



PARISH GROWTH
PARTNERS



STEWARDSHIP:
A DISCIPLE'S RESPONSE
HIGHLIGHTS FROM APPENDIX II

Dear Reader:

The call to stewardship is probably one of the least understood concepts in the modern Catholic Church. Yet, the communication of the stewardship message – and its embrace on the part of the faithful – is vital if the Church is to survive, let alone grow and prosper.

And it's a message we are all called upon to deliver. "Once one chooses to become a disciple of Jesus Christ, stewardship is not an option," said Bishop John McRaith, an original member of the U.S. Catholic bishops' Ad Hoc Committee on Stewardship, referring to the 1992 pastoral letter "Stewardship: A Disciple's Response".

With the recent release of the Tenth Anniversary Edition of this groundbreaking document, the central message has not changed, but the urgency has increased. One cannot lead a life of purpose and fulfillment without giving back to God the gifts of time, talent and treasure that make possible our very existence. Yet, as important as this latest document is, we recognize that you don't have the time to read through almost 80 pages of text. That's why we've distilled the Tenth Anniversary Edition into just 14 pages that captures verbatim the essence of this milestone publication, including seven key steps for implementing a successful stewardship program.

Yours in stewardship,

Craig B. Gibson

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Tenth Anniversary Edition of the pastoral letter on stewardship entitled, “Stewardship: A Disciple’s Response”, published by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, covers both the key concepts of what is meant by stewardship, as well as a resource manual containing specific recommendations on how to create and implement a successful stewardship program at the parish level.

STEWARDSHIP: A DISCIPLE'S RESPONSE

A Pastoral Letter on Stewardship, Tenth Anniversary Edition Highlights from Appendix II, Resource Manual and Key Concepts

- The pastoral letter is an educational tool to invite and challenge
- Enables Catholics to develop new strategies for soliciting gifts
- Every parish should make education and formation for stewardship a major priority
- Stewardship involves a lifelong process of study, reflection, prayer, and actions
- This conversion of mind and heart will not happen overnight
- A comprehensive approach is essential
- To be successful, stewardship education requires the pastor to make a complete, constant, personal, and official commitment to stewardship
- The most important ingredient in any effort is the personal witness of individuals (clergy, religious, and lay)
- Witness talks should also be offered throughout the year
- Present the parish financial report a few months prior to the sacrificial giving presentation
- Professional staff and/or consultants should be employed where appropriate and where parish resources permit
- Contemporary communications instruments now complement letters from the pastor, witness talks, bulletin announcements, posters, and other traditional means of communications
- Given the competition that exists today for people’s time and attention, parishes that wish to be successful in stewardship must pay careful attention to the effectiveness of their communications
- The choices that are made about how to most effectively “tell our story” or “make our case” can be crucial to success
- Parishes are urged to seek the assistance of qualified communications professionals to develop communications plans that will make the best possible use of available resources
- Success in stewardship efforts of a parish requires a visible commitment to accountability

- Parishes are urged to prepare annual reports of their stewardship
- Making sure that the members of a parish family are well informed in our world of mass communications and increasingly sophisticated information technology requires much more than bulletin announcements, form letters and occasional newsletters
- Quality communication is the result of hard work and careful planning. It also requires significant investment by the parish
- Today more than ever, important matters need to be communicated as personally as possible through individual and group meetings, personal letters and phone calls, and a full array of printed, electronic, and audiovisual support materials
- Given the mobility of people today, informational items should be communicated frequently and in a variety of ways
- We must develop forms of communication that can inform, motivate, and invite people to participate in our mission
- As disciples of Jesus, each of us has a responsibility to support the Church and to contribute generously to the building of the Body of Christ

EXCERPTS FROM STEWARDSHIP: A DISCIPLE'S RESPONSE

A Pastoral Letter on Stewardship, Tenth Anniversary Edition Appendix II Resource Manual and Key Concepts

I. INTRODUCTION

STEWARDSHIP AND DEVELOPMENT

When the USCCB approved the pastoral letter, the Ad Hoc Committee on Stewardship promised to follow the publication of *Stewardship: A Disciple's Response* with the resources to help dioceses and parishes with stewardship education and formation. The Ad Hoc Committee also wanted to respond to the growing financial needs in the Church. This resource manual for the implementation of stewardship and development programs has been written for diocesan bishops and their staffs, pastors and parish teams, and lay leaders. The resource manual is a companion to the pastoral letter. For this reason, the resource manual will be of no help, and might be misleading to persons who have not first read, studied, and discussed the pastoral letter itself.

