

STEWARDSHIP

A lifetime of

OPPORTUNITY

RESPONSIBILITY

ACCOUNTABILITY



A Guide For
Parish Stewardship Renewal

Contents

A Disciple's Response – Privilege & Responsibility.....	5
The Importance of Annual Stewardship Renewal.....	9
Practical Steps to Conducting a Parish Stewardship Renewal Process	10
Parish Stewardship Renewal Materials	12
Time and Talent Catalog	13
Sample Pastor Letter	14
Intention Card (Front)	16
Intention Card for Children and Youth	17
Tips for the Lay Witness Talks	18
Homily or Lay Witness Notes	19
Thank You Card	21
Follow-up to Parishioners Who Have Returned the Stewardship Renewal Intention Cards	22
Follow-up to Parishioners Who Have Not Returned the Stewardship Renewal Intention Cards	23
Why Do We Need Telephone Follow-up?	24
Sample Format for the Phone Call to Parishioners Who Have Not Returned the Stewardship Renewal Intention Cards	25
Sample Form for Telephone Follow-up	26
Sample Follow-up Pastor Letter	27
Stewardship Bulletin Announcements	28
Stewardship Prayers of the Faithful - 2006	38

A Disciple's Response – Privilege & Responsibility

By Father Thomas Gentile

Disciples - Close and Constant Contact with the Teacher.

When the Bishops wrote the pastoral on stewardship they entitled it “A Disciple’s Response.” This assumes that all are disciples. A disciple is defined as one who learns from a master. It assumes that there is close and constant contact with the teacher. There exists a trust in the message of the teacher, a willingness to follow that message, and ultimately a desire to live and spread the message. All of this is necessary before one becomes a steward.

Our world defines a steward as a manager. The bishops broadened this definition when they said a steward is one who receives gratefully, tends responsibly, shares lovingly and justly, and returns with increase. So what they are describing are particular kinds of disciples who understand their role as a grateful recipient of all. Because all is entrusted to disciples, they understand that they are responsible for all that is there. Disciples also know that it is not theirs, but is entrusted to them to be shared with those in need. The final and most important component of this trust is the expectation of an increase. What the bishops are specifically describing is a lifestyle.

A Community of Privilege and Responsibility.

The lifestyle of stewardship begins with the acceptance of the role given to each in Baptism. When we are baptized we are called by name into a community of *privilege and responsibility*.

The privilege is that we are part of a community that will love, care, nurture, respect, correct, educate, and honor. It is here that we are given the chance to be disciples. This community is based on the message of the master. It focuses its energy on following the master’s teachings. It teaches that the only way to know the master is to spend the necessary time to develop a close relationship with the master.

The responsibility comes with the realization that it is up to each member of the community to be a source of love, care, respect, correction, education, and honor. *It is in accepting this responsibility that the disciple becomes a steward.* Stewards recognize that their presence is an integral part of this community. Being called by name means each has a unique role to play in the community. St. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 12, “God placed the parts, each one of them, in the body as he intended.”

Stewardship of Time – Chronos and Kairos

The disciple who accepts the lifestyle of a steward realizes the importance of time. Each week a steward is given 10,080 minutes. In these minutes there are various tasks that have to be completed. They range from the essentials of sleeping, eating, and working to the ones that carry with them a

degree of choice, e.g. time with family, in recreation, and time in God's presence or doing God's work.

A steward's lifestyle is built on the basis of time spent in God's presence and doing God's work. Time is divided into two different categories: chronos and kairos. Chronos is time doing ordinary or necessary things, but kairos is time spent that makes a difference. For a steward, kairos starts with prayer. It is in this special time that a steward recognizes how his life is a gift from God. It is here that a grateful lifestyle begins. It is from this time that those parts of life that have a degree of choice to them find their proper priority. Spending quality time with family and doing the portion of God's work that each steward is uniquely called to do become easy choices when the proper amount of kairos time is spent. Unless a steward is willing to spend kairos time, knowing the blessings in his life and assigning the proper amount of time to express gratitude for them by being in God's presence and doing God's work is not possible. Of the 10,080 minutes a steward has each week, the first portion is always kairos time.

Stewardship of Talent – A Lifelong Process of Self Discovery

Recently, I talked to a man who is a stroke patient. He has been taught again to talk, feed himself, attend to most of his personal needs, and walk with the assistance of a cane. He reflected on how he took all of these abilities for granted. It was only when they were diminished that he realized how necessary they were for what was his normal lifestyle. It was in this state of being diminished that he had to make a life choice. He could waste away as many would allow him to do or he could find other abilities that would connect him to the outer world. In his self-search he found what he described as the forgotten ability to listen. He joined this ability to listen with a regained but labored ability to speak and started his own network of contact to other stroke survivors. This man lost his ability to move about freely and sell things to others and found what gives him the most joy he has ever experienced in his life, the ability to lift up others by listening to their stories. Isn't it ironic how much we are able to discover in times of less? For some maybe it takes a decrease to find how much we are gifted and what these gifts are.

Stewards are engaged in a lifestyle that starts with the basic belief that they are able to do what they can because they are using abilities that are given to them by God. Stewards live a life of discovery in which they discover not just what their talents are but how they can best be used. Stewards understand these talents are given for a purpose and their increase is an expectation of the giver. Stewards can articulate each God-given talent and how it can be used to build the community of faith that they entered in Baptism. Stewards never stop asking, "What else can I do?" This is a lifelong process of discovery that never ends until their life in this part of God's kingdom stops.

Stewardship of Treasure – Living by the 10 / 90 Rule

Treasure is the result of applied talent. Many people work 40 or more hours per week at one or more jobs to earn money. What is the purpose for the money earned? For most, it is to meet the financial obligations their lifestyle has created. For example, some work in order to be able to feed, house, and educate their children. Others work to provide for their future needs after their children

are raised. Still others work to have a sense of security for now and for the future. In our consumer-oriented society, many work to pay for luxuries that they want or deem necessary.

The following chart demonstrates how lifestyle costs consume a certain percentage of a person's income as well as the corresponding number of hours in a 40-hour work week that are required to produce that income.

<u>Item</u>	<u>Percentage of Income</u>	<u>Number of Work Hours</u>
Food	13.2 %	5.3 hrs
Housing	32.7%	13.1 hrs
Apparel & Services	4.3 %	1.7 hrs
Transportation	19.1%	7.7 hrs
Health Care	5.7%	2.3 hrs
Entertainment	5.1%	2.0 hrs
Insurance & Pensions	9.6%	3.8 hrs
Other*	10.3%	4.1 hrs

* The "Other" category includes the cost of alcoholic beverages, personal care products and services, reading, education, tobacco products and supplies, cash contributions, and other miscellaneous expenses. If this last category was divided evenly, it would mean that the work of God and community of faith would receive *1.5% of one's total income* or approximately what is earned during *40 minutes* of the workweek.

For a steward this is not an acceptable total. A true steward tries to live by the 10/90 rule. God gets the first 10% off the top. The remaining 90% is left for the steward's life. This is a difficult ideal for many to meet. Most live by the 98/2 rule with the first 98% for lifestyle expectations and the remaining 2% (if that much) is given to God. There is a vast difference between these two rules of living. One places God first while the other puts everything before God. A truly grateful steward cannot live by the 98/2 rule because he would not accept God's work coming second to anything else.

Stewardship Throughout Life

Becoming a mature steward / disciple is a lifelong process. It begins in youth with the process of discovering the many God-given gifts in life. It continues with a conscious decision to develop these gifts to their fullest potential out of gratitude for their presence in the steward's life. During this time of development the steward / disciple begins to give back some of what is there.

