

# *Stewardship*

“Joyfully Receiving and Sharing”

## *Stewardship Renewal Resources:*

*Resources for Individuals and  
Parishes Developing a  
Stewardship Way of Life*

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## RESOURCES AND TIPS

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Included in the section is a list of resources to complete the renewal process and guide a Stewardship and related teams through a successful renewal. A *how to guide* for the novice and additional resources for more experienced parish families.

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## DO'S AND DON'TS FOR STEWARDSHIP SUCCESS

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### *DO'S*

- 1) Do see stewardship as a way of life.—Joyfully Receiving and Sharing.
- 2) Do model stewardship in all the parish does—every program, every ministry, every event and activity for every age group.
- 3) Do adopt and adapt a successful program for teaching stewardship; make a commitment to educate every member of the parish.
- 4) Do realize that grasping the concept of stewardship as a way of life is a journey that will not be complete in anyone's lifetime. Remember that you will always be getting new parishioners and that old-timers need to be spiritually refreshed regularly, too.
- 5) Do get outside help if needed. Dynamic speakers make for enthusiastic stewards, and enthusiastic stewards serve as good role models who attract others.
- 6) Do promote the pastor as the spiritual leader, teacher, and chief cheerleader for stewardship.
- 7) Do point out that God expects a portion of the first fruits of the harvest, not what was left over at the end.
- 8) Do point out all the ways that members of the parish are good stewards. Publicly recognize their talents and gifts and thank them publicly for sharing them, and encourage them to take yet another step.
- 9) Do point out what gifts there are in the parish and that there are opportunities to share those gifts.
- 10) Do invite people to list whom they owe for all that they are and all that they have. Ask them if God is on the list.

### *DON'TS*

- 1) Don't think of stewardship as a one-Sunday-a-year homily or even a one-, two-, or three year campaign.
- 2) Don't make stewardship only about money.
- 3) Don't leave stewardship solely to the pastor. Educate and form the leaders of every parish ministry and group so they can model a stewardship way of life.
- 4) Don't judge how and what people give. When stewardship is a way of life, there is no judgment: Stewardship invites people to pray, to work as a child of God, and to offer to God a portion of the fruits of our labor in gratitude for all the ways God has blessed them.
- 5) Don't assume your parishioners are not good stewards because they aren't donating at a certain level or aren't involved in a parish ministry. Realize that they may be choosing to support a needy family member, for example, or that they may be passionately involved in another cause or organization. They may be giving of themselves—their time, talent, treasure—to other activities that benefit the community.
- 6) Don't point out what the parish needs when inviting others to share their talents.
- 7) Don't compare—and encourage other not to compare—how much you and they give in time, talent, or treasure with what others do and give.

*Adapted from the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis Stewardship Manual.*

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## PASTOR'S LETTER PURPOSE AND TIMING

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Providing an appropriate parish structure to facilitate the gifts of time, talent and treasure, providing spiritual, educational and social services to the parish community is important. The success and effectiveness of the services provided will be commensurate with the adequacy of the structure in place to deliver the services.

Of importance in the parish stewardship renewal process is the pastor's annual communication (letter) to parishioners stressing the importance of stewardship in their individual lives and that of the parish. This annual communication to parishioners also serves as an invitation to prayerfully discern the gifts they have received and how they plan within the ensuing year to return of those gifts proportionately, generously and sacrificially in thanksgiving in service to their parish, community, the diocese and the universal Church.

The letter should be prepared on parish letterhead, personalized where appropriate and signed by the pastor and stewardship committee chairperson. The parish commitment forms should be referenced and enclosed. This communication should be mailed or distributed sometime during the period leading up to the commitment (impact) weekend. It is important for parishioners to have the commitment forms and related information in hand and on their minds as they hear the pastor's stewardship homilies and also important that they have them in ample time to prayerfully consider the completion and return.

It is important to thank them for their past generosity and to ask for their continued support by completing and returning the enclosed parish time, talent and treasure commitment forms.

The letter should briefly remind parishioners of their individual call to discipleship and that stewardship is the action of carrying out that discipleship.

Attached to or enclosed with the letter should be a parish ministry booklet, brochure or leaflet identifying and describing the various parish ministries and/or activities. The time and talent commitment forms should be designed around and representative of the ministries and activities available in the parish. The parish may also want to include additional stewardship information or educational materials.

The process of completing the forms along with how and when they are to be returned should be included in the letter. It is desirable to provide an envelope within which they can confidentially return their completed forms.

There are a variety of ways this letter and enclosures can be distributed or mailed to parishioners.

- 1) They can be mailed to all households.
- 2) They can be labeled and distributed following the Masses on the designated weekend. Those not picked up by parishioners can then be mailed.

Whatever process is followed, it is important for the letter and enclosures to be distributed to and/or mailed, in some fashion, to all parish households.

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## SAMPLE LETTERS

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*There are different kinds of spiritual gifts but the same spirit; there are different forms of service but the same Lord; there are different workings but the same God who produces all of them in everyone. To each individual the manifestation of the Spirit is given for some benefit.*

*1 Corinthians 12:4-11*

Dear Parishioners:

For the past several months our Parish Pastoral Council, Finance Council, and Stewardship Council have been reflecting and planning with me about how best to encourage our parishioners to offer their gifts to God and our parish community. As St. Paul said in Corinthians, each individual has a unique gift which he or she is able to offer. We have decided to use this period of Thanksgiving as an opportunity for all of us to reflect on our gifts and their use. During the weekend of (\_\_\_\_\_) we will have a Parish Ministry Fair. All of our parish commissions and ministry groups will be available in the (Location) after Mass to answer questions about the work they do and to invite you to participate.

Each family will also receive a Parish Ministry Directory, so that you can decide which activity fits in best with your individual or family needs. We ask that you prayerfully reflect on your gifts and your time, and fill out the enclosed Commitment form. These Commitment forms will be collected during the weekend of (\_\_\_\_\_) at all Masses.

When filling out the Commitment forms, we ask that you consider your entire family's needs, and that each individual family member fill out a separate form. We are also asking that you indicate your interest in an activity by using a C (for continuing), and L (for Leaving) and I (for interested in more information).

In preparation for this Commitment process, it might be helpful for you to reflect on the following:

- ◆ What talents do you most readily share?
- ◆ What talents or gifts are you most hesitant to share. Reflect on the reasons for your reluctance.
- ◆ What talents have you buried? What talents have you multiplied?

Is there something that you've always wanted to try but haven't yet done so? Can you do it now? Jesus says, "I came so that they might have life and have it more abundantly. (John 10:10)

My personal prayer for you is that your life be abundantly full of the power and mystery and grace of God. God enters into our lives and transforms them, just as He transforms our gifts of bread and wine into the living Body and Blood of our Savior, Jesus Christ. The more we offer of our time, talent and treasure, the more God is able to transform our offerings to build up His Kingdom.

Thank you for the gifts you have given of your time, your talent and your treasure. I pray that this season will be a holy and prayerful time for you and your families.

Sincerely yours in Christ,  
(Pastor's name and signature)

## SAMPLE LETTER FOR STEWARDSHIP RENEWAL

Dear <First Names>,

Pope Benedict XVI on the occasion of the International Catholic Stewardship Conference in Boston, proclaimed that:

*“The promotion of the practice of stewardship is important for the mission of the church and for the spiritual well-being of each individual.*

*Everyone benefits from the sacrificial gift one makes of time, talent, and treasure. Therefore, please accept my encouragement for your efforts and my prayers that your upcoming annual parish stewardship renewal will be a stimulus to the practice of stewardship in all your parishioners.”*

I, your pastor, cannot say it better than our Holy Father. Consider also a shorter definition of a Christian Steward:

*“Stewardship is the grateful response of a Christian disciple who recognizes and receives God’s gifts and shares these gifts in love of God and neighbor.”*

Or shorter yet: *“Joyfully Receiving and Sharing”*

A Stewardship Way of Life is not a new concept in the Church. How about this statement from St. Ignatius Loyola:

*“Human beings were created to praise, reverence, and serve God, our Lord, and by this means to save their souls. The other things on the face of the earth are created to help humans in attaining the end for which they are created. Hence, they are to make use of these things in as far as they help them in the attainment of their end, and they must rid themselves of them in as far as they provide a hindrance to them...our one desire and choice should be what is more conducive to the end for which we are created.”*

In the gospel of Mark, the young man in the Gospel was asking Christ what he needed to do to be saved. He was already a good, young man. He was already loved by Christ. Christ invited him to go deeper into discipleship to go deeper into his response to follow Christ. The young man was at a crossroad to go deeper or to stay put. He chose the latter.

