

2023 Parish Guide

STEWARDSHIP: Grateful and Generous



Archdiocese of Louisville

Prayer



Participation



Generosity

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

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Stewardship Prayer

Loving Father, You alone are the source of every good gift. We praise You for all Your gifts to us, and we thank You for Your generosity.

Everything we have, and all that we are, comes from You. Help us to be grateful and responsible with these gifts.

You have called us to follow Your son, Jesus, without counting the cost. Send us Your Holy Spirit to give us courage and wisdom to be faithful disciples.

We commit ourselves to being good stewards. Help us to be grateful, accountable, generous, and willing to give back with increase. Help us to live the call of Christ and make stewardship a way of life.

We make this prayer through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, now and forever. Amen

Grateful and Generous

Just as many of us are at different points on the path of Faith, many parishes are at different points on their stewardship journey. Some parishes are just beginning, some are at an “intermediate” point and some are farther down the path in the “advanced” area.

This book is meant to be a reference guide for all parishes, at all stages of stewardship formation.

What We DO After We Say “We BELIEVE”!

Often times when we hear the word “Stewardship” we associate it with money. Stewardship is more than money. It is more than the concept of giving of our prayer, participation and financial generosity. Stewardship is a Way of Life. It is recognizing that ALL we have is a gift from God, and because we are SO grateful for what we have received, we freely share those gifts with others.

In becoming involved with stewardship at your parish, you have a wonderful opportunity. You are joining an empowering ministry that assists the work of all church leaders. You are also benefiting more than your parish. You are introducing people to a way of life that encompasses all aspects of their lives: family, workplace, community, school, parish, and the larger Church.

This manual is designed to provide you with resources to begin or enhance your stewardship efforts. It is based on the United States Bishops’ pastoral, “*Stewardship: A Disciple’s Response*.” The Office of Mission Advancement welcomes your feedback and is available to assist you in your stewardship efforts. We look forward to the opportunity to partner with you in this ministry.

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The annual Parish Guide for stewardship may be found on the Archdiocese of Louisville website at www.archlou.org under Office of Mission Advancement – Resources and Links. A printed version of the entire manual is available upon request. Please contact Melissa Herberger.

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Who Is A Christian Steward?

The Disciple's Vocation

The Christian vocation is essentially a call to be a disciple of Jesus. Stewardship is part of that. Christians are called to be good stewards of the personal vocations they receive. Each of us must discern, accept and live out joyfully and generously the commitments, responsibilities, and roles to which God calls us. Jesus not only calls each of us to Him, but also forms us and sends us out in his service. He knows our personal histories, our strengths and weaknesses, our destinies; He has a purpose in mind for each one of us. This purpose is individual vocation. Every human life, every personal vocation, is unique. And yet the vocations of all Christians do have elements in common. One of these is the call to be a disciple. In fact, we might say that to be disciples – to follow Christ and try to live His life as our own – is the common vocation of Christians; discipleship in this sense is Christian life.

The Call to Stewardship

Becoming a disciple of Jesus Christ leads naturally to the practice of stewardship. These linked realities, discipleship and stewardship, then make up the fabric of a Christian life in which each day is lived in an intimate, personal relationship with the Lord. Following Jesus is the work of a lifetime. At every step forward, one is challenged to go further in accepting and loving God's will. Stewardship plays an important role in the lives of people who seek to follow Christ. Christians must be stewards of their personal vocations. Catholics have a duty, too, to be stewards of their church: that community of disciples, that Body of Christ, of which they, individually and together, are the members, and in which "if one part suffers, all the parts suffer with it; if one part is honored, all the parts share its joy" (1Cor 12:26).

- Everything we have and all that we are is a gift from God!
- We are called to be grateful and generous with all of our gifts, especially the one that means the most to us.
- We are not "owners" of anything; we are "stewards" of all God's gifts.
- We are called to live a less "self-centered" lifestyle and a more "God-centered" lifestyle.
- Keep God first in everything; do not place other "gods" before God.
- Give from our "first fruits," without expecting anything in return.

Many parishes look to increase Mass participation, increase the number of ministry participants, and increase offertory through their stewardship efforts. These are all good “secondary” goals. However, the “primary” goal of stewardship is to transform the lives of both the individual parishioners and parish community – to help each other strengthen our relationship with God and help each other get to Heaven!

Focus on the “Why” and Not the “What”

In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus gives us direction on prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. “When you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, who love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corner so others may see them... but when you pray, go to your inner room... and pray to your Father in secret. When you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites... but when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, so that you may not appear to others to be fasting. When you give alms, do not blow a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do... but when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so your almsgiving may be secret.”

Many of us “give up” certain things (i.e. chocolate, beer) and/or “do something special” during Lent. Many parishes also provide extra community faith activities and events as well during this time of year. Whatever it is that you are giving up or doing special, remember to focus on the “why” you are doing it versus the “what” you are doing. Too many times in our own individual faith journey and in our parish community we are caught up in the “what” (the activity) and we forget about the “why” (our relationship with God). If the “what” doesn’t lead us to God, then we should reconsider the “why” we are doing it. If the “what” is more important than the “why,” maybe we are the hypocrites that Jesus is referring to.

Many times the planning, organizing and busyness of the “what” can lead to anxiety, frustration, and anger that may actually move us away from God, not closer to Him. This is especially true at the parish community level. The pressure to maintain parish schedules may in some cases, provide more opportunity to sin rather than repent, the exact opposite reason why we are doing the “what” in the first place.

Individually, many times when a person forgets their Lenten observance and accidentally eats that candy bar that we were going to give up, they “throw in the towel,” figure that they “blew it,” and decide not to continue with the Lenten observance they committed to. When we do this, we are too focused on the “what” and not on the “why.” The devil will try anything he can to derail us from our path to holiness, especially during our holiest season of the liturgical year. The devil wants us to become obsessed with the “what” so that when we fail, we will forget the “why.”

Remember, God calls us to be obedient and faithful, not perfect. When we offer our “mistake” to God, it shows Him that we want to be with Him, we need Him, we are dependent on Him, we crave His love, mercy and forgiveness – this is the “why” of Lent.