As the steward / disciple becomes an adult, he or she begins making commitments to others and establishing lives of growth. This growth oftentimes includes the gift of children. A steward sees children as another of the many gifts from God. As the primary teacher of children, parents have the responsibility to be a proper example. Living justly and gratefully before a giving God requires conscious decisions to keep God first. This includes being in God's presence the proper amount of time (*Kairos*). Celebrating the Eucharist with the community of faith is essential. The priority to provide a Catholic education that is taught and experienced by walking the journey of faith with the children is also critical.

The search for midlife comfort and security often presents serious conflicts with commitments to God's community. Upon reaching midlife, there is sometimes the tendency (after so much effort is expended in raising and walking with children) to say, "I am now finished." But to continue setting God first is most necessary at this juncture in life. Thinking the job is done leads many to back away from commitments and seek lifestyles that have other priorities. Instead of looking for new ways to stay involved in communities of faith, many simply back away by making fewer commitments and changing the ratio on the 10/90 rule. A true steward never stops looking for new ways to live faith.

Retirement presents a new set of challenges for the steward. One has more time (*Chronos*) since life commitments involving jobs and earnings have usually ceased. In many cases, retirement and security have been attained but there may be lingering fears of having enough. This fear (in some cases very real) causes many to turn inward in worry. The anxiety of not having enough causes some to grasp too tightly to what they have. It causes blindness to the source of what is there. "Blessings to be shared" are replaced by "possessions to be held" in order to generate a sense of security.

In this final stage of life, it is the task of the steward to continually focus on the blessings present and think in terms of how these many blessings can be used even beyond his or her life in this world. Legacy is what is left behind. ***A steward's legacy is comprised of life works that reflect a deep faith in God.*** It celebrates the many gifts of God and leaves concrete foundations in terms of example and funding to see that one's life work is carried on.

Disciples who live their lives as stewards know what God has given, can demonstrate how these have been attended, leaves evidence of their just sharing in the community of faith and finds ways for their gifts to continually increase before the ever-giving God. ***The life of a disciple / steward truly is a life filled with privilege and responsibility.***

The Importance of Annual Stewardship Renewal

We are often asked the question: Why does the parish have to do stewardship renewal each year? This question always prompts the answer: Stewardship is more than a program: it is a life-long process. The bishops' pastoral: *Stewardship, A Disciple's Response*, reminds us that "following Jesus is the work of a lifetime...it is a total way of life and requires continuing conversion." (*Stewardship, A Disciple's Response*, p. 14) Each one of us must have a change of attitude, a conversion to a new way of life. It is an expression of our discipleship, with the power to change how we live our lives. The stewardship message deals with putting God first in our lives, being detached from material possessions, and sharing our gifts of time, talent, and treasure with our local parish and to those in need. We respond with our gifts out of gratitude for all that God has given to us. Christian stewardship is not an option for Catholics. It is how we express our membership in the body of Christ.

Each year, the Office of Stewardship and Development of the Archdiocese of Louisville issues renewal materials to help parishes respond to their growing needs. The manual offers many opportunities that will be helpful to parish leaders as they continue to present the stewardship message to their parishioners.

Over the past decade, many of the parishes in the Archdiocese of Louisville have continued yearlong stewardship education. Some parishes have taken the opportunity to educate their parishioners using the U.S. bishops' pastoral, and they are continually looking for new and exciting ways to engage their parishioners. By using a variety of options and models for introducing and nurturing the stewardship message, thousands of parishes throughout the United States and Canada have been successful in growing the spirituality of the people in their parish. When a parish explores and implements the annual renewal intention card, that parish is fostering the message of stewardship and will withstand the "bumps" in the road for years to come.

A parish must also nurture the stewardship message for children and youth. What resources are available in your parish for the members of our church of today and tomorrow? If children are to grow up to become good and faithful stewards of their time, talent, and treasure, then it is necessary for them to begin embracing the message of stewardship in their formative years. The Archdiocese of Louisville offers three manuals, *Good Things are for Sharing*; *From the Heart*; and *Sharing Our Gifts from the Heart*, as practical guides for implementing and fostering stewardship for children. These materials will serve as natural companions to the bishops' pastoral as your parish continues to implement the true meaning of Stewardship.

Practical Steps to Conducting a Parish Stewardship Renewal Process

I. Pre-Renewal Period (4 to 8 weeks in advance of renewal)

1. **Involve parish leadership** in planning the annual stewardship renewal process. Gather data from parish and finance councils as well as other parish groups for stewardship materials and brochures. Look for volunteers to give witness talks – recruit stewardship advocates.
2. **Review parish stewardship materials** (intention forms, brochures, and time & talent catalogues) and update as necessary.
3. **Provide parishioners with a written financial report** two to three weeks prior to Intention Sunday. While parishes should provide accountability reports to parishioners on a regular basis, it is important that this report be provided to every household at least two weeks prior to Intention Sunday. Present financial information in a simplified accounting statement along with a graph / chart. Be sure to include a brief narrative explaining any significant variances, plans, and expenses.
4. **Publish parish accomplishments** in the weekly bulletin, web site, and parish and school newsletters. Acknowledge the good stewardship already taking place in the parish. Set a positive tone for the upcoming renewal period.
5. **Educate parishioners on the needs of parish ministries.** For example, let people know how many persons are needed to fill the essential roles at a weekend Mass, or how many people are needed to help with the building and grounds upkeep.
6. **Host a Stewardship Time & Talent Fair.** Allow each parish ministry an opportunity to showcase its message and recruit new members. Fairs can be conducted with coffee and donuts following weekend liturgies.

II. Renewal Period (2 weeks prior to Intention Sunday through Sunday following Intention Sunday)

1. **Institute Lay Witness / Pulpit talks** two weeks prior to Intention Sunday by parishioners who have embraced the stewardship lifestyle. Suggestions for these talks along with other tips are available in this guide.
2. **Distribute stewardship renewal** materials and forms approximately one week prior to Intention Sunday. This will allow parishioners time to pray and then decide what their commitment will be for the coming year.
3. **Intention Sunday.** Ask all households to return their forms at one of the Masses on Intention Sunday. Parishes may wish to consider having families bring their forms forward during the offertory and present them to the presider.
4. **Follow-up Sunday.** Use the Sunday following Intention Sunday to collect forms that were not returned on Intention Sunday.

III. Follow-up Period (4 to 6 week period following Intention Sunday)

1. **Begin process for entering** information from pledge forms returned.
2. **Issue thank-you letters / notes** to those returning pledge forms.
3. **Notify committee chairs** with the names of individuals who have signed up to share their time and talent with that committee.
4. **Begin personal contact** and follow-up with parishioners who have not yet responded with an intention form. Send e-mail reminders with forms attached.
5. **Wrap up Stewardship Intention Renewal** within 6 weeks of Intention Sunday.

IV. Additional Stewardship Ideas

1. **Utilize all forms of parish communication** to spread the message of stewardship. This includes your web site, bulletins, parish gatherings and meetings, and newsletters.
2. **Consider publishing** a quarterly stewardship newsletter.
3. **Always look for the opportunity** to inform your parishioners about the theology of stewardship and our baptismal call.
4. **Create parish stewardship magnets** or other items to spread the stewardship message during the year.
5. **Order stewardship theme calendars for parish households** to help spread the stewardship message throughout the year.

Parish Stewardship Renewal Materials

Parish stewardship renewal, when properly understood and implemented, offers an opportunity for all of us to “make a plan” to nurture and use our gifts of time, talent, and treasure. Listed below are components that are inherent to a successful parish stewardship renewal process.

