

Fall STEWARDSHIP Renewal

Diocese of Grand Rapids, Michigan

Q&A

What is the purpose of a fall STEWARDSHIP Renewal?

The fall STEWARDSHIP Renewal program offers opportunity to build parishioners' awareness of STEWARDSHIP as a lifestyle and to encourage their embrace of STEWARDSHIP as a path to discipleship. The renewal program can enhance parishioners' realization that Gospel teachings call each of us to be responsible stewards of the gifts we have received – which, beyond expressing gratitude for what we have received, also includes sharing our gifts with others as a demonstration of our appreciation.

Is it a good idea to talk about STEWARDSHIP in tough economic times?

The message of STEWARDSHIP is timeless because it doesn't focus on how much we have – or don't have. Rather, STEWARDSHIP is a constant, consistent commitment to use God's gifts to accomplish His work, whatever those gifts are. STEWARDSHIP teaches us that God will provide all that we need and that real security comes only from placing our trust in Him. The answers to many of our worries are found in the STEWARDSHIP Way of Life. Peace and comfort come from:

- Placing our trust in God.
- Putting God first in our lives.
- Recognizing the blessings that we have.
- Taking time to thank God for His abundance.
- Re-ordering our priorities.
- Recognizing the difference between what we actually need, what we want and what society constantly tells us we must have.

Why should our parish do a fall STEWARDSHIP renewal?

A fall STEWARDSHIP renewal is important for many reasons:

- Just as we occasionally assess our goals and where on the road to accomplishing them we are, we also are responsible to evaluate and assess our personal STEWARDSHIP. Regularly and consistently reflecting on God's blessings reminds us that we are called to manage those blessings and to share them with others as a demonstration of our gratitude. Prayerfully discerning His will in the management of His gifts will help us make the best use of our blessings and to bring balance to sharing them in proportion to what we have received.
- An annual, structured STEWARDSHIP renewal program will help build parishioners' understanding of how God calls each of us to use our gifts of time, talent and treasure and provide opportunity to adjust our priorities as needed.
- Parishioners can be guided to consider:
 - What are my God-given blessings (time, talent, treasure)?
 - How am I using my gifts?
 - What are my priorities in utilizing my blessings?
 - What should my priorities be?
 - Is giving back to God my priority?
 - Am I giving from my first fruits?
 - What adjustments do I need to make?
- God tells us to teach STEWARDSHIP. Both the Old and New Testaments are rich with STEWARDSHIP messages, with more than half of Our Lord's parables addressing

STEWARDSHIP. If we are going to teach the Gospel, we must teach **STEWARDSHIP**. In the preface of the 2002 edition of their pastoral letter, [*Stewardship: A Disciple's Response*](#), the U.S. Catholic bishops tell us, "*Once one chooses to be a disciple of Jesus Christ, stewardship is not an option.*"

- Teaching **STEWARDSHIP** is the tradition of the Church. Our Catholic parishes, schools, ministries and organizations exist primarily because of the good stewardship and generosity of our Catholic people. For generations, Catholics brought their gifts to the Church without the gimmicks of auctions, golf tournaments, raffles, etc. A return to **STEWARDSHIP** allows a parish to stop using all of its time and talent to raise treasure.
- A return to **STEWARDSHIP** often increases the freewill financial gifts that parishioners give/pledge to the offertory by 5-20%.
- A return to **STEWARDSHIP** often increases the number of parishioners who volunteer in activities and ministry and expands the types of ministry that the parish can offer.
- A return to **STEWARDSHIP** encourages parishioners to spend more time with God, helps them deepen their faith life and gives them strength to resist the rampant materialism of our society.

What is the best way to conduct a fall STEWARDSHIP Renewal?