Through this Stewardship Renewal you and I are given pretty much the same invitation by Christ. We are, for the most part, already good people. We are already loved by Christ. Wherever we are at in our Christian journey, we are invited to go deeper, take another step, make a specific talent available, give a specific hour to prayer before the Blessed Sacrament exposed, thank God through a more free, joyous, and generous gift of our money from the top, give up anger and self pity, make a response we are happy with and proud of. You and I are at that crossroad. Will we stay put, or take a deeper look and take the step?

May God’s generous blessings continue to be accepted by you with praise and thanks and may you experience the joy of using them for His mission.

Sincerely yours in Christ,  
(Pastor’s name and signature)

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## H O M I L Y

### W H A T ' S I M P O R T A N T T O C O M M U N I C A T E

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It is generally more meaningful and educational to consider giving separate homilies, one each weekend beginning with time, then talent ending with treasure. This process gives equal importance, as it should, to all three aspects of stewardship. The Pastor may choose to introduce the four pillars of stewardship: hospitality, prayer, formation, and service. See the suggested schedules for homilies for the four pillars.

Please refer to the scriptural resource section of this manual for biblical support in preparing a homily.

Pastors and associates should also mention and stress the importance of completion of the time, talent and treasure commitment forms and how those forms facilitate the parish stewardship process carrying out the mission of the parish, meeting its needs and making it possible for the parish community to be a place of prayer, hospitality, formation and service.

Stewardship is a way of life whereby we, as disciples, recognize that a person is not the absolute master of his/her own possessions. As stewards we are caretakers of all God's gifts. Gratitude for these gifts is expressed in prayer and worship and we are to share these gifts out of love of God, one another, our parish, diocese and the universal Church.

There are some that mistakenly feel that stewardship is only a gimmick for raising more funds for the Church. This is not so. Stewardship is based on the references in scripture to stewardship, and Jesus specifically talks about it in a number of His parables. By addressing stewardship directly, He made it clear how He wanted us to live. One of those ways is to become involved with others and share with them what we have, not only our treasure, but our time and talent as well. Stewardship is based on God's word, not on the fundraising needs of the church. Stewardship is based on an individual's need to give, not on the Church's need to receive.

Stewardship is based on the premise that all that we have and all that we are comes from God, and as a way to thank Him for all His blessings, we return to God a portion of the time, talent, and treasure allotted to us. A person's decision to give his or her time, ability and tithe/alms is based on his or her need to give, which is inspired by the Holy Spirit within us.

Giving of time, talent and treasure is not limited to the church (parish). Most people will also give of their time and talent as volunteers, where possible, to diocesan or community agencies in addition to volunteering in their parish. Most will also give financial resources to other community agencies in addition to supporting their parish.

It is important to stress the need of each individual's annual recommitment, giving, of time talent and treasure. In this way, parishioners are invited annually to prayerfully and conscientiously assess the gifts they have received from God and how they may plan to continue or change the generous and sacrificial return of those gifts in thanksgiving.

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## SAMPLE HOMILY ~ TREASURE

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God our Father asks us to put our trust in Him rather than material possessions...to put Him first rather than to take care of our own needs and then give Him whatever might be left over. In our culture, this may be the most difficult challenge that we face as Christians, and by the same token, it may be the most rewarding.

Do you ever worry about money? How about the things that money has brought you (cars, clothes, etc.). It seems that in our society, those who don't have money worry about how to get it, and those who do have money worry even more about how to keep it. Scriptures teach us, and many Christians who practice Stewardship share with us, that the proper handling of money and material things requires only faith. With absolute trust in God's care for us, money never has to be a worry again. The first step to this worry-free living is to acknowledge that what you have now and what you will receive tomorrow are because of God's goodness.

The second step is to trust that God really will take care of you according to what is best (maybe not what you would wish for, but what is best). If you take a coin or bill from your wallet, you will see the words "In God We Trust" right on the money. Do you trust God or money? It cannot be both. Putting your trust in God doesn't mean you can be idle or irresponsible with regard to your money. Prudent Stewardship means that you do your best to take care of what God has blessed you with by constantly seeking His will and grace.

The third step is to give out of gratitude a generous first portion of your income as a sign of your trust in God and willingness to serve Him. The standard church guidelines for giving is based on the Biblical tithe, which means 10% (see Genesis 28:22).

My purpose though is not to tell you how much you should give. You should decide in prayer and good conscience the amount. Whatever you decide, be faithful to it. In any case, the sacrifice of giving of ourselves is far outweighed by the reward. When we practice giving in this way, we grow into an even closer relationship with God, resulting in a peace and joy beyond material measure. In review, the three steps to worry-free finances are:

Recognize all that we have as gifts from God.

Trust that God will care for you and your family if you just seek His will.

Share what you have generously as Jesus taught us.

My prayer for you is that you will reach out to our Lord in faith, and see the love that God has for you.

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## SAMPLE HOMILY ~ TREASURE

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There are 3 underlying principles to consider in the stewardship of treasure. First, everything in our life belongs to God, not us. We own nothing. God owns everything. We are simply managers of God's goodness.

Second, we are here for a purpose. God has a plan and mission for our lives. That mission is to bring the good news of the love and mercy of God found in Jesus Christ to the world. Pope John Paul II said this over and over that our mission is to bear witness to Jesus Christ as the answer that is every human life. In the call to be good stewards, we need to consider how to use the blessings God gives us, to serve this mission.

Third, gratitude. As Psalm 116 says, "How shall I make a return to the Lord for all the good He has done for me." We don't consider giving of our resources to the Lord out of a sense of guilt or fear or compulsion, but rather with gratefulness and genuine appreciation for all his goodness to us personally.

So what does stewardship really mean when it comes to using the resources God has given us for the sake of the kingdom? When Scripture talks about stewardship we often hear the words tithe and alms. Alms are about using our resources to care for people in need. It's very simply, the idea of caring for the poor. A major theme of the prophets is to care for the widow and orphan, in other words those in greatest need. Doing so is what Almsgiving is about.

Our understanding of tithe comes from the Old Testament (Gen 28:22). The Jews had a religious responsibility to contribute to the Temple and to those who took care of the liturgical activity of the Israelites. The word tithe means tenth. The general understanding of tithing is that as a sign of recognition that the Lord was their provider; the Israelites should give to the Lord the first tenth of the fruit of their harvest or labors, i.e. their income. One example of many Scriptures that refer to tithing is from the book of Sirach (35:10-12). It says, "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."

In the New Testament, Jesus confirmed the idea of tithing but took the idea of using our resources for the sake of the kingdom much farther. To the rich young man who observed all the commandments but wanted to know what else he should do, Jesus said, "You are lacking in one thing. Go, sell what you have, and give to the poor and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me." (Mk 10:21). Beyond giving a tithe of income, Jesus told the man to sell all his possessions and give to the poor.

Jesus told the disciples after this encounter with the young man that it was hard for those with many possessions to enter the kingdom of God. By giving our wealth to the poor we get liberated from the hold that earthly things have on us, so that we can follow Jesus. In some way, material goods have a hold on all of us. By giving them away we are freed from that hold. It is interesting to note that Jesus directed the man to give the proceeds of selling his possessions to the poor and not to the Temple. Jesus put a very strong emphasis on caring for the

needy. We see this radical teaching of Jesus regarding possessions lived out in the early Church. In Acts (2:44-45) it says that "All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need."