Focusing on the “why” and not the “what” is something that we should do beyond the 40 days of Lent. It should also apply to the other 325 days of the year as well. Lent is a time to build our spiritual muscles, to be persistent, and to make gradual changes that will grow into long-term habits. Lent is our time to prune our vices and grow in virtue.

What we put in our mind, heart, and soul determines our actions. It is not all about the things that we do on the outside; it is what is on the inside that matters most. Of all the gifts that God has given us, the one He wants the most is our heart. Pray for the wisdom and fortitude to focus on the “why” and not the “what” on your path to holiness.

The Harvest is Abundant but the Laborers are Few

Jesus went around to all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and curing every disease and illness. At the sight of the crowds, His heart was moved with pity for them because they were troubled and abandoned, like sheep without a shepherd. Then He said to his disciples, “The harvest is abundant but the laborers are few; so ask the master of the harvest to send out laborers for his harvest.” (Matthew 9:35-38)

We have heard this scripture passage many times before, but perhaps most of us only remember the part that states, “The harvest is abundant but the laborers are few...” Would you be surprised to know this passage is titled “The Compassion of Jesus”? The passage is about relationships, our relationship with God and each other, not about achieving goals or objectives. It is about fulfilling God’s plan and not our own plans.

“The harvest is abundant but the laborers are few” is a common stewardship theme for many parishes, but maybe for the wrong reasons. Most parishes experience the “80/20 rule,” that is, 80% of the work (the harvest) is done by 20% of the parishioners (the laborers). (In many cases, it is probably closer to 90/10). If the goal of the parish harvest is to increase Mass attendance, increase the number of volunteers, or increase the amount of money collected, then it is more about achieving goals than saving souls. If parishioners are seen as statistics and not individuals, parish stewardship efforts are probably not bearing good fruit from the harvest.

The goal of stewardship is to bring people to Jesus and ultimately, help each other get to Heaven. If we are not doing that, we are not fulfilling God’s plan. Our goal is to help people encounter the Lord, grow in love and friendship with Him and share their witness with others. All good gifts are meant to be shared, and through our generous sharing of our gifts, we imitate Christ, and with God’s grace, inspire others to be followers of Jesus. The stewardship of our gifts has the ability to build disciples and transform disciples into disciple-makers; this is the harvest to which Jesus is referring.

Before the harvest can become abundant, the seed of each individual plant must break so that it can transform and grow. Therefore, so it is with our heart. It must break open to grow and

transform. If we are truly interested in reaping the abundant harvest that God has planned, let us focus on developing our relationship with each other and not group our fellow parishioners together as a statistic to be measured.

This is not easy. It may require us to be in some uncomfortable situations. It may require us to listen, not to respond, but to understand. It may require us to go beyond the minimum required and place our complete trust in God. Let us pray for strength and courage to become the laborers God designed us to be.

Freedom

Freedom and discipleship sound like contradictory terms to many people. Today, freedom is seen as the lack of obeying any laws, the ability to do what you want, when you want. Discipleship is seen as a very restrictive lifestyle filled with laws, when in fact the opposite is true. Discipleship leads to freedom. Jesus said, “If you remain in my word, you will truly be my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” (John 8:31-32)

The “Decalogue” of the Ten Commandments means “ten words.” These “ten words” were written by “the finger of God.” Do you want to know the truth? Do you want to be set free? Then follow the Ten Commandments. Include the Ten Commandments in your daily prayers.

Meditate over them – think deeply about how you may or may not be following them. Contemplate them – listen in silence how God may be talking to you and responding to your prayers. Spend time praying over the Ten Commandments and go beyond the obvious.

For example:

- First Commandment – You shall not have other Gods before Me. It is true that you do not have idols of Roman gods in the backyard that you make sacrifices to, but has the pursuit of power, money, and prestige become your prime objective?
- Third Commandment – Remember to keep holy the Lord’s Day. Do you go to church every Sunday, or do you sometimes make excuses when your schedule is busy or when you are out of town? Do you tell yourself that watching Mass on TV fulfills your Sunday obligation to keep holy the Lord’s Day? Do you sometimes take a little nap during the homily and deliberately fail to pay attention?
- Fifth Commandment – You shall not kill. You have not actually committed murder, but have you ever gossiped about someone?
- Seventh Commandment – You shall not steal. You have not stolen a car, but do you spend money beyond your means or deprive others by spending too little?
- Ninth Commandment – You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife. You have never committed adultery, but do you tell dirty jokes or have impure conversations with others?

The Catechism says the Ten Commandments are a gift from God Himself and His holy will (CCC 2059). They are the covenant between God and His people (CCC 2058). The Ten

Commandments free us from becoming slaves to our own sin, pride, and ego. They open our hearts for a relationship with God and each other. They provide the foundation to become the person that God intended each of us to be.

So, start today and begin incorporating the Ten Commandments into your daily prayers. Discover the freedom they provide you on your path to holiness.

The Seven Signs of Stewardship

1. **Hospitality:** Parishes need to warmly welcome all members. Everyone has something to contribute. Everyone is needed. Communities known for the vitality of their faith and for the quality of their service to people in need invariably inspire others to participate in ministry and to be generous in financial support.
 - How do we welcome visitors, new parishioners, and current parishioners?
 - Is there a process in place to welcome and orient new parishioners to the parish?
 - How do we involve current and new families?
 - Do we sincerely communicate that all gifts are welcome and appreciated?
 - Are the children and youth of the parish invited to share their gifts and to participate in parish liturgies and activities?
 - How do we thank those who do share their gifts freely and generously?

2. **Prayer:** The authentic steward must be rooted in the sanctifying presence of Christ, which, when recognized, embraced and celebrated in prayer and in the sacraments, becomes spiritual nourishment and a bond of unity. The steward needs to be sustained, above all with constant contact with the Christian community, the parish, and with the opportunities that it offers for the nourishment of the faith.
 - Are prayer opportunities that nourish and unite the entire community present?
 - Do our activities, events, and meetings begin with prayer and are they rooted in prayer?
 - Do we hold up prayer as a gift that is valued, even if that is the only gift someone can share with their parish?