By design, the principles in the resource manual are general and flexible. They are not a detailed blue print for stewardship education and formation, fund raising, or diocesan and parish financial management.

The resource manual offers helpful suggestions in the following areas:

1. Developing stewardship education and formation programs for adults, youth, and children
2. Planning and implementing diocesan and parish stewardship and development programs
3. Cultivating, training, and recognizing gifts of time and talent
4. Using stewardship principles to solicit gifts of treasure for annual, capital, and endowment purposes in parishes and dioceses

STEWARDSHIP AS A FAITH RESPONSE

With the publication of *Stewardship: A Disciple's Response*, the word of stewardship took on a fresh meaning in the Catholic Church in America. By endorsing the concept of stewardship as a "faith response," the bishops of the United States emphasized that the publication of the pastoral letter was not simply to raise money, as important as this

may be, for carrying out the mission of the Church. *Stewardship: A Disciple's Response* is an educational tool for bishops, pastors, and church leaders who wish to invite, and challenge, all members of the Catholic community to accept their baptismal responsibility "to place their gifts, their resources, their selves at God's service in and through the Church." Thus, while emphasizing that stewardship (as a faith response) means more than raising money, the pastoral letter also enables Catholic organizations throughout the United States to develop new strategies for soliciting gifts of time, talent, and treasure that are faithful to the stewardship principles outlined in *Stewardship: A Disciple's Response*.

USING THE PASTORAL LETTER ON STEWARDSHIP

How can bishops, pastors, and other church leaders successfully use the pastoral letter on stewardship to help recruit and train volunteers and to solicit gifts for ongoing programs, capital improvements, and endowments?

First and foremost, by making stewardship a personal commitment as well as a priority for the diocese, parish, or other church-related organization.

Second, by making sure that all members of their leadership teams (staff and volunteers) understand and make a commitment to the concept of stewardship as a faith response.

Third, by evaluating current development and fund-raising practices and replacing them, as necessary, with programs and activities that incorporate stewardship principles and reflect the highest professional standards.

In the final analysis, successful stewardship and development programs in parishes, dioceses, and other church sponsored organizations will result from the following:

1. The personal involvement of many people –bishop, pastor, staff, volunteers, and the entire Catholic community
2. A commitment of time, effort, financial resources, and prayer to the process of stewardship education and formation
3. A willingness to trust that if stewardship is taught and accepted as a faith response, urgently needed human, physical, and financial resources will follow

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II. EDUCATION AND FORMATION FOR STEWARDSHIP

A MAJOR PRIORITY

Every diocese and parish should make education and formation for stewardship a major priority. This is vitally important today because (1) it helps individuals, families, and communities better understand what it means to follow Jesus in an affluent, consumer culture, and (2) it establishes an appropriate, scriptural basis for responding to the Church's growing need for human, physical, and financial resources.

A LIFELONG PROCESS

Stewardship involves a lifelong process of study, reflection, prayer, and action. To make stewardship a way of life for individuals, families, parishes, and dioceses requires a change of heart and a new understanding of what it means to follow Jesus without counting the cost. This conversion of mind and heart will not happen overnight, but, as always, the Holy Spirit is at work in the Church today. Those parishes and dioceses that embrace the theology and practice of stewardship are beginning to see a change of attitude on the part of clergy, religious, and lay people.

A SOLID FOUNDATION

A comprehensive approach to stewardship education and formation is essential if diocesan and parish communities truly wish to make stewardship a way of life for individuals, families, and communities. Increased offertory and fund-raising programs that bypass stewardship education and formation must be more than a "jump start" to financial giving. Such programs could separate church funding from its vital connection to Christian discipleship. As dioceses, parishes, and other church-related organizations seek to develop urgently needed human, physical, and financial resources, they need encouragement to make sure that their efforts have a solid foundation, which only fully developed stewardship programs can provide.