One way of summarizing the message in Scripture is this: In the New Testament, Jesus is saying that everything we have belongs to God. Our challenge as His disciples is to be good stewards of the blessings He gives us for the sake of serving His purposes.

The teaching from Sacred Scripture on how to be good stewards does not come without a reward.

After this encounter of Jesus with the young man, the disciples asked Jesus what was in it for them because they had already done left everything to follow Jesus. He responded by telling the disciples that whoever has given up family, land and treasure for the sake of the kingdom will receive a hundredfold return of family, land and treasure in this world and eternal life in the next.

In regards to the reward for tithing, the Lord said through the prophet Malachi to, "Bring the whole tithe 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 blessing upon you without measure?" (Mal 3:10).

God will never be outdone in His generosity. He simply loves us immeasurably- even more than we love ourselves. We can be confident that God will care for us. Acceptance of the call to give in a committed way to help build the kingdom and to help others is an important first step. Many have found the concept of tithing to enrich their faith. Making this commitment takes real faith. We need to seek the Lord in prayer about how in specific he wants us to give.

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# SAMPLE HOMILY DEFINITION OF STEWARDSHIP

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(Homily #1)

(33<sup>rd</sup> Sunday in OT, B, Nov 18, 2012, Cathedral)

Dn 12:1-3: “... **the wise shall shine brightly.**”

Ps 16: “... **my heart is glad and my soul rejoices.**”

Hebrews 10:11-14, 18: “... [Jesus] **offered one sacrifice for sins.**”

Mark 13:24-32: “... **the Son of Man coming ... with great power and glory. ... Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.**” “**Know that he [Jesus] is near.**”

## A. Introduction.

“**My words will not pass away.**” Jesus said that our world will come to an end, that “**heaven and earth will pass away.**” But he promised that His words are lasting, His teachings are *truth*, His commandments are the *way* to happiness, and His *life* is eternal.

How do we live, how do we put into practice, how do we implement Jesus’ words that will not pass away? *Stewardship*. This November and December we are re-committing ourselves to the Lord and His Word in our *Stewardship Renewal* at the COLG.

Two weekends ago, Fr. Ted Skalsky preached about the Four Pillars of Stewardship: Hospitality, Prayer, Formation, and Service. This weekend I will describe the beautiful meaning of Stewardship. December 1 & 2, I will preach about the Stewardship of Alms. And December 8 & 9, I will wrap-up with thoughts about our commitment to Jesus and our Catholic Faith, during this Year of Faith. My prayers are with you and your families as you open-wide your hearts to God’s saving message of Stewardship.

## B. What is Stewardship?

Stewardship is the grateful response of a Christian disciple who recognizes and receives God’s gifts and shares these gifts in love of God and neighbor. Children, please hand out these notecards ... Let’s look at each part of this description of God’s plan for our lives:

The Grateful Response:

*Give Thanks*, by Henry Smith, copyright 1978 Integrity’s Hosanna! Music.

Give thanks / with a grateful heart.

Give thanks / to the Holy One.

Give thanks / because He’s given / Jesus Christ, / His Son. (Repeat)

And now / let the weak say, / “I am strong;”

Let the poor say, / “I am rich,”

Because of what / the Lord has done / for us. (Repeat)

We Give Thanks.

Let us put on an attitude of gratitude. Let us be thankful for all God’s blessings. Let us show our appreciation for the love God gives us.

### Of a Christian Disciple:

Disciple means “student.” We are students of our teachers in school, of our boss at work, of our priests. Our best and most important teacher is Jesus Christ. Disciple also means “follower.” We follow the instructions of our parents, we follow the laws of our country, we follow the teachings of the Catholic Church. Jesus Christ is who we follow most importantly and closely.

When did we become a Christian Disciple? – at our Baptism. DEMONSTRATION. Let us put into practice our discipleship. Let us follow Jesus always.

### Who Recognizes and Receives God’s Gifts:

What gifts does God give you? I often ask a group to list 50 gifts from God. The first few come easily: family/friends, food, faith. Then they have to think a bit. I prompt them with gifts that are people, gifts that are things, and gifts that are virtues. Then they begin opening up a large number of blessings, too many to count! Yes, we *receive* countless gifts from our Loving Lord, and we need to often stop to *recognize* these gifts. Daily, we are called to a grateful response to God for these gifts.

DEMONSTRATION – God’s gift of grace – Jesus with us always.

### and Shares These Gifts:

We don’t want to hold these gifts in. We don’t want to be selfish with these gifts. We want to share. We are called to get out of ourselves, and reach out to others. Our parents teach us often to share our food, share our toys, share our time. This call is to generously share. This call is to sacrificially share. As Christian Disciples, we wish to share our time, ability, and alms in imitation of Jesus’ generous and sacrificial sharing to us.

### in Love of God and Neighbor:

We share, we are grateful – WHY? Because we “have to?” Because it is an obligation? No. We gratefully share because we love! We love God with our whole mind, heart, soul, and strength. We love our neighbor as ourselves. This love is sacrificial, is unconditional, is giving.

DEMONSTRATION: How much does Jesus love us? (arm in form of a cross).

### **C. Conclusion.**

Stewardship is the grateful response of a Christian disciple who recognizes and receives God’s gifts and shares these gifts in love of God and neighbor. The Word of Jesus, Jesus Himself, is the Word of eternal life. Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

Let us be grateful as we live out our Christian Discipleship. Let us recognize the many gifts we receive from God. Let us faithfully and generously share these gifts in love. Jesus will help us, He loves us more than we can ask or imagine!

**Stewardship** is the grateful response of a Christian disciple who recognizes and receives God's gifts and shares these gifts in love of God and neighbor.

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

#### **Four Pillars of Stewardship**

**Hospitality:** “I love you”—promotes the virtue of generosity to counteract the temptation to materialism

**Prayer:** “I love God”—promotes the virtue of truth to counteract the temptation to relativism

**Formation:** “I love our Catholic faith”—promotes the virtue of faith to counteract the temptation to secularism

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# SAMPLE HOMILY STEWARDSHIP OF ALMSGIVING

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## (Homily #2)

(1 Advent, C, December 2, 2012, Cathedral)

Jeremiah 33:14-16; Ps 25 “To you, O Lord, I lift my soul;” 1 Thess 3:12-4:2; Luke 21:25-28, 34-36.

### A. Introduction.

We begin the Holy Season of Advent today, as we prepare for the Lord’s Coming. In Luke’s Gospel, Jesus calls us to **“Beware ... be vigilant at all times ... your redemption is at hand.”** St. Paul speaks of receiving teachings and examples that we should put into practice in our lives. We are in the midst of our **Stewardship Renewal** at the Cathedral of Our Lady of Guadalupe. How do we put God’s teaching into practice? How do we prepare the way of the Lord this Advent?

We have discussed many aspects of Stewardship: The Four Pillars of Hospitality, Prayer, Formation, Service; also how we use our Time and Ability as we gratefully respond to the Lord’s gifts.

Another important aspect is the Stewardship of **Alms, Almsgiving**.

The word **“Alms”** is very scriptural. Other words related to this concept: tithe, treasure, wealth, money, financial donations, monetary donations, temporal goods (which would also include other types of donations such as stocks, bonds, life insurance, bequests, real property, land or water rights, mineral rights, wind generator rights, etc. These types of alms are often looked at in “development and planned giving” efforts), ...

At time we are nervous, uncomfortable, or even resentful, at the mention of **“alms”** in our Catholic Church. Yet Jesus spoke of this often; why would I as a preacher of God’s Word skip a topic of Jesus?

### B. Sacred Scripture on alms and tithing:

Jesus’ teaching on Ash Wednesday: **“When you give alms, ... they have received their reward ... do not let your left hand know what your right is doing ... your Father who sees in secret will repay you”** (Matthew 6:1-4).

Jesus on living our faith on the inside as well as the outside: **“But as to what is within, give alms, and behold, everything will be clean for you”** (Luke 11:41).

