

**ICSC Region IX  
Stewardship Symposium  
Archdiocese of Kansas City in Kansas  
Afternoon Panel Discussion**

**Panelists**

DE: Dan Ebener, Diocese of Davenport – Teacher, Planner, Author and Speaker

JL: Fr. Jarrod Lies, Diocese of Wichita – Pastor

JR: Jane Rutter, Steier Group – Development Consultant

MM: Michael Murphy, Director of ICSC

**Discussion Notes**

Introduction – Dan Ebener

What are your thoughts about *Stewardship: A Disciple's Response*?

- Questions for the panel
- Comments about what you've heard
- Reflections on the Pastoral Letter

Diocesan directors will compile your questions and feedback, and address your questions to the panel for discussion.

MM: Opening Remarks

Thank you for being here. This is wonderful stewardship of your own time. For those of you who have studied the Church Fathers, you'll understand what I have to say. Over the years, I have characterized the dioceses represented here today as the Antioch of stewardship formation and a practical spirituality that has come out of this region.

I have had the privilege of visiting dioceses of Peru, Chile and Colombia. They are taking the work that you have done in your parishes and dioceses and are adopting it in their communities. They are using your work to help people understand how to develop their relationship with the Lord. They have asked me to say "thank you." So, on behalf of them, "Thank you."

Question: How can *Stewardship: a Disciples Response* be incorporated into capital campaigns for parishes and dioceses?

JR: Campaigns are nothing more than helping people open their hearts. This is one of the tenets of true stewardship. This approach ensures that everything you're doing has that stewardship heart at its foundation.

Question: How do you get bishops and priests on board with an understanding of stewardship?

JL: I have a unique perspective because I report to a bishop. Bishop from non-stewardship frameworks have a growing understanding of what stewardship is. Bishops seek to understand

the difference between stewardship and discipleship. I asked Bishop Gerber how he got the priests on board. His answer: a leap of faith.

We had to trust that everyone would share a personal witness of stewardship and encourage participation through their leadership. Since they had strong leadership, the priests and people are willing to follow.

Audience Comment (Dan L.): I was sharing earlier, one of the failures when we first started in Wichita, that as ordained priests, they would understand stewardship. That was not a good way to begin. They are human like the rest of us, and stewardship and conversion does not come automatically just because they are priests.

Early on, we did not spend a lot of time forming priests. They all bought into it, but they perhaps did not fully understand stewardship. Dioceses owe it to their priests to invest in forming them in stewardship. The best tool for this is the Pastoral Letter.

I was involved when the Letter was being developed. Still, every time I read it, I learn something new. Use this document as a tool to help priests and others learn the spirituality of Christian Stewardship.

MM: Another recommendation, priests and bishops have pastoral priorities. When they were in seminary, they did not hear about stewardship. One way to encourage them to learn more is to ask them to give a stewardship talk at a parish gathering. That way, they begin to learn about it and look at pastors and parishes that are actively practicing stewardship.

Audience Comment (from a priest): That's right, we are not trained in the seminary in stewardship. It is by necessity that we learn. We maybe have one priest study day on stewardship, but that has to carry us for years. We don't get much opportunity to pray about it and study it. We need more formation in stewardship. We have been in capital campaign mode, which is a great way to encourage stewardship. But we need to educate people about the spirituality of stewardship, which is another way to instill stewardship.

Question: How do we use stewardship as a way to engage youth in the life of our parishes and dioceses?

JR: One of the things that is essential for all of us is to ensure that we have some teaching and practice of stewardship for our little ones. We have to give children that language and understanding of stewardship in our homes, parishes and schools. We have to model stewardship so that they grow up with it. Some of our children go to Catholic schools, and even they do not know much about stewardship.

All of the sudden, they are teenagers and we begin talking to them about stewardship. That's probably a little too late.

Audience Comments: One of the things that we started in our parish is Strong Catholic Families and Strong Catholic Youth. We come up with things that are very simple and direct that involves

families, Food Collection Sunday. Start when families are young and give them simple opportunities to participate in the life of the Church.

Audience Comments: When I was child in this diocese, we had children's envelopes. That got me started. Encourage young couples during marriage prep to participate in stewardship within the parish and diocese.