3. **Leadership:** Parishes need a systematic way of infusing the theology and practice of stewardship into the life of the parish, identifying opportunities for members of the parish to share their gifts of prayer, participation, and financial generosity, and establishing an ongoing process to recruit, recognize, and thank those who share in all ministries.
 - Do we have a parish leadership structure in place that facilitates, models, and encourages stewardship?
 - Is there a process in place to form the lay leaders of our parish community?
 - Are youth and young adults represented in leadership groups?

4. **Recommitment:** Stewardship is expressed not in a single program, but rather in a constant reminder to commit one's very self to the Lord. Annual recommitments inform and form in order to transform individual lives and the life of the parish.
 - Do we offer an opportunity of annual recommitment that informs and transforms individual lives and the life of the parish?
 - What are the opportunities available to invite parishioners to prayerfully consider intentional, planned, and proportionate gifts of prayer, participation, and financial generosity to their parish?
 - Are there distinct prayer, participation, and financial generosity opportunities for children and teens?

5. **Outreach:** The parish as a whole needs to set aside a portion of its resources to serve persons in need in the parish, the community, the Archdiocese, and the universal Church. Ideally, parish outreach programs involve parishioners at the human level and create opportunities for human interaction.
 - How do we share our parish resources with the community and the greater Church?
 - Do we connect the act of sharing with the responsibility of being good stewards of our gifts?

6. **Lay Witnesses:** A key ingredient is the personal witness of parishioners who have experienced a change of heart as a result of their commitment to stewardship. Personal witness is essential to building a solid foundation for parish stewardship.
 - Do we have an atmosphere that welcomes and calls forth our parishioners to witness their call to stewardship?
 - Is personal witness an ongoing component of liturgies or does this happen only at renewal time?

7. **Accountability:** Constant accountability is fundamental to good stewardship. Parish stewardship efforts require a visible commitment to accountability for the full range of parish activities – from the way decisions are made and carried out to the way resources are collected, managed, and used.
 - How do we care for the gifts of our parish community?
 - Do we create communication pieces that reflect how we have used our parishioners' gifts?
 - Have we shared the decision-making process with our parish community?
 - How do we show we are responsible for the gifts shared with our parish community?
 - Have we created Planned Giving opportunities for our parishioners to help them plan for the future?

A Stewardship Plan

Stewardship formation and education and how it is central to our lives as baptized Christians is the foundation on which we should build our stewardship plan. Whether a parish community or an individual, it takes an act of faith to make the decision to live as a steward of God's gifts. By sharing of our gifts of prayer, participation, and financial generosity from our first fruits, not from what we have left over, we are trusting that God will take care of us and will give us all that we need. There is a tremendous freedom that comes with letting go of the fear of not having enough.

We need to have practical steps in place, however, to harvest the gifts of our parish communities. Sometimes it is the action that helps transform our hearts. When stewardship plans are formed, it is important to create ways to make visible members of our own parishes who are our models of stewardship. We need to see that this is an attainable, joyful way to fulfill our lives. It is also important to remember to integrate stewardship for children and youth in our plans. Messages and activities that call forth their gifts in service of the community are extremely important. If we take the time to form our young parishioners now, they will have the opportunity to grow into adulthood with the experience of living as a steward of God's gifts. What better gift could our parishes give to their youngest members? So, where do we begin? How do we create a plan with action steps and timelines for our parish?

STEWARDSHIP MINISTRY “*QUICK START*” GUIDE

1. FORM A PARISH STEWARDSHIP TEAM/COMMITTEE

- Invite parishioners who exemplify stewardship in prayer, participation, and generosity.
- Build a team blessed with a variety of gifts, training, and expertise. Include young professionals.
- Choose a chair with proven leadership and mentoring skills.

2. MAKE A 12-MONTH PLAN

- Create a 12-month parish stewardship calendar and put it in the church master calendar.
- Plan for ongoing communication and personal contact with parishioners.
- Schedule and assign tasks, communications, and events.
- Recognize that stewardship is an ongoing ministry – not any single event or activity.

3. COMMUNICATE

- Include a variety of stewardship messages in bulletins, emails, newsletters, social media, etc.
- Keep the Parish Council informed and active in promoting stewardship, thus leading by example.
- Enlist parishioners to offer testimonials in church and in written and video communications.
- Offer homilies that apply the theme of the Gospel to stewardship.

4. ENGAGE PARISHIONERS IN THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH

- Create opportunities for people to be heard.
- Welcome new ideas and delegate responsibility.
- Invite people personally to get involved in parish ministry.
- Listen to and validate parishioner concerns.

Establishing A Stewardship Committee

The Stewardship Committee functions as the hands and feet of Jesus within a parish and in the community. The Committee and its members help to make the parish a place where the people of God are invited, welcomed, and encouraged through the Sacraments and the many ministries of the parish.

What a Stewardship Committee does:

1. Helps the parish be welcoming and inviting to current and new parishioners
2. Encourages all parishioners to participate in the areas of Stewardship: Prayer, Participation, and Generosity
3. Fosters gratitude throughout the parish
4. Promotes parishioner registration to improve communication

How a Stewardship Committee does it:

1. Helps the parish be Welcoming and Inviting
 - Is the parish visually appealing on the outside?
 - Is the signage fresh and clean?
 - Are Mass times readable at 45 mph?
 - Is it easy to get inside?
 - Is it easy to park and to leave?
 - How does the Church look from the outside?
 - Would a stranger feel welcome?
 - Are the Greeters properly trained and positioned?
 - Are visitors invited to come back and get involved?
 - Are visitors encouraged to register with the parish?
 - Are the elements of the Mass easily accessible? (Order of worship in pews or on screen.)
 - Are the Parish website and social media up to date?
 - Is the content updated regularly? Do pictures/images change every few months?
 - Is it easy to navigate?
 - Are the Mass times readily visible?
 - Can you find the names and contact information for staff quickly and easily?
 - Is information about how to mail OR make an online gift on the home page?
 - Can a prospective parishioner register easily?
 - Would a visitor be attracted to the bulletin content?