- ◆ **Time and Talent Catalog** – The catalog contains brief descriptions of parish committees, ministries, and activities. It is helpful to include contact names and phone numbers. Details of the Time and Talent Catalog can be found on page 13.
- ◆ **Pastor Letter** – The pastor letter is a critical part of the stewardship renewal packet that is mailed to parishioners. The pastor/pastoral administrator is encouraged to customize the letter. Sample letters can be found on pages 14 and 15.
- ◆ **Intention Card** – The intention card provides parishioners with the opportunity to make an annual commitment of time, talent, and treasure. The card should include all committees, ministries and activities and should be designed in a way that is simple to read, yet allows for the parish to gather detailed information. A sample intention card can be found on page 16.
- ◆ **Intention Card for Children and Youth** – Children and youth must be included in the parish stewardship renewal process. The opportunities provided on the intention card must be appropriate for this group. Further details and a sample intention card can be found on page 17.
- ◆ **Brochure** – The Office of Stewardship and Development produces an annual stewardship brochure. The brochure is designed to support the stewardship education of the parish.
- ◆ **Tips for Lay Witness Talks** - Pointers for those giving lay witness talks.
- ◆ **Homily / Lay Witness Notes** - An overview of the readings for the Sundays during stewardship renewal and how they can be connected to stewardship.
- ◆ **Thank-You Card** – Once a parishioner has completed and returned the stewardship intention card, the pastor/pastoral administrator should immediately send a thank you card to the household. This card is an expression of gratitude and affirms the commitment made by the parishioner. A sample can be found on page 21.
- ◆ **Follow-up** – Two weeks after Intention Weekend, the Stewardship Committee or volunteers make phone calls to all parishioners who have not returned the intention card. Two weeks later, the pastor/pastoral administrator should send a letter to those who still have not responded. Further details and a sample follow-up letter can be found on pages 22-27.

Time and Talent Catalog

A Time and Talent Catalog can be a great benefit to parish participation. The goal of the catalog is to educate parishioners about the many opportunities and also to encourage increased participation in the ministries, activities, and services of the parish. People tend to be more comfortable committing time and talent when they know exactly what is expected. The Time and Talent Catalog accomplishes this goal.

Many parishes throughout the Archdiocese of Louisville produce a Time and Talent Catalog. Some catalogs offer a very simple listing of the ministries with a brief description of each. Ideally the catalog would describe the ministry, list the amount of time that will be necessary to fulfill the commitment, and give the name of a contact person in the event the parishioner either wishes to serve or is in need of the service.

The Time and Talent Catalog must be updated annually. This can be accomplished by publishing the entire catalog yearly or can feature a pull-out list of contact persons that can be changed each year while the catalog itself remains the same. As new ministries and opportunities become available, the catalog itself would need to be updated.

Rather than create a separate catalog, the information could be included in an existing form of communication to the parish. For instance, the parish services and ministries could be a part of a parish directory, which also lists names, addresses and phone numbers of parishioners, the pictorial directory or parish service brochures.

One benefit of a Time and Talent Catalog is to highlight or list opportunities for participation by the children and youth of the parish. Notations can be made of ways that a family could be involved in the parish.

The catalog can be given to parishioners prior to or during parish stewardship renewal. Individual parishes can decide on the timing that seems to be best for them. This catalog can also serve as an important asset to the materials given to newcomers to the parish as well as those seeking information before choosing a parish.

A typical listing might include the following:

22. **Altar Sodality:** This organization provides the altar linens, vestments, bread, wine, and so much more. Volunteers clean and care for the altar linens. This group plans various fundraisers throughout the year to provide funding necessary for the celebration of the Eucharist.

Commitment: Meetings the 2nd Tuesday of the month at 10:00 a.m.; other times as needed.

Contact Person: Casey Riley 555-2253

While the Office of Stewardship and Development does not create individual catalogs, they are able to offer guidance and direction. In addition, samples of parish catalogs are on file with the Office of Stewardship and Development.

Sample Pastor Letter

(laser printed on parish stationery)

Letters from the pastor, when personalized and “tailored for your parish,” are major factors in the success of parish stewardship renewal. The following letter will be sent to each pastor/pastoral administrator with the renewal materials and contract. The pastor/pastoral administrator is encouraged to customize the letter according to his personal style. In some cases, the customization might be as simple as changing the closing or rewriting particular phrases. Some pastors/pastoral administrators will prefer to write their own letter, or one that is significantly different than the one below. For parishes that choose Option 1 or Option 2 on the stewardship contract, the pastor letter will be customized on the parish stationery to be mailed with the stewardship renewal intention card.

Option 1 – Personalized Letter

<<Date>>

<< Name>>

<<Address>>

<<City State Zip>>

Dear <<Informal Salutation>>,

The message of stewardship is not always an easy one to follow in our culture. Our society celebrates individualism and possessions. It is easy to make our wants our first priority. However, to accept the invitation of Jesus to “come follow me” means to accept the idea that we are not *owners* but *stewards*. God is the owner of all. To accept the invitation of Jesus means we make God our first priority. To accept the invitation of Jesus is to accept a life of opportunity coupled with responsibility and accountability – the life of a steward.

The renewal of your stewardship commitment is a demonstration of your desire to once again say “Yes” to the invitation of Jesus. Your gifts of time, talent, and treasure help to provide the human and financial resources needed to carry on the ministries and services provided by our parish. Therefore, I ask you to do two things. First, prayerfully consider what you have to share with our parish. Second, let us know your decision by filling out the enclosed commitment card. The renewal of your stewardship commitment demonstrates in a real way your desire to make God’s work your first priority.

Our parish depends upon our response to live as God’s stewards. We can accomplish much if all of us generously share a portion of the time, talent, and treasure that God has entrusted to us.

May God continue to bless the work of our parish.

God Bless You,

<< Pastor’s Name>>

Option 2 – Non-personalized Letter

<<Date>>

Dear Parishioner,

The message of stewardship is not always an easy one to follow in our culture. Our society celebrates individualism and possessions. It is easy to make our wants our first priority. However, to accept the invitation of Jesus to “come follow me” means to accept the idea that we are not *owners* but *stewards*. God is the owner of all. To accept the invitation of Jesus means we make God our first priority. To accept the invitation of Jesus is to accept a life of opportunity coupled with responsibility and accountability – the life of a steward.

The renewal of your stewardship commitment is a demonstration of your desire to once again say “Yes” to the invitation of Jesus. Your gifts of time, talent, and treasure help to provide the human and financial resources needed to carry on the ministries and services provided by our parish. Therefore, I ask you to do two things. First, prayerfully consider what you have to share with our parish. Second, let us know your decision by filling out the enclosed commitment card. The renewal of your stewardship commitment demonstrates in a real way your desire to make God’s work your first priority.

Our parish depends upon our response to live as God’s stewards. We can accomplish much if all of us generously share a portion of the time, talent, and treasure that God has entrusted to us.

May God continue to bless the work of our parish.