Jesus on greed: **“Take care to guard against all greed, for though one may be rich, one’s life does not consist of possessions”** (Luke 12:15).

Jesus on preparing for the Kingdom: **“Do not be afraid any longer, little flock, for your Father is pleased to give you the kingdom. Sell your belongings and give alms. Provide money bags for yourselves that do not wear out, an inexhaustible treasure in heaven that**

**no thief can reach nor moth destroy. For where your treasure is, there also your heart will be” (Luke 12:32-34).**

Jesus on the widow’s gift: **“A poor widow also came and put in two small coins ... this poor widow put in more than all the other contributors to the treasury. For they have all contributed from their surplus wealth, but she, from her poverty, has contributed all she had, her whole livelihood” (Mark 12:42-44).** (This example is one reason I prefer to use alms/tithe, instead of treasure/wealth.)

Jesus on the rich young man: **“Jesus looking at him, loved him and said to him, ‘You are lacking in one thing. Go, sell what you have, and give to the poor and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.’ At that statement his face fell, and he went away sad, for he had many possessions” (Mark 10:21).**

How much does the Lord ask of our alms? **“Of everything you give me, I will faithfully return a tenth part to you” (Genesis 28:22).**

“A tenth part” to the Lord, 10%, a tithe, may seem like a lot; yet don’t we give 10-30+% of our income to the government (so it can provide many services to us)?

Note: This comparison may be misinterpreted. Our alms/tithe is not a “tax,” not a “business/bookkeeping/ financial/accounting” approach. Rather our stewardship of alms/tithe is **spiritual**, following the teaching of our Lord.

### **DEMONSTRATION:**

1. We receive our wages or salary from our employer.
2. We give 10-30 % or more to the government in taxes, as they provide services for us.
3. We share, in gratitude, in love, 10% to our Lord at Mass each week in our almsgiving.
4. Maybe we are called to start with “one hour of work given to Jesus each week.” For example, if you make \$12/hour, then give \$12 each week (one hour of labor) to God in the collection basket.
5. The 10% tithe is really giving 4 hours out of 40 hours to the Lord each week. Step-by-step we can work toward this teaching.

### **C. Prayerfully Consider.**

I always recommend to families to **prayerfully** consider this call from the Lord, and give our Stewardship of Alms, our Tithe, generously, faithfully, and sacrificially.

If 10% seems out of reach today, set an amount to God, and faithfully stick with it this coming year. Next year, add 1% of your income to this amount, the year after another 1%, etc. Trust in the Lord. Be not afraid. Follow Jesus.

We do not need to limit ourselves 10%; we may be called and decide to give more. The Lord welcomes your generosity!

At times, we have a financial crisis: unemployment, a medical situation, a major car break-down: Our Loving Lord understands when we cannot reach our goal for our giving of alms.

To what or to where do we give our alms, our tithe?

--to Jesus' Catholic Church: our parish and our diocese;

--to specific entities within our Church: Catholic Social Services, the Dechant Foundation, the Seminarian Fund, our Catholic Schools, etc;

--to the poor: Catholic Relief Services, Christian Foundation for Children and Aging, etc.;

--to other charitable groups: helping the sick, the unemployed, the poor, the illiterate, etc.

We have been discussing an *Ordinary* Stewardship of Alms. This is our normal almsgiving in the collection basket at Holy Mass each Sunday.

An *Extraordinary* Stewardship of Alms is "above and beyond" this ordinary giving. An extra generosity; an extra sacrifice. At times we are called to this benevolence.

Examples: The parish or diocese has an appeal for a building project; giving to relief efforts for a natural disaster (the Katrina hurricane, the Haiti earthquake); you decide to put the parish, diocese, or other charity in your will, etc.

Are we teaching our children Jesus' message of our **Stewardship of Alms**, by our words and example?

At times, this teaching of the Lord to give alms give us great conviction to follow, at times great tension/ confusion/anxiety, or at times great anger. Bring these emotions and thoughts to Jesus in prayer. Ask Jesus to reveal and heal what is hurting inside.

#### **D. Conclusion.**

Why do we give alms? We give alms because we:

--are grateful to God

--are Christian disciples

--receive and recognize God's gifts of our income

--share

--love God and neighbor and ourselves

**We give alms** as we share and live the Gospel message of Jesus Christ. **Thank you, thank you, thank you for your generosity, your sacrifice, your faithfulness, and your prayer.** The Lord blesses us so much: He loves us more than we can ask or imagine!

### Stewardship of Alms

- Jesus: “**When you give alms ...**” (Matthew 6:2-4, the Gospel for Ash Wednesday).
  - Stewardship is the grateful response of a Christian disciple who recognizes and receives God’s gifts and shares these gifts in love of God and neighbor.
  - “**As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another as good stewards of God’s varied grace**” (1 Peter 4:10).
  - God blesses us with our salary or wages, and our other income.
  - We recognize and receive these financial gifts from God.
- 
- As Christian disciples, followers and students of Jesus, we generously and sacrificially share these monetary gifts.
  - We share these financial gifts in the form of **alms** to the parish, diocese, and charities.
  - We share our **alms** because we love God and we love our neighbor.
  - Other Scripture:
    - Jesus on preparing for heaven by giving **alms**: Luke 12:32-34.
    - Jesus on the widow’s gift: Mark 12:42-44.
    - Jesus to the rich young man: Mark 10:21.
    - Jesus against greed: Luke 12:15.
    - Our tithe to God: Genesis 28:22.

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# SAMPLE HOMILY: COMMITMENT IN FAITH STEWARDSHIP RENEWAL

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## (Homily #3)

(2 Advent, C, December 9, 2012, Cathedral)

Baruch 5:1-9; Ps 126 “The Lord has done great things for us; we are filled with joy;” Philippians 1:4-6, 8-11; Luke 3:1-6.

### A. Introduction.

The readings from the second Sunday of Advent focus on JOY! Baruch: “... **See your children gathered ... at the word of the Holy One, rejoicing that they are remembered by God.**” Yes, God remembers us always – He is with us this Advent, leading us “**in joy.**” Our Responsorial Psalm: “**The Lord has done great things for us; we are filled with joy.**” These great things for us are the many gifts and blessings we recognize and receive from our Loving Lord. St. Paul prays “**always with joy in every prayer for all of you.**” These gifts and prayers assist us in being grateful, as we “**prepare the way of the Lord**” this Advent (Gospel).

We continue our Stewardship Renewal at the Cathedral of Our Lady of Guadalupe. We just celebrated Mary’s feast day of the Immaculate Conception, and we prepare this week for our patronal feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe. Mary asks us to be grateful stewards of her Son’s many gifts. We have discussed the four pillars of Stewardship (Hospitality, Prayer, Formation, and Service). Then we reviewed the definition of Stewardship: a grateful response of a Christian disciple who recognizes and receives God’s gifts and shares these gifts in love of God and neighbor. Last week I preached about the Stewardship of Alms (Tithing), as we generously and sacrificially give into the collection basket at Holy Mass each Sunday. Today: Commitment in Faith, which will bring us joy!

### B. Commitment in Faith.

[Children in Grades 5 and 6, please pass out these blue cards to everyone. Thank you for your help!] What is a commitment? The dictionary says: “commit – to pledge or bind to a certain course or policy.”

Example 1: I was invited to a K-State versus Kansas football game a few years ago in Manhattan. What an event! The “tailgate party” was amazing, with parking costing \$1,000 for one spot for five games! That is not even the cost of the season tickets to get into the stadium! What a bond people have to 22 guys chasing a ball around a field!

Example 2: A more profound commitment – a married couple. We celebrated a Wedding Anniversary Mass for the couples of the diocese in October, with some married over 60 years! That is a true binding, a true commitment in unconditional love and devotion. Joy in each other and in the Lord.