- Is the bulletin easy to read? Engaging?
 - Is there information on how to get involved? How to register? How to donate?
2. Encourages all parishioners to participate in the areas of Stewardship: Prayer, Participation, and Generosity
- Prayer
 - Are there opportunities for parishioners to grow in their faith?
 - Small groups?
 - Books in the narthex?
 - Is there regular information in the bulletin that gives parishioners the opportunity to learn more about their faith?
 - Participation
 - Are the ministries of the parish organized and easy to understand?
 - Is the time commitment clear for each ministry?
 - Is there training for new volunteers? Is it clearly accessible?
 - How do volunteers step up?
 - Are new volunteers contacted and trained within 30 days?
 - Generosity
 - Online giving is the easiest way to support the parish consistently.
 - The process MUST be easy to find and easy to use.
 - Giving by check – place in the offertory basket or mail to the church.
 - Share the impact of the financial support of the parishioners.
3. Fosters gratitude throughout the parish
- Messages of:
 - “We are glad you are here!”
 - “Thanks for ALL you do!”
 - “We are grateful for this Catholic community of believers.”
 - “We thank God for you.”
 - “You are making a difference in this community.”
4. Promotes parishioner registration to improve communication
- Welcome everyone to register with the parish – new or existing parishioners

- Explain why it is important to register.
- Include how to register in the bulletin and on the website.
- Make it easy to register.

Creating a Welcoming Atmosphere

A parish that places stewardship as a priority will create an atmosphere of welcoming and hospitality that can be seen throughout all aspects of parish life. The following checklist will act as a guide in creating that atmosphere. Where is your parish in creating that atmosphere?

1. Our Parish - Spiritual Environment

- The message permeating throughout the entire parish is one of abundance (as opposed to scarcity): God has given us all the gifts we need in our parish community to thrive.
- Our Pastor and parish leadership encourage and challenge us to live an intentional spiritual life.
- There is a welcoming presence throughout our Parish – at liturgies, throughout ministries, through meeting one another.
- It is easy for people to get involved.
- Our staff and parishioners can be described as friendly, helpful, and welcoming.
- People join for the sense of belonging and community.
- Prayer is held up as a focal point in our lives.
- When new members join, parishioners, along with parish leadership, welcome and take the time to orient them to our parish, describe the importance of stewardship both in the parish and in their own lives, and encourage them to share their gifts.

2. Our Parish - Physical Environment

- Our buildings are well maintained; well-lit; safe walkways and stairs; clean restrooms; clear signage (outside and inside).
- Our buildings are handicapped accessible (entryways, in church proper so all can lector, distribute the Eucharist, etc.).

3. Our Parish - Worship

- Our liturgy is the source (gives life to and nourishes our vision) and summit (celebrates who we are becoming) of our faith expression.
- The homilies break open the scriptures and challenge us to live our baptismal call.

- Many parishioners participate in our liturgical ministries and a diversity of our parish membership is involved in our liturgies.
- Our music is varied, diverse, and reflects the culture of our parish.
- We recognize not everyone at our liturgies are registered parishioners, and therefore create an atmosphere of welcoming and inclusiveness for our guests.

4. Our Parish - Ministries

- Our ministries flow from our parish mission and rely on the gifts of our members.
- Our ministries respond to the needs of our parish.
- The people involved in our ministries are a good representation of our entire parish community.
- When people come forward to offer their gifts in service, their gifts are honored, they are responded to quickly, and a place for their gifts is found.
- People are genuinely thanked and affirmed for sharing their time and talents.
- When we ask for participation, the responsibilities and activities are clearly outlined with what gifts are needed and what the expected commitment time is.
- Invitations are made in a variety of ways, with personal invitations always remaining in the forefront.
- There is an atmosphere that everyone's gifts are welcome.
- Formation, education, and training are important components in helping others succeed in using their gifts.
- We publicly affirm and commission those involved in our ministries.

Welcoming New Parishioners

The way in which we welcome those into our parish communities speaks volumes of the parish culture. Oftentimes registering with the parish is the first opportunity a person has to ask something of the parish. How the parish responds sets the tone for the parishioner's experience. Welcoming new members can be designed to best fit the parish community. This is a wonderful opportunity for current parishioners to connect with new members and help them feel a part of their new parish community.

A key part of a welcoming program for new parishioners should be an introduction to stewardship. The staff member, parishioner, or team of parishioners who give the orientation to new members should include materials on the sharing of prayer, participation, and financial generosity. When designing a welcoming program, it is important to include the following elements:

1. Make it easy to become part of the parish community with a clear and quick registration process.
2. Contact and welcome new parishioners in a timely manner after registering.
3. Include current parishioners and key leaders as part of the welcoming program.
4. Introduce new parishioners to the parish community, (i.e. through the bulletin, at Mass, with a special breakfast, by posting pictures of new members in high traffic areas, etc.).
5. Introduce and explain the various ministries, including stewardship, as a way of life.
6. Consider offering a small gift to new parishioners, such as a candle or bible.
7. Design materials to explain the parish structure, ministries, staff, and opportunities for involvement.

New Parishioner Welcome/Registration Packet

The purpose of a welcome packet for new parishioners is to give information about their new parish, services offered, and ways in which parishioners can offer their gifts in service of their parish. It is a way of saying, “this is your parish, here are the ways your parish can serve you, and here are the opportunities for you to be of service to others.” It is also an opportunity to thank parishioners for choosing this parish as their faith community.

Checklist of pieces to include in a packet:

- Welcome Letter from the Pastor
- Parish Council/Committee Structure
- List of Council, Committees, Subcommittees, Ministries, Organizations with description of each, time commitment involved, when they meet, etc. -- also list how and who to contact for more information or to become involved
- Liturgical Services Schedule of Masses and confessions; list of holy days; baptism and wedding guidelines
- Office Hours and Contact Information
- Parish Staff with Description of Duties
- Historical Information and Parish Statistics
- Announcements of Special Events
- Parish Calendar
- Financial Commitment Information with Pledge Card
- Parish School Information

Parish Stewardship Renewal Timeline

The following is a suggested timeline for communicating the annual stewardship renewal and may be adjusted to fit your parish's needs.

