
ROLE OF THE LAY WITNESS

One of the most effective means of presenting the stewardship message is through the Stewardship Lay Witness Talk. This talk is usually given after the homily or at the end of Mass by people who are already practicing stewardship in their own lives. It may be given by an individual, or a couple. In some cases, even children may participate. The talk has two purposes: 1) to inspire people to become good stewards and 2) to share real life examples of how stewardship is lived.

An important part of people's acceptance of the concept of stewardship is the personal witness and individual testimony you provide with your presence and the way you give your talk.

The most important goal of living a life based on the principles of stewardship is a deepening of faith...a real spiritual conversion. Your sharing of your spiritual journey with other members of your parish family is a unique gift and a true statement of your commitment to stewardship. You are showing your gratitude by this sharing.

Sample Outline for Composing Lay Witness Talks

- 1) Introduce yourself.
- 2) Properly define Christian stewardship.
- 3) Discuss how you began practicing stewardship.
- 4) Identify when you began to experience the benefits.
- 5) Urge your fellow parishioners to start and get involved.

SOME DO'S AND DON'TS FOR LAY WITNESS TALKS

Do...

(If time permits and if any of these fit into your talk)

- ◆ Explain that stewardship means giving of the “first fruits,” not what is left over.
- ◆ Talk about the personal need of each Christian to give back in gratitude.
- ◆ Say, “Many of you know from your own giving experience that what I have told you is true.” (Acknowledging that you are not in this alone.)
- ◆ Stress the sense of joy and fulfillment that comes to those who give God the first share of their time, talent and treasure as a way of expressing their gratitude and trust in God.
- ◆ Talk about intentional, planned and proportionate giving. Explain what it means to you to give from your substance.
- ◆ Emphasize that it is important to give all three “time, talent and treasure.”
- ◆ Explain that stewardship involves not only church (parish and diocese); it also includes the community and the universal Church.

Don't...

- ◆ Talk in bargaining terms (e.g. “I gave this much time or treasure and God gave me this in return”)
- ◆ Stress church needs or budgets.
- ◆ Talk in dollar or time amounts: “If everyone could give \$10 a week” ... “we need \$2 more a week” ... “give our fair share” ... “if everyone could give 3 hours per week.”
- ◆ Use threats of possible consequences stemming from the failure to give: “We won't be able to heat or air-condition the church” ... “We'll have to close the school.”
- ◆ Suggest that parish stewardship is an obligation.

SAMPLE LAY WITNESS TALKS

The following are actual presentations given by lay witnesses. Those witnesses and/or giving homilies should feel free to use any of the elements in developing their own talks in ways they find most suitable. The important thing is to make it a personal story.

Lay Witness Sample Talk A

Sacrificial Giving means different things to different people. Let me share with you what Sacrificial Giving has come to mean to me.

Reflecting back on the time spent growing up in Ohio, I've realized more and more not only how loving my parents were but also how wise they were. I learned a lot from my parents, but there are four things I learned from their example that have had a particular impact on my life. **First** was that God loves us. He is good and we can trust Him. **Second** was that each of us is given certain gifts and talents and one of our responsibilities in life is to discover what those gifts and talents are, develop them and use them to benefit others. **Third** was that to whom more is given, more is expected. **Fourth** was that having a job and spending time with your family is important but not enough. We also need to spend time being with and helping others.

With that kind of learning and my parents' kind of example, I did not have a great deal of difficulty in grasping the concept of Sacrificial Giving of time and talent. I didn't call it that, but I did it. From the time I was in high school onward, I made sure I spent time doing things for and with other people, mostly through different types of volunteer work. As I continued to give of my time and talent, I realized that I was growing spiritually. God and other people became a more important part of my life.

After graduating from college and moving to Seattle, I continued to give of my time and talent through various church groups and community boards. Yet something was still missing. You see, I gave of my time and talent but not my treasure. I reasoned that I spent so much time in church and community activities that I didn't need to give regularly to the church or other community groups. Sure, I gave some, but it was sporadic and unplanned.

It wasn't until my wife and I made an Engaged Encounter seven years ago that I started to look even more seriously at my relationship with God. We realized that we couldn't hold back on any area of our giving because God wasn't holding back on any area of His giving. We also decided that we wanted God to be the center of our marriage. That led us to a decision to start giving of our treasure in a planned and proportionate way. We started giving two percent of our income to the church and other charities in 1984. Five years later, we were giving eight percent of our income to the church and other charities.

As we continued to give, we've learned that we are growing more spiritually and that our faith is deepening. By giving as we have, we have tried to place material things and money in their proper perspective. That has caused us to look at what we **need** versus what we **want**. For example, when we bought a new home almost two years ago, we bought a smaller house than we might have if we hadn't been practicing stewardship of treasure.

Sacrificial Giving has become a way of life for us. It's not always been easy, but we try to live it. Presently, I am spending eight hours a week in volunteer work outside my job and my wife is spending three hours per week in volunteer work. In the area of treasure, 80 percent of our giving is church-related while the other 20 percent goes to community agencies. My wife and I are planning to move to the biblical tithe, 10 percent of our income, next month.

Sacrificial Giving of time, talent and treasure has been and will continue to be an important part of our lives.