THE ROLE OF THE BISHOP OR PASTOR IN FORMATION AND EDUCATION FOR STEWARDSHIP

To be successful, stewardship education requires the bishop or pastor to make a complete, constant, personal, and official commitment to stewardship as a constitutive element of Christian discipleship. A bishop or pastor who does not have a solid conviction about the importance of stewardship will give only halfhearted support to the stewardship programs of his diocese or parish. The results will reflect this lack of total commitment.

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III. STEWARDSHIP AND DEVELOPMENT

The basic elements of a parish or diocesan development program are (1) a spiritually based plan with a mission statement, specific goals and objectives, and priorities for funding; (2) a communications program that specifies how the dioceses, parish, school, or agency will regularly communicate its mission, goals, and funding needs to various internal and external publics; and (3) a fund-raising program based on stewardship and development principles that outlines how the dioceses, parish, school, or agency will identify prospective donors, build strong relationships, and solicit gifts for current programs, capital needs, and endowments. To be successful, each of these three elements must be carefully coordinated with stewardship education efforts and other fund-raising activities (e.g., annual appeals, or capital campaigns) at the diocesan and parish levels.

To be successful, stewardship education requires the bishop or pastor to make a complete, constant, personal and official commitment to stewardship.

PRINCIPLES FOR GIVING

One of the most frequently asked questions in any program of church support is “How much should I give?” The following suggestions should help dioceses, parishes, schools, and other church-related organizations encourage individuals, families, and communities to make better decisions about giving as a percent of income.

Diocesan and parish stewardship programs should help individuals, families, and communities better understand why, in the context of a total commitment to stewardship that is planned, proportionate, and sacrificial; it is important to set goals for giving. All Christian stewards must consider prayerfully the gifts they have received from God, and they should make a decision (in advance, from the “first fruits” instead of what is left over after other obligations have been met) about what will be given.

Similarly, “increased offertory” and diocesan fund-raising programs whose primary objective is to increase the amount of money contributed to the parish or diocese miss the important connection between stewardship as “a way of life” and the gifts of time, talent, and treasure that individuals freely give to their Church out of gratitude to God for the many blessings received. Parish and diocesan annual giving programs should never place so much emphasis on the need for financial giving that the fuller meaning and context of stewardship would be obscured. For this reason, annual-giving programs should always emphasize the ways in which stewardship influences all aspects of a Christian’s daily life.

ANNUAL GIVING

Successful stewardship and development programs frequently include procedures for encouraging annual commitments of time, talent, and treasure to the parish, diocese, school and other church-related organizations.

In recent years, annual giving programs have begun to replace special events and other indirect fund-raising activities (including games of chance and social functions) as the primary means of raising money for the ongoing operations of religious and other nonprofit organizations. In parishes and dioceses, this national trend toward annual giving is most often evident through annual “commitment Sundays” in parishes and through the diocesan annual appeal. In addition, a growing number of Catholic schools and other church-related agencies have started annual giving programs.

Successful annual giving programs encourage members of the Catholic community to make annual commitments of time, talent, and treasures to support the work of the Church. Annual giving programs also promote the concept of pledging (as opposed to one-time gifts), and they encourage donors to fulfill their pledges in time frames (weekly, monthly, quarterly, etc.) that best suit their needs. Moreover, parishes should encourage individuals and families who make weekly pledges to make their pledge payments even when they are not able to attend the weekend liturgy at their parish.

A diocesan or parish annual giving program will be consistent with the principles outlined in *Stewardship: A Disciple’s Response* if it is based on, and reinforces, the stewardship themes and convictions outlined in the pastoral letter. Moreover, such programs should encourage individuals, families, and communities to embrace a broader understanding of stewardship as a faith response.

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To ensure that annual giving programs remain consistent with the principles of stewardship, diocesan and pastoral staffs, and volunteers should have significant ongoing opportunities for stewardship education and formation.