God Bless You,

<< Pastor’s Name >>

Intention Card (Front)

PARISH STEWARDSHIP RENEWAL INTENTION CARD

Please place
label here

The time that we have been given here on earth, the skills and talents we have developed, and all of the material possessions come to us in process and appreciable gifts - to be cherished, nurtured, and shared with others. Please take a moment to fill out this section. The children and youth are encouraged to participate by making selections from the back of the intention card. *Your examinations are for one year. In addition, on the reverse side of this intention form you will find a parish census update.*

Renewal of Stewardship of Time & Talent

Prayer Commitment	Formation	Worship	Service	Stewardship
01. Pray Daily for All Parishioners	16. Formation Committee	32. Worship Committee	46. Service Committee	62. Stewardship Committee
02. Attend Mass Regularly	17. School Committee	33. Lector	47. Altar Sodality	63. Volunteer Coordinator
Administration	18. PTO Board	34. Eucharistic Ministry	48. Boyer Club	64. Public Relations
03. Parish Council	19. Religious Education (K-8)	35. Eucharistic Minister for Sick or Homebound	49. Social Club	65. Stewardship Education for Children and Youth
04. Administration Committee	20. Religious Education (9-12)	36. Altar Server	50. Athletic Coach	
05. Finance Committee	21. RCIA Sponsor	37. Gift Basket	51. Newcomers' Welcome	
06. Summer Picnic Planning Committee	22. RCIA Team	38. Choir	52. Hospitality Reception	
07. Summer Picnic Booth Captain	23. Sacrament Programs	39. Cantor	53. Singles Group	
08. Summer Picnic Volunteer	24. Children's Church	40. Musician	54. Seniors Group	
09. Catholic Services Appeal - CSA	25. Marriage Preparation - Sponsor Group	41. Usher	55. Choir Church	
10. Newsletter Committee	26. Provisional for Marriage	42. Ministry of Hospitality	56. Hospital Visitation	
11. Parish/School Technology Team	27. Senior High Youth Group Volunteer	43. Art and Environment	57. Nursing Home Visitation	
12. School Annual Fund	28. Junior High Youth Group Volunteer	44. Remembrance - Liturgy	58. Cub/Boy Scout Leader	
13. Gratuities/Facilities	29. School Volunteer	45. Remembrance - Food	59. Brownie/Girl Scout Leader	
14. Collection Counter	30. Vacation Bible School Helper		60. St. Vincent dePaul Society	
15. Fish Fries	31. Cafeteria Helper		61. Habitat for Humanity	

In the section below, please indicate the Ministries/ Committees/ Events you wish to begin and those you wish to continue.

Adult # 1: David (Example) 2, 29 _____

Adult # 2: _____

Adult # 3: _____

Other hobbies, skills, etc. that I would be willing to share with the parish:

Electronic _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State, Zip _____

Stewardship of Treasure

In recognition that everything we have comes from God and as a sign of gratitude, I/we have decided that \$_____ is a fair portion to return **weekly** in the Sunday offertory envelope beginning _____

(This card represents an intention only and is not legally binding)

Intention Card for Children and Youth

Every man, woman, and child is called to care for and share God's gifts. The time that we have been given here on earth, the skills and talents we have developed, and all of the material possessions come to us from God as precious and irreplaceable gifts – to be cherished, nurtured, and shared with others.

This message must be conveyed to the children and youth. One way to go about doing this is through the use of a separate stewardship renewal intention card designed specifically for children and youth. When they reflect, plan, and then fulfill the commitments that they have made, they take a step on the stewardship journey. In order to help the children and youth develop an attitude of gratitude that is central to stewardship, the card must include ministries and activities that are appropriate for every age. The sample below must be customized to reflect the actual opportunities and needs of the parish. Just as with any intention card received by the parish, the data must be recorded and the children and youth must be contacted for participation.

Stewardship Renewal Intention for Children and Youth		
Name <i>(e.g. Christopher)</i>	Ministries from list below <i>(e.g. 100, 104)</i>	Other ways I will use my gifts
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

100. Cross Bearer	106. Altar Server	112. Help a neighbor or relative
101. Lector	107. Children's Church	113. Care for the environment
102. Minister of the Eucharist	108. Children's Church Assistant	114. Parish Facilities Clean-up
103. Hospitality Minister	109. Vacation Bible School	115. Write cards & letters to sick and homebound
104. Youth Choir	110. Vacation Bible School Volunteer	
105. Gift Bearer	111. Special Needs Volunteer	

Tips for the Lay Witness Talks

The Lay Witness Talk is one of the strongest components of stewardship education. The talks are generally given after the pastor's remarks on the readings of the day. It is essential to select parishioners who live stewardship and are respected members of the parish community. An individual, couple or family, as well as young adults, could be considered to give a lay witness talk. The talks are designed to inspire people to become good stewards as well as provide real-life examples of how stewardship is lived. Following are tips for the Lay Witness Talks:

- ◆ Include personal experience and humor if appropriate. People respond best when the speaker comes across as a real person.
- ◆ Motivate people to become good stewards of time, talent, and treasure by showing them that their everyday work, at home and on the job, is stewardship.
- ◆ Challenge people to reflect on their own values and the priority of the Catholic faith in their lives as evidenced by the manner in which they utilize their many gifts from God.
- ◆ Explain the use of the intention card as a tool to evaluate past giving habits and a means to allow the parish to plan and budget for the upcoming year.
- ◆ Write out and memorize the talk, but have it with you for reference.
- ◆ Practice in church with the sound system.

Sample Format for the Talk

- ◆ Introduce yourself.
- ◆ Explain your relationship to the parish.
- ◆ Provide details of your personal stewardship journey.
- ◆ Describe what good stewardship looks like.
- ◆ Speak about what or who inspired you to become a good steward.
- ◆ Explain how being a good steward has changed your life.
- ◆ Describe the way you decide and plan what and how much time, talent, and treasure you give back to God.
- ◆ Invite the audience to join in the journey.

Homily or Lay Witness Notes

4th Sunday in Ordinary Time - Jan. 29, 2006

Each of the three readings for today refers to an ability to speak. In the first reading we hear Moses talking of a prophet that God will raise up for his people. This prophet will have the word of God put into his mouth. He reminds the people of the necessity of listening to these words. He assures them of the authenticity of the word by saying that if the prophet speaks in the name of anyone other than God, the prophet will die.

A prophet is raised up for a particular purpose. His message is particular to the needs of the community at that given time. The instruction of the prophet is to change bad behavior within the community or to point the community in a direction that it needs to go. To speak of stewardship is to point people to a new way of behavior. It calls for the listener to make God his or her first priority. By making God one's priority, one begins to change the way he or she lives.

St. Paul in the second reading speaks of how other priorities can get in the way of the 'Lord's affairs.' He is not condemning marriage or sexuality but uses them as an example of how God's affairs can be put on hold or reduced in importance by other affairs of life. This is an appropriate message for a person trying to live as a steward in our times. There are always other things or necessities that this world will hold up as more important than God's work. A steward will always struggle to keep his or her priorities straight. The allure of materialism in our society entices the steward to see "wants" as "necessities." If the allure is successful, God's work and the support of that work can easily become less important or no longer a priority.

In the Gospel we hear the power of Jesus' message. It has the authority to remove evil from persons. It can change the life of those who hear it and internalize it. A steward looks for that authority in Jesus' message. It is that authority that points to the way of a steward in our confusing world. Hearing and spending time internalizing Jesus' words help us to clearly identify what is necessary for a steward. God's priorities come first in all things.

Homily or Lay Witness Notes

5th Sunday in Ordinary Time - Feb. 5, 2006

Two of the readings speak of healing and the necessity of healing. In the first reading from Job, we hear one of his many laments. He has lost all for no apparent reason, and he is in the throes of his suffering. He is longing for a new purpose and a reason for living. All that sustained him - power, wealth, his personal health, and family - have been taken away. All that gave him happiness has disappeared. It was in this state of depravation that Job discovered that his God was always faithful.

In this time Job uttered his act of faith, "The Lord gives and the Lord takes away, blessed be the name of the Lord." Oftentimes, we need to be deprived of some of what we depend on to realize that God is always faithful and the giver of all we have. As long as we believe that all we have is ours, we can never be stewards. We cannot steward what we own but only what belongs to another.