Catholics are bombarded every day with commercial messages that tell them to put their own personal and material wants first. A fall **STEWARDSHIP** Renewal is a time to challenge Catholics to put God first in their personal planning and in their budget. The best way to get this message across is through:

1. Printed materials that allow parishioners to read and reflect on **STEWARDSHIP**.
2. Activities (ministry fair) that promote a greater understanding and awareness of ministry and involvement opportunities.
3. Witness talks on the **STEWARDSHIP** way of life.
4. **STEWARDSHIP** pledge cards that encourage parishioners to commit to faithful and generous stewardship.

Sacred scripture tells us, "*The intention in the human heart is like water far below the surface, but the man of intelligence draws it forth.*" (Proverbs 20:5) Most Catholics want to be good stewards. They want to follow the Gospel call to share their blessings. Yet, their best intentions often are never realized because they do not make the commitment to put them into action. By conducting a **STEWARDSHIP** Renewal, distributing materials, discussing **STEWARDSHIP** from the pulpit and asking parishioners to complete a **STEWARDSHIP** commitment card, you can help them convert their good **STEWARDSHIP** intentions into actions.

How does the diocese support the fall STEWARDSHIP Renewal?

The diocese supports parish **STEWARDSHIP** efforts with the following activities.

- A model for a **STEWARDSHIP** Renewal program has been developed and is available for parish use.
- Model **STEWARDSHIP** brochures, letters, intention cards and bulletin articles have been created so that parishes can focus their efforts on developing more parish-specific materials and activities.
- **STEWARDSHIP** efforts in the parish are reinforced in the *FAITH* magazine and through resources provided in the monthly stewardship newsletter, support for parish stewardship committees and other activities.

If our parish did a renewal last year, why do we need to do it again?

Because **STEWARDSHIP** is essential to discipleship, it is important that we reinforce its importance on an ongoing basis. Just as we annually celebrate Lent, Easter, Pentecost, Advent and Christmas, **STEWARDSHIP** is an important part of our faith to be regularly recognized and celebrated. A fall **STEWARDSHIP** Renewal is a time to call all Catholics to greater faith and trust in God. This is not something we do once. This is something we should do constantly.

What is the benefit for my parish?

Parishes that teach and encourage **STEWARDSHIP** are stronger parishes. Recognizing and encouraging gifts of time and talent helps parishioners improve their faith life, and they tend to become more actively involved in the ministry of the parish. When you recognize and encourage gifts of treasure, parishioners become more generous (typically giving about 8% more), and concerns about parish finances and budget diminish. A **STEWARDSHIP** Renewal will be a time for parishioners to realize that each of us has a responsibility to live as God's stewards and to support our parish with our time, talent and treasure.

Fall is such a busy time of the year? Why do a STEWARDSHIP Renewal at this time?

Research across the country shows that parishioners are most receptive to the **STEWARDSHIP** message in the fall because:

- The Gospel readings during fall Ordinary time often contain strong **STEWARDSHIP** messages that make it easy to remind parishioners that God calls us to **STEWARDSHIP**.
- We tend to think of fall as a new beginning. Thus, with the summer behind them and the rush of the holidays not yet upon them, parishioners are more inclined to sign up for new parish ministries in the fall.
- The success of the **STEWARDSHIP** effort depends on parishioners being in the pews to hear the message. Parishioners are most inclined to be in their home parish in the fall.

The parish is very busy in the fall . How can we possibly add a STEWARDSHIP Renewal?

STEWARDSHIP is not just one more thing to do. **STEWARDSHIP** is a total way of life that will sustain the parish and keep it strong. The question should not be, "How can we find time to do this?" Rather, it should be "How can we afford not to do this?" It is recommended that a **STEWARDSHIP** Committee be part of every Pastoral Council. It is the responsibility of that Committee, in collaboration with the pastor, to plan and implement an ongoing **STEWARDSHIP** effort in the parish. Help in establishing a **STEWARDSHIP** Committee in your parish is available via the Office of Stewardship and Development at 616-243-0491.

What if our parish prefers to conduct a STEWARDSHIP Renewal at some other time of year?

If it is not feasible for your parish to conduct your **STEWARDSHIP** effort in the fall, then determine what time of year is best and proceed accordingly.