IV. PROMOTING GIFTS OF TIME, TALENT, AND TREASURE TO THE PARISH AND DIOCESE: SEVEN STEPS TO SUCCESS

STEP 1: PERSONAL WITNESS

Since stewardship is a way of life, and not simply a program of church support, the most important ingredient in any effort to encourage giving of time, talent, and treasure is the personal witness of individuals (clergy, religious, and lay) who have experienced a change of heart as a result of their commitment to stewardship. For this reason, parishes and dioceses are strongly encouraged to ground their stewardship and development programs in the personal witness of bishop, pastor or diocesan staff, and volunteers. An example of this type of personal witness would be for the presider at the liturgy to make a financial contribution or complete a commitment card for time, talent, and treasure.

Parish stewardship programs currently in use in parishes and diocese throughout the United States provide excellent examples of clergy and lay witness talks that can be offered during the liturgies leading up to a stewardship or commitment weekend. To ensure that stewardship is seen as more than simply the parish's annual giving program, witness talks on stewardship themes should also be offered at various times throughout the year. Similarly, diocesan annual giving program and other diocesan events should include opportunities for personal witness on the part of the bishop and others to the importance of stewardship as a faith response. It is also important that parish leaders present the parish financial report at a different time, preferably a few months prior to the sacrificial giving presentation.

The most important ingredient in any effort to encourage giving of time, talent, and treasure is the personal witness of individuals (clergy, religious, and lay) who have experienced a change of heart as a result of their commitment to stewardship.

STEP 2: COMMITMENT OF LEADERSHIP

The personal commitment of the bishop or pastor is absolutely necessary for the success of diocesan and parish stewardship and development efforts. In addition, wherever possible, parishes and dioceses should have active stewardship committees whose members include a representative group of pastoral and lay leaders willing to pray, discuss, learn, and lead.

The leadership team commissioned by the bishop or pastor should be responsible for (1) stewardship formation and educational programs in the diocese or parish, and (2) oversight of the parish's or diocese's efforts to promote gifts of time, talent, and treasure for annual, capital, and endowment purposes.

Professional staff and/or consultant should be employed where appropriate and where diocesan or parish resources permit. As in all aspects of church life, the collaborative leadership and active involvement of many people are essential to the success of parish and diocesan stewardship efforts.

STEP 3: HOSPITALITY, EVANGELIZATION, AND OUTREACH

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 their ministries and to be generous in their financial support. With this in mind, parishes and diocese that seek to promote gifts of time, talent, and treasure to support their mission and ministries of the Church should first demonstrate that they are welcoming communities with a commitment to preaching the Gospel and serving the needs of others.

Parishes and dioceses should not make commitments to hospitality, evangelization, and outreach simply because this will enhance their ability to recruit volunteers or raise money. These activities should be the natural outgrowth of a parish's or diocese's mission. However, dioceses and parishes that seek to increase participation or to raise additional funds would do well to look to the effectiveness of their effort to welcome, evangelize, and serve.

As an integral part of their commitment to stewardship as a way of life, parish and diocesan leaders should initiate and implement stewardship projects unrelated to the Church itself, e.g., conservation of natural resources, environmental improvements, advocacy projects to benefit the poor and needy, custody of family values, etc. In addition, as a witness to the value of generous giving that is not based on obligation or need, dioceses and parishes should try to make donations of time, talent, and treasure to people and causes (in their local communities and throughout the world) that are over and above their participation in assessments and collections.

STEP 4: COMMUNICATION AND EDUCATION

All stewardship and development programs currently in use in dioceses and parishes throughout the United States require the use of one or more communications media. Printed materials, audiovisuals, telemarketing programs, computerized tracking, and other contemporary communications instruments now complement letters from the bishop or pastor, witness talks, bulletin announcements, posters, and other traditional means of communication.

Given the competition that exists today for people's time and attention, parishes and dioceses that wish to be successful in stewardship and development must pay careful attention to the effectiveness of their communications. Especially since most diocese and parishes are working with very limited communications budgets, the choices that are made about how to most effectively "tell our story" or "make our case" can be crucial to success. With this in mind, parishes and dioceses are urged to seek the assistance of qualified communications professionals (staff and volunteers) to develop communication plans that will make the best possible use of available resources.

With this in mind, parishes and dioceses are urged to seek the assistance of qualified communications professionals (staff and volunteers) to develop communication plans that will make the best possible use of available resources.