In the gospel, we see Jesus continue his ministry of healing. Restoring the infirmed to wholeness was a major part of his ministry. In the time of Jesus, people did not see a scientific relationship between medicine and healing. Illness was the presence of evil spirits. Jesus' ability to heal was a sign of messianic times.

In this section, we see Jesus do what he always did. After curing many, he went off by himself to pray. Why was it so critical for Jesus to pray? The answer is in the discourse with Peter. Peter indicates that everyone was looking for Jesus because they wanted him to do more healing. Jesus said it was time to move on to other villages and preach the good news: "That is what I came to do."

The need to pray enabled Jesus to stay focused on his entire ministry and not become fixated on only one part. In the same way, a steward needs prayer to stay focused on his total calling in life. Many people stay in their comfort zones, but stewards are always looking for what else they can do. A steward would never say, "I've done my part or it's time for someone else to do something." Because of the focusing they do in prayer, stewards are not interested in comparing who has accomplished more or less; stewards are always focused on the work that remains to be done.

In St. Paul's letter to the Corinthians, we see Paul make the statement that he is under compulsion to preach the gospel. He could not do otherwise. But what produced this compulsion? It was from an understanding of his role in the kingdom of God and what was needed from him for that kingdom. Paul knew he was a steward of the faith entrusted to him by Jesus Christ. There was a need for Paul to do what Jesus expected of him when Jesus gave him this faith - proclaim it! Doing so would be a sign of gratitude to Jesus and a fulfillment of the expectation that it would return to him with increase. A steward realizes his place in God's kingdom and the expectations of that placement. To make it grow by sharing in action the faith that Jesus has given is an absolute necessity.

Thank You Card

It is important that the parishioner receives a thank-you card upon returning the completed intention card to the parish. This sign of appreciation serves as an affirmation of the importance of the commitment. The card is most effective when it includes not only the personalized salutation and signature, but also a brief note from the pastor/pastoral administrator. This effort does take time, but it is time well spent and will certainly benefit the parish in the years to come.

This year's card is a note card and contains the following message:

Outer Panel:

Thank you

*"The gift you have received,
give as a gift."*

Matthew 10:18

Inner Panel:

Dear

The parish depends on the gifts of all parishioners to support the ministries of parish life. Thank you for sharing the gifts you have received with your parish. May God continue to bless you and your family.

Yours in Christ,

(Pastor/Pastoral Administrator's signature)

Follow-up to Parishioners Who Have Returned the Stewardship Renewal Intention Cards

Contacting *all* parishioners who have volunteered to serve the parish in any capacity is mandatory. It is important to contact children and youth as well as adults. This phone call serves as an affirmation of the commitment the parishioner has made. It also ensures that all people who have taken the time to volunteer are given the opportunity to serve. The majority of parishioners would gladly participate. They often just need the personal contact that comes from the phone call.

- ◆ *It is imperative that time and talent intentions, as well as treasure intentions, are recorded in the parish database.*
- ◆ The chairpersons for each of the five major committees (administration, formation, service, worship and stewardship) should receive printouts of each of the committees, ministries and activities in their area. These printouts should include the names and telephone numbers of all parishioners who volunteered in their areas. In addition, the chairperson for the stewardship committee should be given a master copy that includes the names of all volunteers for all ministries.
- ◆ Either the stewardship committee or the chairperson for each of these committees (e.g. worship committee) should then give a copy of the names and phone numbers of the volunteers in a particular area (e.g. lectors) to the persons in charge of that ministry, committee, or event.
- ◆ Each of the volunteers should then be contacted. If a person has volunteered for an event that is several months in the future (e.g. fall festival), he/she should be contacted, thanked for the commitment, and given a date or time frame for future contact.
- ◆ At a very minimum, it is essential that all who are new to the committee, ministry, or activity should receive a welcoming phone call. By noting whether the person is beginning or continuing the involvement with the particular ministry, the parish office can make this a manageable task.
- ◆ It is the responsibility of the chair of each of the major committees to make sure that the subcommittees contact every person who volunteered in their area.
- ◆ It is the responsibility of the stewardship chair to hold all chairpersons accountable for the contact of all volunteers.

Follow-up to Parishioners Who Have Not Returned the Stewardship Renewal Intention Cards

An important component of parish stewardship renewal is the follow-up to all parishioners who have not returned the intention card. The volunteers who work on the telephone follow-up can accomplish much more for the parish than just ensuring the completion of the stewardship intention cards. They can help build relationships within the parish community. The volunteer has an opportunity to identify the true needs of the parishioners. It is also a chance to extend to parishioners a sense of welcome and belonging. This personal touch is crucial. It is the true value of the phone call.

The following timeline will help to ensure that *all* parishioners return their intention cards.

- ◆ Two weeks after Intention Weekend, the parish office should provide the stewardship committee with a list of parishioners who have not returned the parish stewardship intention cards. Members of the stewardship committee, the parish stewardship coordinator, or other volunteers should begin the reminder phone calls to those parishioners. The telephone follow-up script and response forms can be found on the following pages.
- ◆ As the intention cards are received, the names should be removed from the master list of people who need further contact. The commitments from each intention card should be entered into the parish database. If time constraints make this impossible for the parish staff, volunteers can be enlisted to record the time and talent commitments. Parishioner files can be password protected so that the volunteer has access only to selected areas. Refer to the PDS “Security Setup Section” on pages 4.42-4.57 of the *Census Contribution Data Entry and Process Manual*, Version 17, for further details.
- ◆ Four weeks after Intention Weekend, the pastor should send follow-up letters to all parishioners who have not returned the intention card.
- ◆ Again, as the intention cards are received, the names should be removed from the master list of people who need further contact. The commitments from each intention card should be entered into the parish database.
- ◆ All phone calls should be completed within one month of Intention Weekend for maximum effectiveness.

Why Do We Need Telephone Follow-up?

One goal of parish stewardship renewal is to provide every parishioner with the opportunity to be involved in the parish community. Telephone follow-up greatly increases participation. The phone call is a way to encourage all parishioners to return the intention card. If properly trained, the callers can truly be ambassadors for the parish.

Why follow up?

- ◆ People often need a personal invitation. Stewardship, by its very definition, is an invitation. The phone call or letter shows parishioners that each individual is important to the parish community.
- ◆ People often do not respond the first time they are asked. The follow-up phone call and letter are important reminders to busy people.
- ◆ This component of stewardship education reminds the parishioners that gifts of time and talent are just as important to the parish as gifts of treasure.
- ◆ Telephone follow-up allows the caller to be active in relaying the parish stewardship message to other parishioners.
- ◆ Telephone follow-up provides an opportunity for the person who receives the call to voice concerns and observations. This is second only to home visits in giving parishioners the opportunity to tell what the parish can do for them. The concerns or observations should be passed along to either the pastor/pastoral administrator or the appropriate committee chair.