Example 3: The greatest commitment, promise, pledge – our commitment to Jesus Christ and

His Catholic Church. Jesus, our Savior, our Brother, our Friend, gave His life for us, to free us from sins and bring us to heaven. We want to commit to Him. We promise our lives following Jesus. We commit our time, ability, and alms to Jesus and His Church. Joy in knowing we are preparing the way of the Lord for our eternal destiny.

### **C. Stewardship Renewal.**

Just as a family remembers its love for a child by having a birthday party each year, just as a married couple renews their commitment to each other each year on their anniversary, so we re-dedicate ourselves to God in our Stewardship Renewal each year. This week, you will receive in the mail a Ministry Guide. In it are the many ministries and organizations of the parish, time & ability forms for adults and youth, and an almsgiving form for each family. Please prayerfully discuss as a family, complete it this week in honor of Our Blessed Mother, and return next week in the collection basket. Let us re-commit ourselves to our Compassionate God.

Note that the Time & Ability Form has three columns: Interested, Continued Involvement, and Leaving Ministry. This assists our office staff and the heads of these ministries each year. You will receive a call thanking you for your commitment, and we will answer any questions you have.

Youth (ages 10-17): You are important to us! We ask that you prayerfully complete a Youth Form.

Singles and Families: With God's grace, complete the Stewardship of Almsgiving Form, pledging a generous and sacrificial tithe to God. Stick with it! Trust! Be not afraid! Follow Jesus!

### **D. Examples.**

Our four pillars of Stewardship, as well as Almsgiving (Tithe), gives us a focus for our Stewardship Renewal:

**Hospitality:** (by the choir) [4<sup>th</sup> graders – please come and help me!] Remember hospitality, which means “I love you.” One area of hospitality is our choir, who generously gives of their time and ability to help our worship. Maybe you are called to sign-up for the choir. Pray about it. Children, let's say: “Thank you, Jesus. Help me be generous, and bring joy to others!”

**Prayer:** (by the tabernacle) [3<sup>rd</sup> graders – please come and help me!] Remember prayer, which means “I love God.” We have several prayer groups to join, or you may be called to sign-up for an hour in adoration of the Blessed Sacrament each week. Ask the Lord how He is calling you to deeper prayer. Children, let's say: “Thank you, Jesus. Help me find You: the Way, the Truth, and the Life, in the Holy Eucharist!”

**Formation:** (by the ambo) [2<sup>nd</sup> graders – please come and help me!] Remember formation, which means “I love our Catholic Faith.” We have many groups learning about our faith – groups for adults, for youth, for children, and for families. Children, let's say: “Thank you, Je-

sus. Lead me to a deeper faith, this Year of Faith, through your Word and your Church.”

**Service:** (by the large crucifix) [1<sup>st</sup> graders – please come and help me!] Remember service, which means “I love our neighbor.” There are dozens of groups that assist our community of faith, and the wider community. How is the Lord calling you to serve with others? Children, let’s say: “Thank you, Jesus. Help me to build up community.”

Finally, **Almsgiving – Tithing:** (by large collection basket in front) [Kindergarten – please come and help me!] The Lord gives us the gift of our income. Let us generously and sacrificially return a portion to God and His Church. Let us be faithful. Let us put God first. Children, let’s say: “Thank you, Jesus. Help me give to you!”

### **E. Conclusion.**

Let us be grateful stewards, as we live out our Christian Discipleship. Let us recognize and receive the bountiful gifts of God. Let us share these gifts in love of God, neighbor, and self. Let us renew this Stewardship commitment to our Gentle Jesus, who loves us more than we can ask or imagine!

*For more Homily resources visit*

*<http://www.dcdiocese.org/stewardship/stewardship-renewal-resources>*

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## S A M P L E P U L P I T A N N O U N C E M E N T S

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During the Stewardship Renewal, the following or other appropriate and timely pulpit announcements about stewardship can be made.

### **Weekend Number 1:**

You should have received a mailing from the pastor this week. During the next few weeks, you will be asked to look at your giving of time, talent and treasure. You will be asked to make a commitment of our time and specific talents to our parish. You will also be asked to decide the portion of your income you plan to give in thanksgiving to God for what you have received and as a way of expressing your faith and trust in God. Please give prayerful consideration to your response.

Today, you will be hearing from (name), a parishioner about how stewardship has affected his/her/their life.

### **Weekend Number 2:**

Our parish continues with the stewardship renewal, parishioners are asked to prayerfully consider what gifts they have received from God and determine of their time, talent and treasure they can return to \_\_\_\_\_Parish and the community.

Last week you heard from (name), our parishioners, about Stewardship as a way of life. This week our parishioners, (name), will share his/her thoughts on stewardship with us.

### **Weekend Number 3:**

As you are aware, our parish is in the midst of a Stewardship Renewal. Next week, you will be asked to make a commitment of gifts of your time, talent and treasure to our parish. Last week, you heard from (name), our parishioner, about stewardship. This week you will be hearing from another parishioner, (name).

### **Commitment Weekend:**

Over the past few weeks, we have asked you to give prayerful thought to your commitment of time, talent and treasure. This is Commitment Weekend and today during Mass, we will be asking the ushers to come forward and collect our commitment forms. (If the parish uses another method of collecting the forms, the announcement can be changed accordingly.)

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## PURPOSE OF A TIME AND TALENT FAIR

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### *Goal*

To Increase Levels of Ministry and Involvement: This will result from more people completing Time/Talent commitment forms and from parishioners learning about programs, ministries and services they wish to utilize. This will in turn help people to grow in their relationship with God, with each other, and thus, help to further God's Kingdom.

### *Purpose*

- 1) **Informational:** help parishioners gather information that will assist them in completing their Time/Talent Commitment form. Note that information must occur before solicitation. The Ministry Fair should not be a solicitation tool. Solicitation occurs elsewhere in the process (mostly on Commitment Sunday).
- 2) **Spur Interest:** To increase interest in making a time or talent commitment.
- 3) **To help all parishioners in attendance** (many of whom won't end up volunteering) to learn more about what is going on at the parish so they feel better about their parish and are thus more inclined to support it, maintain their membership, and grow from utilizing some of the services (i.e., religious education, counseling, RCIA, etc.).
- 4) **To help the ministries and organizations involved** get better organized and increase their effectiveness by developing a greater sense of their mission and purpose.

Ministry fairs are a lot of work, but they can greatly enhance the success of your annual time and talent renewal if planned and executed well. Fairs are a natural way of getting stewardship to work right then and there.

The following is a list of **Do's and Don'ts**, to help plan a stewardship fair.

*(Adapted from the Diocese of Wichita)*

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## 20 TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL TIME AND TALENT MINISTRY FAIR

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### ***DO'S***

1. Do talk with your pastor and ask for his support from the pulpit.
2. Do form a team with as many people as possible.
3. Do set dates long in advance in order to get ready. Fairs take a great deal of time and planning.
4. Do ask (do not simply invite, but actually ask in person) every organization in your parish to submit a brief description about their organization (very important!)
5. Do print a Time and Talent Catalog made up of those descriptions that can be handed out at the fair. Be creative.
6. Do include all the names and phones numbers of contact persons for each of the organizations.
7. Do get the word out as soon as the date is chosen.
8. Do invite each organization to set up a display table/booth for visitors to look at.
9. Do make sure every table/booth has someone available at all times during the fair in order to answer questions or sign up new members.
10. Do have a contest between the organizations for the best or most creative display.
11. Do set your tables up in a manner that maximizes visibility for all the organizations.
12. Do provide some sort of food and beverage during your fair. (This is a must.)
13. Do locate the ministry fair in the social hall after all the Masses during Time and Talent Education Sunday. This way you can maximize attendance.
14. Do take some pictures of your displays. It will make planning easier next time and it will help you explain your fair to people who were not there.
15. Explore different formats for your parish. The stewardship office can give your council ideas.