STEP 5: RECRUITING, TRAINING, AND RECOGNIZING GIFTS OF TIME, TALENT, AND TREASURE

The demands made on people's time and energy make it more important than ever to recruit, train, and recognize gifts of time and talent for the parish or diocese. Active recruitment of volunteers is essential to the parish's or diocese's stewardship of its own human and financial resources because the active involvement of individuals, families, and communities in the mission and ministries of the Church is one of the surest signs of the health and vitality of any faith community.

To make sure that the time and talent of volunteers are respected and used wisely, dioceses and parishes should invest staff time and budget resources in the training and continuing education of volunteers. They should also find appropriate ways to recognize and celebrate the precious gifts of time and talent that people contribute to the Church on behalf of the mission of the Church.

New education resources and training materials are needed to help parishes and dioceses improve their efforts to recruit, and recognize volunteers. To ensure that gifts of time and talent receive their proper emphasis and are not overshadowed by efforts to secure gifts of treasure, careful attention should be paid to this increasingly important aspect of a total stewardship program.

STEP 6: STEWARDSHIP OF TREASURE

Parishes and dioceses that wish to encourage financial gifts for ongoing programs, capital needs, and endowments should look first to steps 1 to 5 above.

- Has the parish or diocese effectively witnessed to the value of stewardship as a way of life?
- Is the leadership fully committed to stewardship and development?
- Are individuals and families in the diocese or parish actively involved in ministries of hospitality, evangelization, and service?
- How effective are parish and diocesan communications?
- And finally, are gifts of time and talent really welcome or does the parish or diocese unwittingly send a message that it only cares about money?

The parish or diocese that can honestly evaluate itself on these questions with a positive result will be in an excellent position to encourage gifts or treasure to support the mission and ministries of the Church. Building on this kind of solid foundation, the diocese or parish should employ fund-raising methods that respect and reinforce stewardship themes of gratitude, accountability, generosity, and returning to the Lord with increase.

Within a total stewardship context, parishes and dioceses should not hesitate to use the best available ethically sound fund-raising practices to ask the Catholic people to make financial contributions that are planned, proportionate, and sacrificial. Provided that the basic approach is consistent with the theology and practice of stewardship, the principles and techniques of professional fund-raising can be extremely helpful to the overall stewardship and development efforts of the parish or diocese.

STEP 7: ACCOUNTABILITY

Success in stewardship and development efforts of a parish or diocese requires a visible commitment to accountability. This commitment includes accountability for the full range of parish or diocesan activities—from the way decisions are made and carried out by diocesan or parish personnel to the way money is collected managed, and used. Indeed, accountability is fundamental to good stewardship.

Parishes and dioceses are urged to prepare annual reports of their stewardship. These reports should be prepared in a manner that promotes understanding of the relationship between the ministries of the Church and the financial affairs of the parish or diocese. Church leaders should also use the annual report to render and account of their stewardship of human resources (personnel policies, just compensation, etc.), and their stewardship of church property and facilities.

A visible commitment to accountability will be reflected in the leadership styles and attitudes of the bishop, pastor, and all who have responsibilities for the human, physical, and financial resources of the diocese or parish. Like personal witness, a commitment to accountability is essential to building a solid foundation for a diocesan or parish stewardship program.

The seven steps suggested are not intended to be an exhaustive list of all of the programs or activities that are required for success in promoting gifts of time, talent, and treasure. However, the experience of parishes and diocese in many different regions of the country show that if these seven principles are honored, the Catholic people will respond generously to the invitation to participate in the mission and ministries of the Church.

KEY CONCEPTS

The following definition of key concepts and terms for stewardship, philanthropy, development and fundraising are offered in order to identify the similarities and differences among these important concepts that are too often used interchangeably.

Success in stewardship and development efforts of a parish or diocese requires a visible commitment to accountability.