Audience Comment: Scholarship program for the seniors for our Catholic schools.

Audience Comment: We tend to throw money at things instead of engaging people. People get stagnant in some parish settings / committees. How can we get people engaged around giving of their time and talent?

JR: I am a firm believer in term limits. A lot of the reason people don't get involved is because people have had the ministry for 18 years. There may be a real desire for people to say "I don't want to do this anymore, but they feel like they cannot give it up. When young leaders take over, we often tell them that they are not doing it like we typically do it in this parish. That can diminish their commitment and energy in giving.

Audience Comment (Greg F.): Cure of Ars has had an adult education program (Donuts to Dogma). We invite people after our Sunday Mass to come in and talk about family issues, Church issues, social justice issues. But we have aged to the point that it feels like the same people all the time. If you can find a way to renew a program like this, it is a great way to engage people.

Audience Comment (Mike W.): The biggest reason why people don't give money – they are not asked. The difference between being *welcomed* to an event and *invited* to an event. You have to ask, and ask sincerely and directly.

Audience Comment (Brian N.): There are things that I am asked to do, that would be poor stewardship for me to do. So part of forming people in stewardship is helping them realize that good stewardship is aligning your time and resources with your priorities as a person of faith and according to your vocation. And, at times, being willing to say "no".

JL: Millennials respond best to service requests. They seek service without expectation in a group setting. Service is a compelling way to invite people into the life of the Church.

Question: How do we combat those "isms" that keep us from giving?

JL: The key here is self-gift. If we realize that we can give of ourselves freely, and get everything we need and want in return. Black is a selfish color – it absorbs every color in the spectrum and gives nothing back. White is a selfless color – it reflects back every color in the spectrum.

Audience Comment (Jessica A.): Giving witness is the best way to help other people draw closer to the life of the Church. This is the best way to know the joy of self-gift.

Audience Comment (Gary): Parishes form small groups in similar life situations, as long as its fruitful and leads to a deeper life of faith. We surveyed parishioners to ensure that our groups and ministries had a purpose. This encouraged more people to engage in the life of the parish through groups that had a clear identity and purpose.

Question: How can you incorporate stewardship into sacramental preparation?

Audience Comment (from a priest): Sacramental preparation is key to encouraging people to embrace a life of stewardship. I ask couples why they are naming this child what they are. They answer, and I ask them by naming this child, do you own this child? When they say no, I remind them that they are stewards of this child. Eucharist – We receive Jesus, but we do not keep him to ourselves. We go out and reflect His love to the world. Communion is an act of stewardship.

Audience Comment (Gary): Stewardship homilies and resources for pastors available online. This can help with their formation in stewardship spirituality.

MM: Some of the more faithful parishes involved in stewardship formation, they begin with the stewardship of prayer. This is not a common starting point. But prayer, or spending time with God, is the starting point of a vibrant stewardship parish. This offers them a paradigm shift in stewardship – teach people how to pray, help them become prayer leaders, and help them learn to devote time to prayer. This broadens their horizons about the possibilities that stewardship can create in their lives and in their parish communities.

Audience Comment (Shannan B.): How can we start bringing this topic into Catholic education and other apostolates and ministries within the Church? How active is ICSC in encouraging this kind of stewardship integration?

MM: This is an integral part of our ICSC strategic plan. We have been searching for more ways to incorporate stewardship formation into other areas of the life of faith. This has yet to catch on in some places, but we are providing resources and plans to encourage this kind of integration within parishes and dioceses.

Question: What are the major challenges or obstacles that keep people from drawing into the life of the Church? How does stewardship help meet these challenges?

JR: Think of the qualities that attract you to Christian stewards. Joy, peace, enthusiasm in giving – these are the qualities that invite people into the life of the Church. When we live our faith with joy, we naturally draw others into our Catholics community and give them a sense of self worth that they may not have found themselves.

JR: People are looking for us to evangelize freely. There cannot be a “hook”; it cannot be transactional, like we are looking for something from them. We need to give freely, or they will sense and anticipate any ulterior motives.

MM: Introduction to national ICSC conference in Atlanta. The resources and speakers at the conference will overwhelm you. I’d invite you simply to come and see.

Dan Ebener – Thank You

Closing Prayer