### ***DON'TS***

1. Don't try to host a fair with minimum planning. Take time to plan your fair well. Start early.
2. Don't expect every organization to set up a display.
3. Don't try to do it all yourself. Enlist the aid of volunteers. You'll be surprised how many people will be willing to work with you.
4. Don't force any organization to participate. Instead, let the positive impact of stewardship work on those who will wish to participate in the next fair.
5. Don't criticize any display. Instead, thank and encourage the group that has put one together, even if there is no creativity.
6. Don't allow soliciting to go on during the fair. Soliciting at this time will work against you, as it will reduce the number of people willing to engage with the booths and those staffing the booths. Make a pulpit announcement after Communion on Time and Talent Education Sunday that clarifies the informational purpose of the Ministry Fair and assures parishioners that there will be no solicitation for volunteer efforts at the Ministry Fair. Ask the parishioners to explore opportunities, ask questions and bring the commitment forms they received in the mail to Mass the next Sunday. (The Stewardship Committee should ensure that there will be forms in the pews on Commitment Sunday, and those not bringing completed ones from home will be given "encouragement" and time to complete one at the end of the homily.)

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## ROLE OF THE LAY WITNESS

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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 get involved in a deeper and deeper way.

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

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### *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.
- ◆ Have the pastor review your talk before you present it.

### *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.

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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.

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## YOUTH AND CHILDREN AS LAY WITNESSES

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Helpful suggestions for using children to present the Stewardship message to other children in the form of a Lay Witness Talk or dialogue. Just as the adult Lay Witness Testimony is one of the most effective means of presenting the stewardship message to the adults of the parish, a well-done children's Lay Witness Talk can be an effective tool in presenting the stewardship message to the children and youth of the parish. Such a talk should be given by a young person who is already practicing stewardship on a child's level in his or her own life. The talk should be directed to the other children in the parish as a means of inspiring them to become cheerful givers (2 Cor 9:7) of their time, talent, and treasure, and to share real life examples of how stewardship is lived. This talk should be done in addition to the adult Lay Witness talk, on a separate weekend.

### *Tips in choosing a child as Lay Witness*

- ◆ Invite a child who is already actively practicing stewardship in the parish. Children who are altar servers, youth ushers, youth lectors, nursery aids, etc. often show an understanding of stewardship in their lives.
- ◆ The child should be someone who attends Mass every weekend with his or her family. Often the entire family is involved in stewardship on both a parish and community level.
- ◆ Invite a child who is mature, articulate, and somewhat at ease in front of large groups.
- ◆ The child should be willing to work with the pastor (or his designate) in preparing the stewardship talk.
- ◆ The child should be willing to speak at all of the weekend Masses on the specified Sunday. Consider a dialogue or an interview rather than a talk. Even the most articulate and mature child can sometimes freeze in front of a large congregation at a weekend Mass. To help put the child at ease and make their testimony more effective, consider the following suggestions.

### *Lay Witness Interview*

- ◆ Use a dialogue format, "interview" the lay witness with regard to his or her practice of stewardship. Ask the child to explain what stewardship means to him or her, and to share with the group real life experiences that relate to stewardship. The interview should cover all three aspects of stewardship--time, talent, and treasure. The child should be given a copy of the interview questions and ample time to prepare answers from his or her own experiences well ahead of time. Then a time should be scheduled with the pastor or catechist to actually rehearse the program.
- ◆ Invite the children of the parish to come forward and gather around the pastor and the child lay witness. The child who is doing the lay witness talk is now speaking to a much smaller "congregation" of peers, and the adults are privileged to listen without putting undo pressure on the child.
- ◆ In parishes that do a children's Liturgy of the Word (separate from the adult Liturgy of the Word), the child's lay witness presentation could take place at that time.
- ◆ Introduce the Lay Witness to the group and include a little information on the child's family. Many of the children may already know the lay witness, but some may not.

*Sample questions for a child's lay witness interview*

1. We have been promoting stewardship here at \_\_\_\_\_ for many years. I know you have watched the adults come up here and talk about stewardship. What do you think stewardship is all about?
2. If stewardship is really all about “thanking” God for all the wonderful things He has given to us, what are some ways you use your time to thank God?
3. We are reminded that all that we have and all that we are is a gift from God. He gives everyone special talents--that’s just how God makes us--with special talents and abilities. “Billy”, what are some of the special talents that God has given you?
4. How do you use those talents here at our parish as a part of stewardship? How do you use your talents in the community?... in your school?
5. When you share your gifts of talent and time with everybody here at church, how does that make you feel?
6. In stewardship, we are told that our money (or treasure) is one part of the many gifts God has given us. How can your treasure be given as a gift of gratitude for God’s many blessings?
7. You seem to really enjoy living as a good steward of God’s many gifts. Do you have anything more you would like to say to your friends?
8. How would you encourage the other children to get started in stewardship? The pastor (or other adult “interviewer”) will help guide and direct the lay witness testimony.

Using this format, the child won’t have to worry about what comes next. He or she can speak from the heart in a relaxed and comfortable manner.

At the conclusion of the dialogue, the pastor should thank the lay witness for sharing his or her thoughts on stewardship and encourage all the children to think about their own special gifts and talents, and how they might use them to serve God and one another. Tell the children that they will have an opportunity, just like the adults, to fill out a commitment card on Commitment Sunday. Explain that those children who do wish to make Stewardship a way of life, and fill out a commitment card, will soon thereafter receive a box of envelopes. The envelopes will have a place for them to write down those special things they do each week in thanksgiving for everything God has given to them. Children always have time and talent to share with others as a way of thanking God, and many children have treasure to share as well.

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## C O M M I T M E N T F O R M S

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The use of time, talent and treasure forms is very important to the parish stewardship renewal process.

Specifically, the time and talent forms should be representative of the parish structure, its ministries and services available as well as providing parishioners the opportunity to volunteer their time and talent in meeting the needs and services of the parish.

The use of generic forms, unrelated to parish structure, ministries or services is not advised. Generic forms are generally lacking in providing parishes with the information and volunteerism needed to adequately support parish ministry, needs and the delivery of services to the parish community. Likewise, generic forms do not generally provide parishioners with a sense of adequate or needed volunteer involvement in the parish community.

Treasure commitment forms should challenge parishioners to look carefully at their material gifts and to discern the generous and sacrificial return of those gifts to the parish.

*(Sample time and talent forms can be obtained from the Diocesan Stewardship Office. An electronic form is available at [www.dcdiocese.org/stewardship](http://www.dcdiocese.org/stewardship).)*

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## THANK YOU

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### *Personalized Thank You*

Thanking those who complete and return commitment forms is necessary and very important.

The thank you process should be formal and personalized either by mail or by phone.

If by mail the letter should be on parish letterhead and signed, preferably by the pastor. Some parishes use postcards in place of a letter for thank you cards.

If the thank you process is handled by phone, those making the calls should be instructed what to say so that a uniform message is communicated.

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## SAMPLE THANK YOU LETTERS FROM PASTOR

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### *Sample A*

Dear Parish Member,

The Stewardship committee would like to thank you for your participation and sharing of your time and talent during Stewardship Renewal at \_\_\_\_\_

In being present during that time, you expressed your commitment as a Christian Steward. You have recognized that the Lord has blessed you with time, talent, and abilities that can be fruitful for Him and His work among us. We are confident that you will have the availability to help, participate, and share with us again in the near future. In the name of the parish and our pastor;

THANK YOU!!

### *Sample B*

Dear Personalized Parishioner,

Thank you for participating in our parish stewardship renewal effort. I am very encouraged by the enthusiastic response from our parishioners.

Over [number] households returned commitment forms representing time, talent and treasure commitments. You should be contacted soon and invited to become involved. If you are not contacted, please let me know.

You have also indicated that you intend to support the parish with a financial commitment equivalent to a weekly offering of \$\_\_\_\_\_. This commitment is most generous of you. Your commitment will aid me and our finance committee in establishing a realistic budget for our parish.

Again, thank you for being a responsible steward by sharing what you have to further the mission of our parish.