***If you always do
what you've always done...
Then you'll always get
what you've always gotten!***

Sample Format for the Phone Call to Parishioners Who Have Not Returned the Stewardship Renewal Intention Card

1. Introduce yourself by giving your name and stating that you are a member of the parish.
2. Ask if the intention card sent out by the pastor/pastoral administrator has been received and returned to the parish office.
3. *If the answer is yes*, thank the person and tell them that this is greatly appreciated.
4. *If the answer is no*, ask the person if he/she would please fill it out and either place it in the collection basket or mail it to the parish office.
5. *If the card has been lost or discarded*, tell the person that another can be sent.
6. *If a person says he/she does not want to participate*, ask them to indicate this on the card and return it. If appropriate, explain that every intention card is important when the parish plans the ministries for the coming year.
7. *If the person says he/she is already involved*, thank them and ask that they mark those ministries since this is an annual update.
8. *If a person is reluctant because of uncertainty over their finances*, remind them that this is not a binding contract and can be adjusted at any time.
9. *If a person objects to the intention card*, remind him/her that it is not a legal obligation. It just helps the parish know the interests and talents of parishioners. In this way, the parish can better plan the ministries and activities offered for the year, thus being better stewards of the parish resources.
10. *If the person asks for information not known to the caller*, tell them you will pass the question along to the pastor/pastoral administrator or the appropriate committee chair.

The best time to call is often between 6:30-9:30 weekday evenings. Let the phone ring at least five times. The caller should not leave a message on the answering machine.

For maximum effectiveness, all phone calls should be completed within four weeks of Intention Weekend. The pastor letter should be sent at the end of this period.

Sample Form for Telephone Follow-up

This form should be customized to meet the needs of the parish. For instance, it may be necessary to record the address as well as the phone number. Creating the form in landscape format will allow the areas for recording the information to be larger.

- ◆ It is best if the list of names provided to the callers includes the informal names of the adults of the household.
- ◆ The caller should make any changes to the phone number as well as note any address changes that are mentioned.
- ◆ Dates and comments about attempts to reach the household should be recorded.
- ◆ Any requests for additional cards should be noted on the sheet.
- ◆ Completed lists should be returned to the stewardship committee so that they can be forwarded to the person responsible for updating the parish database.

Name	Phone Number	Record of Attempts	Person Contacted	Response	Questions/Comments

Personal invitation is key to
BUILDING PARISH COMMUNITY

Sample Follow-up Pastor Letter

Four weeks after Intention Weekend, the pastor/pastoral administrator should send a follow-up letter to every household that has not returned a completed stewardship renewal intention card. This allows time for the stewardship committee to make the follow-up phone calls to those households beforehand. The follow-up is crucial for encouraging the return of additional stewardship renewal intention cards. Before the letter is mailed, the parish secretary or volunteer should update the list of parishioners who returned the intention cards to include all names that responded, including those responding to the telephone follow-up.

Dear Parishioner,

The theme for Parish Stewardship Renewal 2006 is *Stewardship – Opportunity, Responsibility, and Accountability*. The involvement of all parishioners is one way we go about communicating this theme.

Earlier, I sent a letter and your stewardship renewal intention card to you. Our records indicate that we have not received your response. The information gathered from the intention cards is important to parish planning. It is also a tangible sign of your commitment to our parish. For these reasons, it is important that you complete the intention card and return it as soon as possible.

If you intend to continue with your current commitments, please indicate that on the intention card. If your current situation makes it difficult for you to make a commitment at this time, we would like to know that as well. If your intention card has been misplaced or discarded, we will be happy to send you another. Just contact the parish office.

I urge you to reflect prayerfully on your gifts of time, talent, and treasure and then decide on a fair portion to return to the parish. We look forward to your response.

You are in my thoughts and prayers.

Sincerely,

<<Pastor's Name>>

Stewardship Bulletin Announcements

2006 - CYCLE B
(NEW AMERICAN BIBLE TRANSLATION)

First Sunday of Advent (November 27, 2005)

“You do not know when the master of the house is coming... Do...not let the master come suddenly and catch you asleep. What I say to you, I say to all: Be on guard!” Mark 13:35-37

The good steward is always expected to have the affairs of the master in order at all times. There is no time for complacency. Stewardship of time entails readiness to serve others and vigilance in that service.

Second Sunday of Advent (December 4, 2005)

“What we await are new heavens and a new earth where, according to God’s promise, the justice of God will reside.” 2 Peter 3:13

Advent does not imply a passive waiting, but an active preparation for a new heaven and new earth. Like John the Baptist, we must prepare the way of the Lord. In their pastoral letter on stewardship, the U.S. Bishops emphasize that we are active coworkers in God’s creative plan.

Third Sunday of Advent (December 11, 2005)

“Rejoice always, never cease praying, render constant thanks; such is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.” 1 Thessalonians 5:16

The opposite of stewardship is not greed, but self-pity and ingratitude. Stewardship is about gratitude and rendering constant thanks. We can’t give what we don’t have. Stewardship means being aware of how much we’ve received. After that realization, giving is a mandate.

Fourth Sunday of Advent (December 18, 2005)

“Mary said, ‘I am the maidservant of the Lord. Let it be done to me as you say.’” Luke 1:38

In the first reading today, God promises King David that his house and his kingdom will endure forever. It is through Mary’s “YES” to a life of service that the promise finds fulfillment.

Christmas (December 25, 2005)

“The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.” John 1:13

Christmas is the celebration of God’s greatest gift: His only Son. No matter what we consider our gifts we will never be able to give more than this.

Mary Mother of God (January 1, 2006)

“You are no longer a slave but a son!” Galatians 4:6

St. Paul says God raises us to be heirs of His kingdom. This gift of faith calls a steward to share it with others.

Epiphany of the Lord (January 8, 2006)

“They opened their coffers and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.” Matthew 2:10

The presentation of gifts by the Magi crosses all boundaries of nationality, culture, and faith. The Magi recognize Jesus as a special presence and deserving of gifts. A steward knows Jesus’ presence is gift to us. All who believe are required to give out of gratitude for the gift of Jesus.

Second Sunday in Ordinary Time (January 15, 2006)

“When Samuel went to sleep in his place, the Lord came and revealed his presence, calling out, ‘Samuel, Samuel!’ Samuel answered, ‘Speak, for your servant is listening.’” 1 Samuel 3:9-10

Today we hear Samuel respond eagerly, “Here I am!” each time the Lord calls him. A steward must be listening for the call of God in his/her life and be ready to respond like Samuel “Speak, for your servant is listening.”

Third Sunday in Ordinary Time (January 22, 2006)

“From now on... those who weep should live as though they were not weeping, and those who rejoice as though they were not rejoicing; buyers should conduct themselves as though they owned nothing, and those who make use of the world as though they were not using it.” 1 Corinthians 7:29-31

We are called to possess lightly - to manage our affairs prudently without forgetting that we own nothing. It all belongs to God.

Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time (January 29, 2006)

“The people were spellbound by his teaching because he taught with authority and not like the Scribes.” Mark 1:22

Listening to the authority of Jesus’ teachings helps us not to be confused by the perceived “wisdom” of the world that focuses only on self. The authority of a steward is to think otherwise.

Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time (February 5, 2006)

“Praise the Lord, for God is good; sing praise to our God, for the Lord is gracious.” Psalm 147:1

In thinking about stewardship, it is easy to forget the motive for giving by focusing on the activity of giving. The most important motive for giving is the recognition that God is good and gracious. Giving should always be in thanksgiving. The Scriptures remind us that God loves a cheerful giver, not a grouchy one.

The Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time (February 12, 2006)

“Whether you eat or drink - whatever you do - you should do all for the glory of God.” 1 Corinthians 10:31

St. Paul zeros in on the essence of stewardship, “do all for the Glory of God.” If we see stewardship as a life in gratitude to God, all we do, say, or give is a thankful response that gives glory to the Giver of that very life.

The Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time (February 19, 2006)

“Thus says the Lord: Remember not the events of the past, the things of long ago consider not. See, I am doing something new!” Isaiah 43:18-19

God spoke these words to His people just before they left from the Babylonian captivity to return to their homeland. He is telling them to focus on a new way of living and remember this escape from exile is a gift to a people who were sinful. God also calls us to a new way of life in stewardship - a life generously sharing a portion of His gifts with others.

The Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time (February 26, 2006)

“Jesus said: ‘How can guests at a wedding fast as long as the groom is still among them? So long as the groom stays with them they cannot fast.’” Mark 2:19

Mark compares union with God to the wedding covenant between husband and wife. Do we consider ourselves to be in a love partnership with God? When we are called to give service to the parish, do we see this as a loving response to God’s love for us?

First Sunday in Lent (March 5, 2006)

“Jesus appeared in Galilee proclaiming God’s good news: ‘This is the time of fulfillment. The reign of God is at hand! Reform your lives and believe in the - good news!’” Mark 1:14-15

The good news of stewardship is that giving *can change our lives*. Countless Christians have discovered the joy that giving can bring into their lives. Our motto should be: “Give to live” or “Give until it feels good.” To the many parishioners who have returned their stewardship intention cards, a heartfelt thank you! If you have not returned your intention card, it is not too late. Your intentions help our

parish practice good stewardship by allowing us to plan for the coming year.

Second Sunday in Lent (March 12, 2006)

“If God is for us, who can be against us? Is it possible that God who did not spare his own Son but handed him over for the sake of us all will not grant us all things besides?” Romans 8:31-32

Stewardship of treasure involves trust in God. You must believe in God’s providence and trust that, if you give a just portion of your income to His work, God will help you live on the rest.

Third Sunday in Lent (March 19, 2006)

“He told those who were selling doves: ‘Get them out of here! Stop turning my Father’s house into a marketplace!’” John 2:16

Do my expenditures of time, talent, and treasure reflect my true priorities? Do I have a marketplace mentality - centered on me? Or do I have a stewardship mentality - centered on others?

Fourth Sunday in Lent (March 26, 2006)

“We are truly God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to lead the life of good deeds which God prepared for us in advance.” Ephesians 2:10

Our good deeds go beyond giving money to charity. Stewardship is not about how we spend our money, but about how we spend our lives.

Fifth Sunday in Lent (April 2, 2006)

“I solemnly assure you, unless the grain of wheat falls to the earth and dies, it remains just a grain of wheat. But if it dies, it produces much fruit.” John 12:24

We should not be afraid to give of ourselves. The Gospel assures us that we will be rewarded. As Sarah Bernhardt says: “It is by spending one’s self that one becomes rich.”

Passion Sunday (April 9, 2006)

“Your attitude must be Christ’s: though he was in the form of God he did not deem equality with God something to be grasped at.” 1 Philippians 2:5-6

The attitude of Adam was envy - wanting to be “like God.” The attitude of Christ is humility - wanting to be of service to others. Service to others is the way of the steward.

Easter Sunday (April 16, 2006)

“He went about doing good works and healing all who were in the grip of the devil, and God was with him.” Acts 10:38

An astute observer once defined stewardship as “preaching by example.” Christ’s good works, his example, remains his most eloquent preaching. The same is true for us.

Second Sunday of Easter (April 23, 2006)

“The community of believers were of one heart and one mind. No one claimed private ownership of any possessions, but everything they owned was held in common.” Acts 4:32

The Christian community described in Acts understood and practiced total stewardship. The believers did not claim personal ownership but held everything in common. Stewardship not only involves sharing our possessions with others, but also sharing our ownership of those possessions with God.

Third Sunday of Easter (April 30, 2006)

“Look at my hands and feet; it is really I. Touch me, and see that a ghost does not have flesh and bones as I do.” Luke 24:39

Christ loved us in the flesh. Similarly our love for each other should be in the flesh. Our good intentions need to be translated into concrete actions.

Fourth Sunday of Easter (May 7, 2006)

“I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand catches sight of the wolf coming and runs away... That is because he works for pay and has no concern for the sheep.” John 10:11-13

Unlike the hired hand, the good steward/shepherd feels personal responsibility for the Owner’s property. The image of the good shepherd teaches us that stewardship is not about money, but about responsibility and commitment. The good steward is the employee who says confidently, “the buck stops here.”

Fifth Sunday of Easter (May 14, 2006)

“I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who live in me and I in them will produce abundantly.” John 15:5

We cannot produce abundantly without a deep prayer life; without living in God. A woman with a full time job and four children was once asked how she possibly had time to pray. She replied: “I am too busy not to pray! If I didn’t take time to be with God, I would be swallowed up in chaos.”

Sixth Sunday of Easter (May 21, 2006)

“I no longer speak of you as slaves, for a slave does not know what the master is about. Instead I call you friends.” John 15:15

The good steward is not a servant but a friend of God's. Stewardship flows out of our friendship with God and is primarily a response to that friendship.

Ascension of The Lord (May 28, 2006)

"May the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, grant you a spirit of wisdom and insight to know him (the Lord, Jesus Christ) clearly." Ephesians 1:17

St. Paul prays that we know our Lord Jesus Christ. It is in this knowledge that a steward learns how to live his life.

Pentecost (June 4, 2006)

"There are different gifts, but the same Spirit; there are different ministries but the same Lord; there are different works but the same God who accomplishes all of them in every one." 1 Corinthians 12:4-6

We need to pay special attention to the gifts we are unaware of in ourselves. God called fisherman to be apostles and great preachers. We never know what gifts God will call us to use. The talents we are called to share may be the ones that we are least aware of.

The Holy Trinity (June 11, 2006)

"And know that I am with you always, until the end of the world." Matthew 28:20

God is always with us. How often are we with God? Our relationship with God is like our relationship with our children. What our children really want from us is our time. The same is true of God. In our stewardship of time, how much time do we set aside for God in prayer?

The Body and Blood of Christ (June 18, 2006)

"During the meal he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. 'Take this,' he said, 'This is my body.' He likewise took a cup, gave thanks and passed it to them, and they all drank from it. He said to them, 'This is my blood, the blood of the covenant, to be poured out on behalf of many.'" Mark 14:22-24

The Eucharist illustrates the ultimate model of stewardship - the sharing of God's very self with all.

The Twelfth Sunday in Ordinary Time (June 25, 2006)

"Why are you so terrified? Why are you lacking in faith?" Mark 4:39

Jesus asked his disciples this question when they were being tossed by the sea. The fear of not having enough cause many to withdraw from God's service and support.

The Thirteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time (July 2, 2006)

“Just as you are rich in every respect, in faith and discourse, in knowledge, in total concern, and in our love for you, you must abound in your work of charity.” 2 Corinthians 8:7

Paul reminds the people of Corinth of their many blessings and calls them to give charitably to others. We too are blessed in many ways. Are we as charitable?

Fourteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time (July 9, 2006)

“He could work no miracle there, apart from curing a few who were sick by laying hands on them, so much did their lack of faith distress him.” Mark 6:5-6

Stewardship is a faith response. Christ could not perform good works without faith. Neither can we. If faith without works is dead, so are works without faith.

Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time (July 16, 2006)

“It is in Christ and through his blood that we have been redeemed and our sins forgiven, so immeasurably generous is God’s favor to us.” Ephesians 1:7

God has been generous to each of us. Does God’s generosity elicit a grateful response of sharing our time, talent, and treasure?

Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time (July 23, 2006)

“The apostles returned to Jesus and reported to him all that they had done and what they had taught. He said to them, ‘Come by yourselves to an out-of-the-way place and rest a little.’” Mark 6:30-31

Stewardship does not mean you should pack your life full of more and more activities till there is no time left. Christ tells us to take a break once in awhile. Part of stewardship of time is rest.

Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time (July 30, 2006)

“Jesus then took the loaves of bread, gave thanks, and passed them around to those reclining there; he did the same with the dried fish, as much as they wanted.” John 6:11

The multiplication of the loaves and fishes teaches a basic principle of stewardship. That is that generosity travels in an ever-widening circle, returning a hundredfold to those who give not only of their surplus but also from their substance.

Transfiguration of the Lord (August 6, 2006)

“From the cloud came a voice saying, ‘This is my beloved Son on whom my favor rests.’” Matthew 17:5

The distinction of being a beloved son or daughter comes from imitating Christ. He did his Father's will and shared what his Father shared with him.

Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time (August 13, 2006)

"Follow the way of love, even as Christ loved you. He gave himself for us as an offering to God, a gift of pleasing fragrance." Ephesians 5:1-2

Maturity is the ability to do the things that should be done, whether you like it or not. Recognizing our need to give is a mature sense of stewardship.

Twentieth Sunday in Ordinary Time (August 20, 2006)

"Give thanks to God the Father always and for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." Ephesians 5:20

If you do not see the reason for giving thanks, you might need to examine your life more closely.

Twenty-First Sunday in Ordinary Time (August 27, 2006)

"Far be it from us to forsake the Lord for the service of other gods. For it was the Lord, our God, who brought us and our fathers up out of the land of Egypt, out of a state of slavery... Therefore we also will serve the Lord, for he is our God." Joshua 24:16-18

What gods do we worship - the god of greed, the god of selfishness, the god of comfort, the god of appearances, the god of consumerism, the god of pleasure? A steward is thankful to the God of generosity and does not become trapped in worshiping these other false gods.

Twenty-Second Sunday in Ordinary Time (September 3, 2006)

"Every worthwhile gift, every genuine benefit comes from above... God wills to bring us to birth with a word spoken in truth so that we may be a kind of first fruits of his creatures." James 1:17-18

Every gift we have comes from God. In recognition of this fact, we are invited to return the first fruits of our time, talent, and treasure to God.

Twenty-Third Sunday in Ordinary Time (September 10, 2006)

"My brothers and sisters, your faith in our Lord Jesus Christ glorified must not allow for favoritism." James 2:1

We should show no favoritism to those we serve and we should show no favoritism in how we serve. All of our talents are equally important, no matter how humble. Our small acts of kindness to others make more of a difference than our grandiose efforts.

Twenty-fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time (September 17, 2006)

“None of us lives as his own master and none of us die as his own master. While we live we are responsible to the Lord, and when we die, we die as his servants.” Romans 14: 7

St. Paul can make this bold statement because he believes a basic principle of stewardship - It all belongs to God: our life, our time, and all of our possessions.

Twenty-Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time (September 24, 2006)

“You envy and you cannot acquire, so you quarrel and fight... You ask and you do not receive because you ask wrongly, with a view to squandering what you receive on your pleasures.” James 4:2-3

James warns each one of us against the dangers of materialism. In fighting the materialism in our culture, I must ask myself not only, “What do I own?” But more importantly, “What owns me?” What is the one thing I possess that I could not live without? This is what owns me.

Twenty-Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time (October 1, 2006)

“Anyone who is not against us is with us.” Mark 9:40

The practice of stewardship should not provoke quarrels and factions. There are many different ways a person or a parish can practice stewardship. Anyone who is trying to practice stewardship is part of a common journey in faith.

Twenty-Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time (October 8, 2006)

“The Lord God said: ‘It is not good for the man to be alone.’” Genesis 2:18

The U.S. Bishops’ pastoral on stewardship calls us to a life of community in order to fight the destructive individualism in our culture. It is not good to be alone.

Twenty-Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time (October 15, 2006)

“Go and sell what you have and give to the poor; you will then have treasure in heaven. After that come and follow me.” Mark 10:21

Following Christ in a consumer society like ours is not an easy task. As a result of being tainted by our society, we are trained not to give anything, but to always pay for what we get, and to expect everyone else to do the same.

Twenty-Ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time (October 22, 2006)

“You know how among the Gentiles those who seem to exercise authority lord it over them, their great ones make their importance felt. It cannot be like that with you. Anyone among you who aspires

to greatness must serve the rest; whoever wants to rank first among you must serve the needs of all.”
Mark 10:42-44

Stewardship is an expression of our practical faith. It is not just about how we spend our money, but about how we spend our lives. We are called to spend our lives in service to others.

Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time (October 29, 2006)

“The blind man said: ‘I, Rabboni, want to see.’ Jesus said in reply ‘Be on your way! Your faith has healed you.’ Immediately he received his sight and started to follow him up the road.” Mark 10:51-52

The healing and gifts we share with others are based on the healing and gifts we have first received from God. Our generosity is a response to God’s generosity.

Thirty-first Sunday in Ordinary Time (November 5, 2006)

“You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” Mark 12:31

True stewardship is outer directed. The question a steward always tries to answer is: “What is the best way I can show my love for this neighbor?”

Thirty-second Sunday in Ordinary Time (November 12, 2006)

“I want you to observe this poor widow contributed more than all the others who contributed to the treasury. They gave from their surplus wealth but she gave from her want, all she had to live on.”
Mark 12, 43-44

What made her give from her need? Maybe her state in life made her realize that relying on God is the way she had survived in the past. What in our lives keeps us from this same act of faith?

Thirty-Third Sunday in Ordinary Time (November 19, 2006)

“Every other priest stands ministering day by day, and offering again and again those same sacrifices which can never take away sins. But Jesus offered one sacrifice for sins...Once sins have been forgiven, there is no further offering for sin.” Hebrews 10:11-14,18

Stewardship is not about guilt, but gratitude and service. The motto for stewardship is not, “give until it hurts,” but “give until it feels good.”

Christ the King (November 26, 2006)

“Anyone committed to the truth hears my voice.” John 18:37

Stewardship is not an ideal but a lived faith. In order to carry out the Master’s wishes (action), the good steward must first know the Master’s mind (prayer) and listen to the Master’s voice. Stewardship has often been defined as “prayer elevated to a lifestyle.”

Stewardship Prayers of the Faithful - 2006

The following Prayers of the Faithful are offered as part of the yearlong stewardship effort. Parishes are encouraged to use the prayers each week. Please feel free to edit or rewrite these prayers in a style that is familiar to your parish community.

December - 2005

As we prepare during this season of Advent to receive God's greatest gift, His son, may we reflect on our need to share with others... We pray to the Lord.

January - 2006

May we resolve during this year to share more generously than ever our time, talents, and treasure with our parish community and others... We pray to the Lord.

February – 2006

That our actions will continue to build up our parish community as we live out our call to be good stewards of God's many gifts... We pray to the Lord.

March – 2006

During this season of Lent, may we open our hearts to the needs of the poor and oppressed... We pray to the Lord.

April – 2006

That our actions will demonstrate our gratitude to God for the gift of salvation and eternal life... We pray to the Lord.

May – 2006

May we follow the example of the Blessed Mother and open our hearts to follow the message of God without measuring the personal cost... We pray to the Lord.

June – 2006

May we become better stewards of our time, especially the time that we spend with God... We pray to the Lord.

July – 2006

May we open our hearts to return to God the first fruits – giving from our substance rather than our surplus... We pray to the Lord.

August – 2006

That we may always seek to see the face of God in all people we encounter... We pray to the Lord.

September – 2006

May we always remember - “all that we are” and “all that we have” are gifts from God... We pray to the Lord.

October – 2006

That all members of our parish community will be united in our common faith journey ... We pray to the Lord.

November – 2006

During this season of giving thanks, may we always remember that God is the source of all the blessings in our lives... We pray to the Lord.