- **Week 1 -- Pray** – Pray together as a parish for a successful parish stewardship renewal. Remember, the first thing Jesus did before a big event was pray. Pray your parish Stewardship Prayer at each Sunday Mass during your parish stewardship renewal.
- **Week 2 -- Announce Coming Stewardship Events** – Let everyone know what is going to take place over the coming weeks using pulpit announcements, bulletin articles, website updates, announcements at individual parish ministry meetings, etc.
- **Week 3 -- Parish Stewardship Mailing** – Send each parishioner a cover letter from the pastor, a one-page stewardship reflection, a stewardship commitment card, and the annual parish stewardship report.
- **Week 4 -- Review the Annual Parish Stewardship Report** – Before you ask parishioners to consider a greater stewardship commitment, you should demonstrate to your parishioners that the parish is a good steward of the gifts received. Pastors should refer to the report during Mass.
- **Week 5 -- Stewardship Awareness Sunday** – Pastor gives a stewardship homily.
- **Week 6 -- Lay Witness Talks** – A member of the parish family should speak at all Masses (and possibly at other parish meetings and events) about his or her own personal stewardship journey.
- **Week 7 -- Showcase Parish Ministry Opportunities** – Highlight the many ways that parishioners can generously participate in the parish. Consider a Festival of Ministries, Ministry Catalog, Procession of Ministries, or other activity.
- **Week 8 -- Time for Reflection** – Parishioners are asked to spend time in prayer, reflection, and discussion with family members regarding their stewardship commitment.
- **Week 9 -- Stewardship Commitment Sunday** – Encourage parishioners to complete and return commitment cards that indicate how they will generously participate in the life of the parish. This should include prayer, ministry opportunities, and a financial giving covenant. The most effective way to collect commitment cards is allowing time at Mass to complete the cards with a special collection ceremony during Mass.
- **Week 10 -- Follow-Up** – If a parishioner does not return a commitment card, the parish should make an effort to follow up with a phone call, letter, email, or invitation to an informational meeting.
- **Week 11 and Ongoing -- Appreciation and Accountability** – All parishioners who return the commitment cards should receive a letter, email, or phone call thanking them and welcoming them. The entire parish should see the results of the stewardship effort in the bulletin.

NOTE: *For best results, schedule your Stewardship Awareness Sunday events into the “natural flow” of your parish calendar. Stewardship activities should “complement,” not compete with other parish activities.*

Sample Letter From Pastor

(Date)

Name and Address

Dear _____

Spiritual growth and renewal are critical to our individual spiritual development and vital to the community life of our parish. Being a good steward by giving God our prayer, our participation and our generosity is how we thank God for His many blessings.

During the next few weeks, you will be hearing about stewardship and what it means to be a good steward in terms of your own spiritual lives. I invite you to reflect on the gifts of Prayer, Participation and Generosity that God has given to you and how you use these gifts each day.

- **Prayer.** How much time is set aside each day in prayer to visit with God and to spend time alone with Him? Is prayer a priority and a habit, or is it something that often gets missed in the busyness of everyday life?
- **Participation.** What special talents has God given to you? Each of us has received special gifts from God, and God wishes us to use these to love Him and our neighbors. When we use the talents God gave us, we have an opportunity to help build His kingdom here on earth. Is time spent in volunteer activities for parish and community?
- **Generosity.** What percentage of your yearly income is given to support your parish, the Archdiocese, your community, and other good works? If God were to call you home today, would you be happy with your commitment?

At each Mass this weekend you will be hearing from (*name/names of lay witnesses*) who will share with all of us their personal stewardship experiences. I invite you and your family to pray about stewardship and your relationship with our Lord Jesus Christ during the next several weeks.

Yours in Christ,

Pastor's Signature

(Pastor's Name)

Sample Bulletin Announcements

- First Bulletin Announcement

Our Parish will begin (renew) its Stewardship Initiative on (date). Stewardship is based on the spiritual principles of the Old Testament and the teachings of Jesus Christ. Stewardship allows us to thank God for all the blessings He has given to us by committing to a life of prayer, participation and generosity. Stewardship will transform the spiritual lives of each of us and our parish as a whole.

- Second Bulletin Announcement

Stewardship is based on our need to return, out of gratitude, a portion of the gifts God has entrusted to us so that we can share God's word here on earth. It is based on the fact that all we have and all that we are comes from God and we can thank Him for these blessings by giving of ourselves through prayer, participation and generosity. Soon we will begin (renew) our Parish Stewardship Initiative. Please be generous in giving of yourself.

- Third Bulletin Announcement

Christian stewardship provides a spirituality that you can take home from church, exercise at work, and express through personal involvement in your parish and community. Please pray that our Stewardship Initiative, which begins next weekend, will enlighten our entire parish. At all Masses next weekend, we will be hearing from parishioners (names) who will share how stewardship is affecting their lives.

- Fourth Bulletin Announcement

Our Stewardship Initiative begins this weekend. At all Masses, our priests and select parishioners (names) will be speaking about stewardship. Next weekend you will hear from (name) parishioners. Please continue to think prayerfully about your personal commitment of prayer, participation and generosity to our Church and community.

- Fifth Bulletin Announcement

We continue our Stewardship Initiative this weekend. Stewardship changes the lives of both givers and receivers. At all Masses this weekend, you will hear more about stewardship from our pastor and parishioners who will be sharing their personal experiences. You will receive a commitment card in the mail later this week asking you to be a good steward by committing to a life of prayer, participation and generosity.

- Sixth Bulletin Announcement

This is Stewardship Commitment Sunday. Please return your prayer, participation and generosity cards at Mass today. If you did not bring them today, please bring them next week or mail them to the parish office.

Prayer and Participation

Reflection on Prayer

Here are some thoughts from Matthew Kelly's book *Rediscover Catholicism*:

1. One of the greatest gifts we can give anybody is to help them develop a sustainable prayer life.
2. Prayer is perhaps the most difficult thing we will ever do. To hear God's voice we need the discipline of prayer. Prayer requires daily commitment.
3. Prayer and contemplation are integral to Christian life because thought determines action. The actions of your life are determined by your most dominant thoughts.
4. What you allow to occupy your mind forms the reality of your life, good or bad. Things happen in your mind before they occur in time and space.
5. Whatever you place your mental attention on will increase in your life.
6. You cannot grow a good life with bad thoughts.
7. In this modern time, it is not that God has stopped speaking to us but rather that we have stopped listening.
8. Our world has been filled with noise and we can no longer hear the voice of God in our lives. We need to create opportunities for solitude and silence in our lives to listen to God.
9. Prayer doesn't change God; prayer changes us.