Sincerely yours in Christ,  
(Pastor's name and signature)

Note: Eliminate paragraph three in the above letter if a parishioner commits only to a gift of time and talent. If a parishioner commits only to a gift of treasure, you should eliminate sentence two and three of the second paragraph in the above letter.

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## STEWARDSHIP PRAYER

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**CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF DODGE CITY  
STEWARDSHIP PRAYER**

Lord, source of all gifts,  
you call us to be disciples of your Son,  
to be stewards of all creation.

May the hours and the days you give  
us to be filled with faith, with hope,  
and with love.

May the talents and the abilities you give  
us be shared for the benefit of family  
and community.

May the money and possessions you  
give us be shared for growth of family  
and community.

Help us make the choices that will  
renew the face of the earth, and will  
bring us to see you face to face.

We ask this through Christ the Lord.

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## PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL

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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 a generous giver of gifts, so that we can carry out Christ's mission for His Church on earth, we pray to the Lord.

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

Lord, grant us the ability to honestly evaluate our lifestyle, that it might reflect a desire to walk closer with you, we pray to the Lord.

Lord, help us to wisely use the gifts you've entrusted us in a Stewardship Way of Life, we pray to the Lord.

Lord, give our parish family the desire to do your will, giving generously of ourselves and our gifts for the mission of the Church, we pray to the Lord.

Lord, we offer 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.

Lord, make us trustworthy stewards of your abundant blessings. Show us ways that will enable us to fully embrace your teachings of charity, we pray to the Lord.

Lord, help us to have the courage to be good stewards of God's many blessings.

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**SAMPLE PHONE SCRIPT OR  
POSTCARD FOR THOSE  
WHO DID NOT RETURN FORMS**

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Hello \_\_\_\_\_. This is \_\_\_\_\_ from \_\_\_\_\_ Parish. We are calling and visiting with several families in the parish to discuss thoughts about what can be done to make our parish a better place of Hospitality, Prayer, Formation, and Service. Your opinions and participation are important to us. Our records reflect we have not received the completed time, talent and treasure forms that were previously distributed to you. Could we mail another set of forms to you or would you like us to schedule a visit with you at your home to talk about those things in parish life that are important to you?

(If they want another set of forms sent, please do so promptly.)

(If they would like to schedule a visit, ask when they would be available to meet.)

(If they want neither, simply thank them.)

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## SAMPLE PARISH DIRECTORY OF MINISTRIES

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This is a partial listing for example only.

*Sample ministry booklet can be obtained from the Diocesan Stewardship Office. [An electronic form can also be obtained and modified to fit individual parishes.](#)*

***Mission Statement:***

***Parish Goals:***

***Parish Pastoral Council:*** The Parish Pastoral Council is a consultative body which collaborates (or shares responsibility) with the pastor and pastoral staff in setting the pastoral direction of the parish community. The council seeks to listen to the Holy Spirit to discern what is best for the parish in the light of the Gospel, the Church's teaching, and the experiences and needs of parishioners and the surrounding community. The pastoral council strives to achieve consensual agreement on recommendations to the pastor which affect future directions for spiritual growth and pastoral activity. The council, whose membership is discerned every two years, meets monthly.

***Parish Finance Council:*** The parish Finance Council is a consultative body which aids the pastor in the administration of the parish goods: financial resources, buildings and grounds. Members of the Finance Council provide expertise in finance, administration and law. The five people who have membership on the Finance Council are appointed by the pastor and serve for a term of three years.

### **CELEBRATING**

***We are a Eucharistic community, united in prayer, worship and sacramental life.***

- ◆ ***Eucharistic Minister:*** Assists in the distribution of communion at parish liturgies and/or takes communion to the sick. Training is required.
- ◆ ***Lector:*** Proclaims the Word of God at Sunday liturgies once a month. Requires the ability to read well and to proclaim God's word effectively. Initial and occasional training sessions are provided.
- ◆ ***Servers:*** Assist the priest at the weekend or weekday liturgies. Must attend a training session. Usually asked to serve one Sunday a month.

### **EVANGELIZING**

***We are a caring and welcoming community of faith, and an evangelizing presence in the world around us.***

- ◆ ***Legion of Mary:*** Visits the sick and shut-ins; meets twice a month for prayer/sharing.
- ◆ ***RCIA Team:*** Member of a formation team which shares with adults preparing to be initiated into the Church. Meets on Tuesday evenings.

### **TEACHING**

*We are a center of religious education and sacramental life for all people, at all levels.*

- ◆ **Baptism Program:** Married couples who assist and help prepare parents for their child's Baptism.
- ◆ **Adult Education Committee:** Determines needs, develops and facilitates programs for adult learning and enrichment. Meets monthly.

### **PARTICIPATING**

*We call all of our people to be witnesses to the presence of Christ, and to inspire others to embrace Christ more profoundly.*

- ◆ **Coffee & Donuts:** Set up and serve coffee and donuts after the 9:00 AM and 10:30 AM Masses on Sunday.
- ◆ **Divorced and Separated Group:** Meets monthly for talks, dialogue and support; sponsors social activities.

### **OTHER SERVICES NEEDED**

- ◆ **Sunday Receptionist:** Answers the phone and takes messages for the staff on Sunday morning. Welcoming attitude and ability to keep confidences.

*(Sample parish directories can be obtained from the Diocesan Stewardship Office. An electronic directory can also be obtained at [www.dcdiocese.org/stewardship](http://www.dcdiocese.org/stewardship).)*

## SCRIPTURAL RESOURCES

OLD TESTAMENT		
Genesis	1-24	God created the world in seven days.
	2:5-25	God created man and women
	22:1-19	God put Abraham to the test: To prove the firmness of Abraham's faith in God's promise that through Isaac all the nations of the earth would find blessings.
	28:10-22	Jacob's dream of the staircase to heaven with stone as a pillow.
Exodus	19:5	We own nothing.
	23:9	Help the poor.
Leviticus	25:23	We own nothing. The land shall not be sold in perpetuity; for the land is mine, and you are but aliens who have become my tenants.
	27:30	Tithes belong to the Lord, as sacred to Him.
Numbers	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.
	24:17-22	Justice, equity and charity.
II Samuel	24:24	Sacrificial giving: The kings, however, replied to Aranuah, “No, I must pay for it, for I can not offer to the Lord my God holocausts that cost nothing.”
Nehemiah	10:36-40	Tithing – first fruits
	12:44	Tithing – first fruits
Psalms	24:1-2	Ownership and creation.
	115:12-14	Creation.
Proverbs	3:9-10	Honor the Lord with all your wealth, with the first fruits of all your produce; then will your barns be filled with grain, with new wine your vats will overflow.
	31:10-13, 19-20, 30-31	Living as a steward
Sirach	Ecc 29:11-12	Give planned, proportionate and sacrificial goals.
Isaiah	25:4-6	Poor people – the Lord will provide
Malachi	1:14-22	Sacrificial: Cursed is the deceiver, who has in his flock a male, but under his vow sacrifices to the Lord a gelding.
New Testament		
Matthew	6:1-4	Giving alms (Ash Wednesday Reading)
	6:19-21	Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth where moth and decay destroy, and thieves break in and steal... for where your treasure is, there also will your heart be.
	6:24-34	You cannot serve God and money – Dependence on God – Do not worry about your life.
	16:24-28	The conditions of discipleship.
	18:10-14	The parable of the lost sheep.
	20:1-16	The workers in the vineyard.
	24:25	Faithful and prudent steward.
Mark	25:14-30	The Parable of the Talents.
	4:24-25	The parable of the Lamb.
	10:17-31	The rich man.
	12:41-44	The poor widow's contribution – Widow's Mite.