ACCOUNTABILITY

Central to our understanding of stewardship and development is the concept of accountability. Dioceses, parishes, schools and other church-related organizations that seek to develop urgently needed human and financial resources needed to show that their programs and services truly “make a difference” in meeting spiritual, educational, and social needs of the people they serve. They also need to give evidence of their long-term stability and growth potential to encourage investment. This is a basic requirement of stewardship and development—to render an account of the organization’s use of time, talent, and treasure entrusted to its care. As the demand for charitable giving grows (and competition increases), accountability will become an even more important indicator of whether an organization is “worthy of investment.”

Quality communications is the result of hard work and careful planning. It also requires a significant financial investment by the diocese, parish, school, or other church-related organizations.

COMMUNICATIONS

Making sure that the members of a parish or diocesan family are well informed in our world of mass communications and increasingly sophisticated information technology requires much more than articles in the diocesan newspaper, bulletin announcements, form letters, or occasional newsletters.

Quality communication is the result of hard work and careful planning. It also requires a significant financial investment by the diocese, parish, school, or other church-related organizations. Today more than ever, important matters need to be communicated as personally as possible through individual and group meetings, personal letters and phone calls, and a full array of printed, electronic, and audiovisual support materials. In addition, given the mobility of our people today, informational items should be communicated frequently and in a variety of ways, so that those who miss one information source can still be reached through others.

If the desired outcome of our communications efforts is a community of people who understand, accept, and are committed to the mission and goals of the diocese, parish, school, or agency, we must develop forms of communication that can inform, motivate, and invite people to participate in our mission. As a Catholic community about to enter the new millennium, the communication opportunities and challenges that are being presented to us are staggering. The way we respond to these challenges and opportunities will have significant consequences for evangelization, religious education, and all our stewardship and development activities.

PLANNING

To be successful in developing the human and financial resources needed to carry out its mission, a diocese, parish, school, or agency needs to have a plan. The purpose of the plan is to set direction by answering the following fundamental questions:

- Who are we?
- What makes us distinctive as a diocese, parish, or other church-related organization?
- What values do we choose to emphasize as characteristic of “what we stand for?”
- What do we want to do? What are our major long-term goals?
- How can we accomplish our goals? What are our main objectives?
- What specific action steps will we take to carry out our objectives? How do we measure our success or failure (accountability)?

A plan that can simply and honestly answer each of these fundamental questions will accomplish two important objectives: (1) it will set direction for all the programs and activities of the diocese, parish, or other church-related organization, and (2) it will guide all stewardship and development activities by setting the agenda for communications and establishing priorities for fund raising.

ROLE OF LEADERSHIP

Successful stewardship and development programs require the active involvement of all of an organization’s leaders (bishop, pastor, and other church leaders) working together as a team. As traditionally defined, the successful stewardship and development team requires the participation and interaction of leaders.

TREASURE

True stewardship is taking care of and sharing all that we have and all that we are—our time, talents, and treasure. Why is it so important to share our treasure?

Money and all of the things that we possess (our treasure) are gifts from God that we are asked to care for and generously share for our own benefits and the good of others. It is important for us to share our money and all of our material possessions for two reasons: first, because all the good things that God has made (including money) are meant to be shared, and second, because each of us has a real need to give.



Why do we need to give? We need to give our money to individuals and families in need, to the Church, and to other worthwhile charitable organizations because giving money is good for the soul and because we need to return thanks to a loving God for all of the many blessings each of us has received.

One of the most frequently asked questions in any stewardship educational program is “How much do I give?” The answer (from a stewardship perspective) is nothing. We don’t have to give anything. “How much do we want to give?” is the question that stewardship asks. That means giving as much as we can, from the heart as a faith response because we are generous stewards, who want to share our time, talent, and treasure with others.

Frequently in discussion of stewardship (or “sacrificial giving”) reference will be made to “the biblical tithe” (giving 10 percent of income) and other norms that could provide helpful guidelines for generous giving. As disciples of Jesus, each of us has a responsibility to support the Church and to contribute generously to the building of the Body of Christ. The emphasis in the bishops’ pastoral, *Stewardship: A Disciple’s Response*, is not on “tithing” (giving a fixed percent of income), but on giving according to our means. In many ways, this is a far more challenging norm. It challenges us to be good stewards not only in how much we give away, but in what we do with all our resources.

As disciples of Jesus, each of us has a responsibility to support the Church and to contribute generously to the building of the Body of Christ.