Assist Parishioners in Developing a Daily Prayer Process

Most Catholics have never been taught how to develop a daily prayer routine. There are many daily prayer processes. Three are listed below:

The Most Holy Rosary of the Blessed Virgin Mary

- Encourage parishioners to pray the rosary often, especially as a family.
- For information on how to recite the rosary, visit the "How to Recite the Rosary" website at <https://www.newadvent.org/images/rosary.pdf>.

The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius -- The following is from St. Ignatius' Spiritual Exercises and is entitled the "*Awareness Examen*." This short prayer exercise is intended to help increase one's sensitivity to God working in one's life.

- **Thanksgiving**
Begin by looking over the day and see where you need to be thankful. Allow gratitude to take hold of you and express this to the Lord.
- **Ask for Light**
Ask for the Spirit to show you what God wants you to see.
- **Finding God in All Things**
Ask the Holy Spirit to show you where God's presence has been in your life, either in you or in others, and in the events of public life.

- **Respond to God in Dialogue**
Is there any one area on which you are being nudged to focus your attention, to pray more seriously, to take action? Discuss this with Jesus.
- **Help and Guidance for Tomorrow**
Ask God to help guide you in your needs for tomorrow.

Prayer Process Suggested by Matthew Kelly (*The Four Signs of a Dynamic Catholic*)

- The most dominant quality among Dynamic Catholics is a daily routine of prayer.
- A daily routine refers to a specific time and place set aside for prayer. Dynamic Catholics make this time a priority each day.
- Dynamic Catholics tend to begin their time of prayer in very specific ways: by reading the Bible, praying the morning prayers of the Church, reading from a favorite spiritual book, etc.
- Dynamic Catholics universally begin their day with some type of prayer, even if the main time they set aside for prayer is later in the day.
- God speaks to us in the silence. Spending time in silence is indispensable in our quest for spiritual growth.
- Prayerlessness is one of the great torments of modern times.
- Many Catholics have never been taught how to develop a daily routine of prayer.

- † **Gratitude:** Begin by thanking God in a personal dialogue for whatever you are most grateful for today.
- † **Awareness:** Revisit the times in the past twenty-four hours when you were and were not the best version of yourself. Talk with God about these situations and what you learned from them.
- † **Significant Moments:** Identify something you thought you experienced today and explore what God might be trying to say to you through that event (or person).
- † **Peace:** Ask God to forgive you for any wrong you have committed (against yourself, another person, or Him) and to fill you with a deep and abiding peace.
- † **Freedom:** Speak with God about how He is inviting you to change your life, so that you can experience the freedom to be the best version of yourself.
- † **Others:** Lift up to God anyone you feel called to pray for today, asking God to bless and guide them.
- † Finish by praying the *Our Father*.

Encourage Greater Mass Attendance

There is a direct correlation between Mass attendance and stewardship (the greater the attendance, the greater the stewardship and vice versa). Spending time with God empowers us! On the practical side, studies show that people that regularly attend Mass participate in parish ministry more and contribute more financially.

1. When you plan special Masses, be sure the individual you want to invite receives the invitation! Don't just make an announcement at Mass or put a notice in the bulletin. Contact the invitees individually.
2. Have a "Special" Mass once a month:
 - January – invite those who had a child baptized within the last year.
 - February – Near St. Valentine's Day, invite newly married/engaged couples.
 - March/April – invite newly registered families over the past year.
 - May/June – invite all recent high school graduates.
 - November – Near All Soul's Day, invite those who have lost a loved one within the last year.
 - Throughout the year – ask sports coaches to plan team Masses during each sports season. Also, ask each parish ministry to plan an annual Mass for their members.
 - Appreciation Mass for all parish volunteers.
 - Annual Outdoor Mass – "Mass in the Grass."
 - Scouting Mass
 - Use your imagination!

When children come to Mass, parents come to Mass:

- Involve children more in the liturgy and make weekend Masses a family event.
- Include children to bring up gifts, be readers or greeters.
- Schedule a quarterly Family or Children's Mass. Let the children help plan the Mass.
- Have religion teachers have discussions on the Sunday homily.
- Ask the principal or pastor to write school families encouraging better Mass attendance.

Other Suggestions:

- Pastor writes a letter after Labor Day to school families inviting them back to Mass.
- Pastor speaks at all parish ministry meetings about the importance of Mass attendance.
- Encourage parishioners to include Mass in their special family celebrations.

Ideas for Year-Round Stewardship

This section of the manual provides ideas and activities to promote stewardship throughout the entire year. Stewardship is not limited to a particular season or activity. Rather it is yearlong involvement and commitment. It is essential to a parish that each member feels welcome and needed. This can be accomplished by planning activities that will bring members of the parish together socially, spiritually, and through service.

The ideas below are listed by month. This in no way limits a parish to a particular time frame. The activities include all parishioners and all areas of parish life and thus the responsibility for planning and organization lies with all parish committees and ministries. The activities may take place only once a year or may be recurrent, even as often as weekly or monthly. Once started, some will continue indefinitely.

July

Schedule an event for the single members of the parish. This could begin with a short prayer service in Church. The planned activity could take place at the parish or the interested people could gather at a designated location for an evening together. Ideas might include bowling, dinner, movie, or a dance.

Designate a section of the weekly bulletin to list birthdays to be celebrated during the upcoming week.

Celebrate an Anniversary Mass for those couples who have been married for 5, 10, 15, 20, 25, 30, 35, 40, 45, 50 and upward years. Invite the couples and their families to a reception following the liturgy.

August

Establish a monthly Hospitality Sunday. Invite all parishioners to attend. Extend a special invitation to all new members. Provide refreshments and the opportunity to mingle.

Gather the leadership of each parish committee and ministry for a potluck dinner, prayer service, and workshop.

Recruit parishioners to work together to clean and spruce up the school building before the start of school. Time could be devoted to building and repairing things that the teacher has on a wish list. These tasks should be completed early enough to allow the teachers ample time to get the rooms ready for the first day of school.

Create a Needs Network. This ministry would match parishioners who are willing and able to assist others with persons who are in need of help, such as single parents, the homebound, those who are ill, and the elderly.

Set up a Junior Festival of Ministries for Children and Youth. This could take place at school registration or another time. The children and youth would be responsible for taking turns in the booths and giving information to parents and students who are new to the school. Scouts, athletics, worship, choir, outreach, and other ministries and activities could be represented.

