is a complete lifestyle, a life of total accountability and responsibility acknowledging God as Creator and Owner of all. Stewards as disciples of Jesus Christ see themselves as caretakers of all God's gifts. Gratitude for these gifts is expressed in prayer, worship, offering, and action by eagerly sharing these gifts out of love of God and one another (National Catholic Stewardship Council 1993). Stewardship is based on the spiritual principles of the Old Testament and the teachings of Jesus; and where it has been implemented, both givers' and receivers' lives have been changed. Stewardship is a way of life, a way of thanking God for all His blessings by returning a portion of the talent, treasure and time allotted to us.
- ◆ Stewardship is living out Christ's instruction to "love one another as I have loved you." (John 13:34)
- ◆ Stewardship is caring. Stewardship is responsible management of our God-given resources of talent, treasure and time. It enhances our relationship with God and one another.
- ◆ Stewardship builds happy, healthy families. Stewardship renews Christ's Church.
- ◆ Stewardship pleases God because the good steward is careful of creation, is respectful of justice and charity, and is prayerful at all times. "Much will be required of the person entrusted with much and still more will be demanded of the person entrusted with more." (Luke 12:48)

***Our offering of talent, treasure and time is one way of saying: "We belong to the Lord and to one another."***

**Stewardship is...**

***Eucharist***

We profess that we belong to God and all that we possess is His.

***Hospitality***

We place our life in God's loving hands and make Him our treasure.

***Service***

We unite our offering with the rest of our Parish Family so that together we might care for the needs of one another, especially the poor.

***Prayer***

We adore Him as the giver of all good gifts.

**"As each one has received a gift, use it to serve one another as good Stewards of God's varied grace". (1 Peter 4:10)**

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## S P I R I T U A L I T Y   O F   S T E W A R D S H I P

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Stewardship is living out a commitment to be Christ-centered rather than self-centered. This conversion is the result of our total focus on God as the Creator and giver of all good gifts. Profound gratitude, justice and love become the fundamental motives for giving back to God.

*Christian stewardship can be identified by several meaningful characteristics, according to Stewardship a national newsletter:*

- ◆ Christian Stewardship provides a spirituality that a layperson can take home from Church, exercise at work, and express through personal involvement in both the community and the Church.
- ◆ Christian Stewardship successfully bridges the material world around us and the world of the Spirit within us.
- ◆ Christian Stewardship gives joy! Those who voluntarily give their time and abilities for work in the parish will always experience joy if they give them for Christ. They are not, however, guaranteed freedom from frustration.
- ◆ Christian Stewardship is not job-oriented or project-minded. It is a way of life.
- ◆ Christian Stewardship takes a positive view of money. It sees money not only as a medium of exchange but also as a symbol of the person who has it. We reveal something of who we are by the way we acquire it, use it, and share it.
- ◆ Christian Stewardship helps us to become aware that God is the ultimate giver of the gifts we have. Our gift to God should be from our first fruits not from what may be left over.
- ◆ Christian Stewardship teaches Christians to be concerned about where and how to share their parish financial surplus. Stewardship is not giving just to meet the needs of the budget.
- ◆ Jesus Christ is God's greatest gift to us. Stewardship tells us to share a portion of our time, talent, and treasure so that the gift, Jesus Christ, may be given to those who do not know Him.

No doubt, the spiritual benefits outweigh all else. Properly presented, teaching about stewardship will deepen our faith and ultimately change our lives.

*The following theological points serve as a basis for a Christian way of life expressed through stewardship:*

- ◆ Stewardship expresses a basic attitude of gratitude to God for God's many gifts to us and the trust we have in God as the ultimate source of our security.
- ◆ As stewards we use the gifts God has given us to further His creative and redemptive purposes; as stewards we use God's gifts for God's purposes.
- ◆ God's creative and redemptive purposes are most fully revealed in the life, death, and resurrection of God's son, Jesus. The basic pattern of Jesus' work is found in the Paschal mystery. It is a pattern of giving life for the sake of others, and in the giving, finding life more fully realized for ourselves and for those to whom we give.
- ◆ The Church is a gathering of disciples who nurture and encourage one another in discipleship. The practice of discipleship in and through the Church is one of the primary ways we are called to follow Jesus. It is the whole Church, the Body of Christ, which is responsible for carrying on the work of Christ in the world today.
- ◆ Our sharing in the Paschal mystery of Jesus brings us to understand sacrifice as a sign of gratitude, praise, and trust in God. Sacrifice means giving from our substance so our giving changes us.

*An example: The bread and wine we offer at the Eucharist represents the whole of our lives. When they are transformed, the whole of our lives are transformed. So, too, the symbolic offering of a significant proportion of our talent, treasure, and time is a sign of our giving our whole lives to God, and our whole lives are transformed in the action.*

St. Paul reminds us that we are but one body with many parts. For the body to function, those parts are interdependent. Christ expects us to work with Him to make the mission of the Church real, vibrant and alive. Stewardship requires participation in the mission of the Church. The challenge of stewardship is to direct our doing. Each of us is here for a purpose. Each of us is here to make a difference. According to the parables of stewardship, God charges us with the building of the Kingdom.

- ◆ When stewardship is introduced in a parish those who respond generously to the message are often parishioners who have experienced a spiritual renewal through Renew, Marriage Encounter, Cursillo, Christ Renews His Parish, the Charismatic Renewal or similar small faith-sharing groups. Many distinguished leaders in the Church believe that establishing and nurturing small faith-sharing groups is critical for the future vitality and spiritual growth of Catholics. Experience has demonstrated that parishioners who are members of such groups are often leaders as well as generous contributors of their time, talent, and treasure.