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## SAMPLE LAY WITNESS TALKS

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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.

## *Lay Witness Sample Talk B*

### Come, Share This Joy

My task this morning is to share a little of my joy with you- the joy I have experienced since Sacrificial Giving became a part of my life four years ago. Up to that time, I had never considered that I had a serious financial responsibility to God. Oh, I had made a commitment to give a few dollars each week but it wasn't a serious one. The amount certainly wasn't sacrificial and my motive was not gratefulness. But then I was asked to help present a program similar to this to my parish. And I began reading and thinking and praying and I came to realize that an issue I had been avoiding for a long time was "tapping me on the shoulder". It was time for me to come to grips with this business of money.

It was not a good time. I was just picking up the pieces from a marriage that had ended a few months earlier. I was the sole support of my teenage son, the sole owner of my house with its two mortgages, I had two years left of car payments on my car and three charge cards with chronically unpaid balances on them. Fully 70% of my gross pay was dedicated to the taxes that were withheld, the mortgages, the car payments and minimum payments on the charge card balances. And with the winter coming on, the heating bill had no place to go but up. After the 70% was gone-after that came the food and all the day-to-day bills and the monthly bills. So I was certain that I couldn't afford to give the way I had been reading about.

The only problem was that nowhere in all my reading was there any indication that a guy was off the hook because he couldn't afford it. There was no one there to pat me on the hand and say "Oh, that's OK, Trudy. Maybe next year when things are looking better for you." No, indeed! Instead I found myself staring straight into the face of the poor widow as she dropped her two mites into the treasury box in the synagogue. "*She gave from her want,*" Jesus said (Mark 12:42-44). She gave from her want-from her substance. All that she had. Does He ask us to give that much? No. But, He does ask us to give that way-from our substance, sacrificially and in trust.

And so, I took the plunge. I began giving a fixed percentage of my income up front and off the top to my parish and setting aside the same percentage to charitable donations. The percentage that I decided upon was 5% each-10%-the biblical tithe. And what has been the result?

Well, the blessings have been many- both practical and spiritual. Within two years, I was completely out of debt. I have been able to fund my IRA's fully and I have even put a little savings aside. It wasn't that I had more money. It was simply that I took better care with the 90% that was for my use. But, the biggest change-the greatest blessing-has been a change of heart.

Before I began tithing, for a long time, I had struggled with tight-fistedness-a stinginess and hardness of heart with the result that, although I was able to give some of my time once in a while for a good cause, I could not seem to open up that fist and give my money with the same good spirit. Every so-called gift was given with a cold, calculated entry into an imaginary ledger where I balanced Sacrifices Made with Reward Expected.

But, as I embarked on this adventure of Sacrificial Giving, dedicating the first part of my income to the Lord, I immediately sensed a loosening of the grip. And, as my fist unclenched and as I let go of my dependency on material possessions and put my trust in God's providence, my life has been blessed with a harmony and a radiance that it never had before. My faith is on firmer ground. My heart's in the right place. It really is true, you know, "*Where your treasure is, there also will be your heart.*" (Mt 6:21). And through the giving I felt a sense of sharing in the work that is being done, the good work of the Lord, that's being done through my gifts. And because the giving has been cheerful-and not grudging or calculated-it's been fun. And therein lies the joy.

I invite you to come, share this joy.