September

Coordinate a Senior Health Fair. Invite professionals from all fields relevant to the health of senior citizens. Doctors and nurses might volunteer to do blood pressure and cholesterol screening; attorneys could talk about wills and/or planned giving; local police and fire representatives might speak about home safety and security; representatives from area retirement homes could speak about those options. Healthy snacks could be provided. An important component of the day would be the time to socialize.

Use the parish website to list the coordinators or chairpersons for each of the major committees and ministries of the parish. Include the phone number of each of these people. Pertinent information concerning the committee or ministry could also be included.

Establish a Mom's Group for mothers with young children. Set up the time and location for them to gather weekly or monthly throughout the school year. The entire group or a team of coordinators from the group could plan activities and projects. Each family could bring snacks to share.

Plan a Healing Mass for those parishioners who have experienced stillbirth, miscarriage, or the loss of a child. Distribute a special prayer card or memento.

October

Invite a guest speaker to give a talk on various ways each member of the parish could be of service to those outside of the parish. The presentation could be a part of the homily or could be scheduled as an evening meeting with the whole parish invited to attend.

Involve the older youth and teens of the parish in planning their own regularly scheduled liturgies. In addition to planning, they should be involved as altar servers, lectors, hospitality ministers, choir members, gift bearers, and ushers.

Encourage students in junior or senior high to plan and staff a Halloween House or Halloween party for young children. This could be done on Halloween itself or the weekend before. Treats could be provided or each young child could bring a bag of candy to share.

November

Coordinate activities that give family members the opportunity to participate together in service to the parish or community. Following the collection of items for the needy, invite families to take part in the delivery. Set aside particular days or evenings to allow for maximum participation.

Form small groups consisting of couples who are interested in meeting in the homes of one another. The groups would discuss books, scripture, or issues that are pertinent to their lives. This idea would also work well for the single people of the parish.

Host a Thanksgiving Dinner for those people in the community or parish who are unable to do this for themselves. Encourage area businesses to donate food items. Children and youth can join the adults of the parish in this act of stewardship.

Coordinate a daylong retreat for parish leaders. Invite a retreat leader from the Archdiocese of Louisville to be a part of this day. Spend the time building relationships and getting to know one another.

December

Celebrate Christmas as a parish with a Family Dinner. The children and youth of the parish could sing carols during dinner. Prior to the event, the school or parish children could make invitations to be inserted in each of the parish and school bulletins. They could also make decorations, cards, and placemats for the event.

Schedule a potluck dinner for the senior citizens of the parish. The parish might provide the meat and drinks and the senior citizens might bring the rest of the food. If funds are available, the parish might provide the entire dinner. Another option would be to schedule a dinner in a local restaurant.

Ask each coach to pray with the team before and after each game and practice. Coaches could also encourage team members to join them at liturgy or in parish service or service to the community.

January

Host a Festival of Ministries. Each ministry, committee, and parish activity should have a display and information to distribute. Include displays of ministries available for the children and youth. To encourage people to attend, post artwork created by the children and youth of the parish or have a skit or play.

Insert a flyer into the bulletin on the five weekends preceding parish stewardship renewal. Each week, the flyer would focus on a different area of parish ministry. Include descriptions of the ministries and committees in that area as well as contact names and phone numbers.

Invite children to attend weekly or monthly liturgies planned for them. They could be included as altar servers, lectors, choir members, hospitality ministers, gift bearers, and ushers. The homily should be appropriate for children and youth. If an entire liturgy is not possible, young children could be taken to an adjacent area for Liturgy of the Word and related activities.

Encourage parishioners to volunteer together for projects such as an area soup kitchen, Habitat for Humanity, Repair Affair, neighborhood clean-up, or parish projects. Invite older youth, young adults and families to participate whenever appropriate.

Conduct a survey of parishioners who are between the ages of 18 and 39. First, ask them to comment on ways the parish could better meet their social and spiritual needs. Then ask them to list ways that they would like to become active in the parish. Also ask if they are aware of things that other parishes are doing for this age group that would be beneficial to the parish.

February

Designate a section of the bulletin for descriptions of parishioners who are sharing their time and talent with the parish and community. These examples could highlight adults, youth, or children. They could focus on families, groups, or individuals. Entire ministries and committees could be acknowledged. Photos of these volunteers in action could be displayed. Provide a way for other parishioners to nominate the members who may otherwise go unnoticed. Seek permission before including the person or group in the article.

Recruit homebound parishioners to make phone calls as needed by the parish. These people might help with follow-up for parish stewardship renewal. They might keep in touch with parishioners who are in need of support and personal contact.

March

Plan a dinner presentation for couples or singles. Participants could bring a dish and the parish could provide the meat and drinks. The evening could include a guest speaker on a topic pertinent to the audience.

Produce a parish newsletter. This could include the “good news” of parish happenings. Each committee or ministry could prepare a brief report or article. The newsletter could also include examples of stewardship by members of the parish and school. A separate section for children and youth would include articles written for, by, and about them. The newsletter might include a parish calendar with meetings and parish events listed. Birthdays and anniversaries for the month or quarter might be another component of the newsletter. The newsletter should feature articles designed to educate the parishioners about the true meaning of stewardship.

Plan a Healing Mass for those parishioners who have suffered the loss of a spouse or parent. Distribute a special prayer card or memento.

April

Encourage RCIA candidates to become actively involved in the parish. Representatives from the Stewardship Committee or other committees and ministries could be invited to meet with them. RCIA leaders could help the candidates determine interests and talents and then match that to particular volunteer opportunities.

Sponsor either a family night out or a family night in. The idea would be to play games, read, or do projects as a family. An option would be to have the parish set aside one night per month when there are no meetings, practices, or other functions. Teachers could refrain from giving homework on this evening. Families could be encouraged to make this a special evening at home, or the families could gather in the same space. For this activity, family members would interact primarily with each other.

Co-sponsor an event with a neighboring parish or community group. Choose a topic and speaker that would be pertinent to all.

May

Place a sign-in sheet in the vestibule or other appropriate location for visitors to the Sunday liturgy. Ask that they include their address with their name and then send a brief note thanking the visitors for their attendance.