Luke	6:24-25 6:38 9:60-62 10:29-37 11:41 12:15 12:32-34 19:11-27 20:9-19 21:1-4	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. Measuring your giving. “Go and proclaim the kingdom of God...” The Parable of the good Samaritan. Give alms Guard Against Greed Give alms; Wherever your heart is your treasure will be The Parable of the Ten Gold Coins. The Parable of the Tenant Farmers. The poor widow’s contribution – Widow’s Mite.
John	14:15-21 19:25	The Advocate. Mary, Mother of God and stewardship.
Acts of the Apostles	20:35	It is more blessed to give than to receive.
Romans	13:8-10 14:12	Love fulfills the law. So then, each of us shall give an account of himself to God.
I Corinthians	10:17 12:4-11 14:12	Eucharistic stewardship. Unity and variety of blessings and gifts. “Seek to have an abundance... for building up the church.”
II Corinthians	8:1-9 9:1-15	Generosity in giving. God’s indescribable gift – His life; cheerful giver.
Ephesians	5:15-16	Duty to live in the light.
I Timothy	3:15 6:17-19	Being a steward of the church. The right use of wealth: be generous, sharing what you have.
Hebrews	13:5 13:16	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.” Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have; God is pleased by sacrifices of that kind.
James	1:16-18 2:14-17	God’s gifts to us. Faith and works.
I Peter	4:8-11	Christian Charity: As each one has received a gift, use it to serve one another as good stewards of God’s varied grace.
I John	3:17	Love for one another – worldly needs.
The Four Pillars of Stewardship		
Hospitality	Hebrews 13:2	Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by this some have entertained angels without knowing it.
Prayer	Thes 5:17	Pray without ceasing.
Formation	Acts 2:42-47	Formation of the new Christian Community
Service	Mt 20:28 Mt 25:40	Called to serve. The least ones.

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## D A T A B A S E M A N A G E M E N T

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Despite advances in modern technology and mass communications, the average parish leader often has limited awareness of the diversity among parish membership. Extensive and frequent geographic mobility, changing demographics, and indifference toward the issue of parish registration all contribute to the enormously complex responsibility of parish recording keeping. A well-planned parish census can provide the parish with accurate information and awareness about:

- ◆ Important statistics concerning members and up to date addresses and phone numbers
- ◆ Pertinent knowledge about the concerns and issues of members
- ◆ Essential sacramental information
- ◆ Parish demographic trends
- ◆ Information about which parishioners are active and those who are not currently active or who feel alienated

All of this information will help a parish to better identify needs, meet those needs and communicate with specific groups of parishioners (e.g. families with young children). This database will also provide for effective mailings to all Catholics in the parish and will provide a tool for identifying potential contributors of time, talent, and financial resources.

A parish census can also offer opportunities for evangelization and parish pastoral planning. The Office of Stewardship can help you to discover what type of census will best meet your present needs.

Even if you decide that a full census is not practical, a parish should attempt to update its records concerning parishioners on a regular basis and utilize the latest computer software to allow for the most effective use of this information. The following information will help you to decide what factors are important if you are considering updating your computer software to provide more accurate information about your parishioners.

### ***How to pick a database management system***

Ideally, your computer database system will be able to function to provide ministry, census and financial information. The census information would include information on each family member such as name, address, phone numbers, email addresses, sacramental history, age, race, sex, marital, and school or level of education attained. The ministry information should include time and talent involvement, both present and past, and skills and interests (some software have modules dedicated to stewardship). The financial information would include information on specific giving, broken down by year and fund. The financial information would also include the normal accounting information, which would be useful for a finance committee in preparing a budget and for year-end reports to the Diocese and parishioners.

***Essential aspects of any system:***

- ◆ The system should be able to accommodate data for census, ministry and financial purposes
- ◆ The system should be able to generate reports in a variety of formats, to print labels, and to merge with other systems,
- ◆ The software provider should provide on going services, ideally including monthly maintenance, periodic updating, telephone support, and training opportunities
- ◆ The system should be compatible with your present system, or should have the ability to import current data

***Essential aspects of the ministry and census system:***

- ◆ The system should allow you to create a variety of lists based on specific demographic categories, e.g.: young families, over 65, under 30, etc.
- ◆ The information should be exportable to a spreadsheet
- ◆ The system should provide the ability to generate individual letters, reports and/or labels.
- ◆ The system should allow the creation of lists based on volunteer ministry
- ◆ The system should allow for the creation of an experience profile for each person including past and present involvement, skills, key talents such as language, accounting, etc., and interests.

***Essential aspects of the financial system:***

- ◆ Ability to generate reports of weekly, monthly, quarterly and yearly giving
- ◆ Ability to generate letters to parishioners with reports of financial giving
- ◆ Ability to spread the budget throughout the fiscal year using last year's experience
- ◆ Ability to account for individual program budget and expenses (allows for recording income and expenditures by parish program)
- ◆ Ability to export accounts and data to a spread sheet
- ◆ Ability to segregate reporting for separate funds

***How to get started:***

1. Review current system and determine basic computer capability, including whether the system will be networked.
2. Call the Diocesan Finance or Diocesan Stewardship office for information and suggestions.
3. Meet or talk with at least three other parishes that are using different systems and review the checklist above with them.
4. Decide who will be responsible for data entry and who will keep the records current. Consider whether you will need to hire an individual who will be responsible for census records. This position could be part-time and could be the other half of a Volunteer Ministry coordinator position. The Stewardship Office has more information on the creation and need for a Volunteer Ministry position.
5. Decide who will have access to the records and if there will be some restrictions on access. This is especially relevant in a networked system.
6. Budget money for installing the system, for training and for continuous updating.

***How to Collect Updated Information:***

- ◆ Ask for it. Invite parishioners through the bulletin, website, and newsletter that each families updated information important so the parish may serve them well.
- ◆ Photo directory
- ◆ Sacramental moments
- ◆ Stewardship Renewal
- ◆ Companies that specialize in data collection such and Flocknote.com
- ◆ Social media outlets
- ◆ Text Messages
- ◆ Data base cleaning services endorsed by the United States Post Office.

[https://ribbs.usps.gov/ncoalink/documents/tech\\_guides/CERTIFIED\\_LICENSEES/LIMITED.PDF](https://ribbs.usps.gov/ncoalink/documents/tech_guides/CERTIFIED_LICENSEES/LIMITED.PDF)

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## PERSONAL ASSISTANCE

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The Diocesan Stewardship Office supports the diocesan stewardship process at the parish and diocesan level. In this role the Stewardship Office directly assists the annual diocesan stewardship renewal process providing educational information, training and related materials to parishes. The diocesan Stewardship Office is available and willing to work directly with parishes as they seek help, assistance, education and training relative to the stewardship concept, the process, parish planning and working with parish stewardship committees. To seek assistance and help please contact:

Eric Haselhorst, Director of Stewardship  
Catholic Diocese of Dodge City • 910 N Central • Dodge City, KS 67801  
Office phone – 620-227-1537 • E-mail address – ehaselhorst@dcdioocese.org

### ***Educational Assistance***

Along with educational materials, the Stewardship office hosts the annual Diocesan Stewardship, Justice and Respect Life Conference at the Cathedral of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Dodge City. The conference is open to all parishioners whom have a desire to grow their parish and personally. Engaging and informative speakers are sought out to give our diocese ideas and encouragement as they work to achieve a *Stewardship way of life*.

For scheduled dates of conferences and seminars, please contact the diocesan Director of Stewardship (620-227-1537)

### ***Mentoring Assistance***

There are a variety of sources from which to seek information, education and training. In addition there are those from within our diocesan community who have a variety of parish, diocesan and national experience and exposure who are available and willing to provide assistance to parishes.

The following mentoring resources are available:

- ◆ Diocesan Stewardship Office
- ◆ Bishop John Brungardt
- ◆ Various Parish Representatives and/or Stewardship Committee Members

For assistance in seeking services from any of the above, please contact the diocesan Director of Stewardship (620-227-1537).

### ***Written/Video/Audio Assistance***

There are various sources of printed stewardship materials available from the diocese, the International Catholic Stewardship Council and other publishers. All of these materials are informative, educational and helpful. Also available is a collection of video and audiotapes that are available to be checked out for viewing or listening from the diocesan stewardship office.

A variety of resources are available at [www.dcdioocese.org/stewardship](http://www.dcdioocese.org/stewardship)