Celebrate a special liturgy with all graduates of the parish. Use the opportunity to invite them to continue their relationship with the parish community.

Assign parent/child server teams to serve at youth or regular liturgies. These teams could also be assigned as gift bearers and hospitality ministers.

Host a Couples' Night Out for couples with children school age or younger. This could be held monthly or on an occasional basis. The parish could provide the food or each couple could be asked to make a small donation. A special table should be set up for each couple. High school students who need service hours could be recruited.

Collect backpacks, school supplies, and toiletries. Encourage students to donate the school supplies that went unused or were gently used throughout the year. Distribute these to the homeless and other needy persons.

June

Host an appreciation dinner for all involved in the committees, ministries and services of the parish. Also include parishioners who are interested in learning how they too can become involved. Present certificates of appreciation to those who model stewardship. The pastor might give a "State of the Parish" talk as part of the evening. Another idea is to provide training for particular ministries or those new to the ministry immediately following the dinner.

Begin a pen-pal program between parishioners and the homebound or those in nursing homes. Cards and letters should continue even if there are no replies from the homebound.

Invite each person at the liturgies to greet someone they do not know. This greeting could take place at the beginning or end of the liturgy.

Stewardship and Random Acts of Kindness

Random acts of kindness are a good start on your path to holiness. Stewardship is next level! Why? Because stewardship is a lifestyle based on gratitude and generosity. Stewardship is intentional and rooted in love, not random with no strings attached. The whole point is strengthening our relationship with God and each other.

Here are some ideas to get you started:

Prayer

- Don't have time for daily prayers? Say a quick prayer for people that annoy you. You will be praying more than you imagined and your attitude towards them will change.
- Don't have time to read the Bible? There is an app for that. Start with daily scripture readings. Remember, scripture is one of the ways God talks to us.
- Don't have time to pray the rosary? Start with three Hail Mary's each day. You will be looking for your Rosary in no time.
- Is everything falling into place for you, no major issues? Attend Mass on a day other than Sunday and receive the Holy Eucharist. Thank God for all He has given you. Remember, the word "Eucharist" means "thanksgiving."
- Have you been hurt by what someone said recently? Go to Confession – receive God's mercy and forgiveness. Then, go and forgive the person that hurt you. We cannot give what we do not have.
- Are you easily angered? Make a list of the top five things you are grateful to God for in your life. When you feel your temperature rising offer the gratitude list as a prayer to God. It is impossible to be angry and joyful at the same time.

Participation

- Are you lonely, bored or unsatisfied? Give away what you want to receive. If you want love, mercy, forgiveness, fellowship – give it away and it will come back to you many times over.
- Are you overbooked, too busy, feel out of control? Then stop and rest. Even God took a day off. Has "being busy" become a god in your life that keeps you from things that are important?
- When someone offers to help you with something, gladly accept it. You may not need the help but it may help the other person. You may be the answer to their prayer.
- Can't figure out what you would like to get involved with at your parish? Instead, ask God what He would like you to do. If we want God's help, we have to invite Him into our life.
- Do you enjoy working in parish ministry or performing other charitable works? Share your joyful stories with others and invite them to join you. Your story may open the door for someone to meet Jesus.

- Do you spend a lot of time on social media, live streaming, or cable TV? Then do a fast from media. Think “garbage in, garbage out.” Use the extra time doing charitable works in your parish or your community.

Generosity

- Do you think, “I work hard, I earn my money on my own, God had nothing to do with it?” If so, remember who created you. Who gave you the talent and skill needed to get a job to provide for your family? God did. If you think about it, all of “our” money is His.
- God and money run neck and neck as the top priority for many people. Where does God fall on your list? If not number one, you need to put the other “gods” behind God. The first commandment is the first commandment for a reason.
- Have you been employed for years, received an annual raise, given a promotion or seen your family income increase over the years? Has your Sunday offering increased at the same rate? Our giving should be proportional – when given more, we are called to give more.
- Don’t have much money to give to your parish or other charity? Make a budget. You will be surprised how much you spend eating out all the time. Most of us have more than we need and have plenty to share.
- Do you leave a bigger tip when going out to eat on Saturday night than what you put in the offertory basket on Sunday morning? We are called to give from our “first fruits” – our first and best, not our “leftovers.” Try putting charitable giving at the top of your expenses on your household budget.
- Do you have a good job, make good money, and have all the toys you need but still feel empty? Give more money away. As Archbishop J. Fulton Sheen said, “Never measure your generosity by what you give, but rather by what you have left.”

Other Stewardship Resources

Archdiocese of Louisville Stewardship Website

- www.archlou.org/stewardshipresources

Stewardship Bulletin Reflections and Prayers of the Faithful

- Sent via email
- Also available on www.archlou.org

One-on-One Parish Meetings with Melissa Herberger

- 502.585.3291, Ext. 1127 or mherberger2@archlou.org

Prayer Apps

- Hallow
- Relevant Radio
- Laudate
- Mass Times for Travel

Books - In addition to the U. S. Bishop's Pastoral Letter "*Stewardship: A Disciple's Response*," the Bible, and the Catechism of the Catholic Church, below are other stewardship-related publications:

- *American Church* – Russell Shaw
- *Barstool Theology* – Trevor Gundlach
- *Becoming a Parish of Intentional Disciples* – Sherry Weddell
- *Benedictus a Book of Blessings* – John O'Donohue
- *Divine Renovation* – Fr. James Mallow
- *From Christendom to Apostolic Mission* – University of Mary
- *Fruitful Discipleship* – Sherry Weddell
- *It's Not Your Money* – Joseph Galloway
- *Lives of the Saints* – Fr. Alban Butler
- *Made for Mission: Renewing Your Parish Culture* – Tim Glemkowski
- *Rediscover the Saints* – Matthew Kelly
- *Stewardship Success* – Eric & Lisa McArdle
- *The Five Signs of a Dysfunctional Team* – Patrick Lencioni
- *The Ideal Team Player* – Patrick Lencioni

Compass Catholic Ministry

- Dedicated to help parishioners discover smarter ways to manage their money.
- Teaches Biblical financial principles from an authentically Catholic viewpoint.
- Resources include training classes, podcasts, newsletters, and website.
- Website is www.compasscatholic.org.