

# Fall Stewardship Renewal

## Diocese of Grand Rapids, Michigan

### FAQ's

#### **What is the purpose of a fall Stewardship Renewal?**

The fall Stewardship Renewal program offers an opportunity to educate parishioners about stewardship and to recognize and encourage good stewardship. The renewal program can aid parishioners' realization that the Gospel teachings call all of us to be stewards and that stewardship is not an option but a way of life that leads us to greater discipleship.

#### **Is it a good idea to talk about stewardship in tough economic times?**

Absolutely! With the loss of financial security recently experienced at the world, national, local and personal levels, people are reconsidering how they use their treasure. This is an opportune time to reinforce the message that real security comes only from placing our trust in God. The answer to so many of our worries can be found in the Stewardship Way of Life. We can find peace and comfort by:

- Placing our trust in God.
- Recognizing the many blessings that we have.
- Taking time to thank God for His abundance.
- Re-ordering our priorities.
- Recognizing the difference between what we really need and what we want that results, in part, from a materialistic society constantly telling us we always "need" more.
- Putting God first in our lives.

Further, the economy has not negatively affected all families. Many still enjoy the blessings they had before the financial decline. They may be more inclined to be generous when they clearly understand the need to give and because they are more grateful for their own blessings, especially when they see others experiencing financial difficulties.

#### **Why should our parish do a fall stewardship renewal?**

A fall stewardship renewal is important for many reasons:

- Just as we periodically review and adjust our personal financial course, we are responsible to evaluate and assess our personal stewardship. As His disciples, we are called to reflect on His blessings, not once in a while or only in the good times, but regularly, and to seek His will in using our gifts to serve Him through our parish. 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 to make a specific commitment of each to our parish for the next year.
- 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 are needed?
- God tells us to teach stewardship. Both the Old and New Testament are rich with stewardship messages. More than half of Our Lord's parables address 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 US 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 occur in the parish.
- 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 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. Homilies and lay witness talks on the stewardship way of life.
4. Stewardship commitment cards that encourage parishioners toward more 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 are often 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.

### **Our parish did a renewal last year, why do we need to do it again?**

Because we tend to forget all that God has done for us and all that we owe to God, stewardship education and awareness should to be ongoing. Just as we celebrate Lent, Easter, Pentecost, Advent and Christmas annually, stewardship is an important part of our faith that should 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. When you recognize and encourage gifts of time and talent, you help 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 we all have 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 the Ordinary time of fall often have strong stewardship messages. It is easy to remind parishioners that God calls us to stewardship when they are hearing the same message in the readings of the day.
- Traditionally, we think of fall as a time to start a new venture. Thus, parishioners are more inclined to sign up for new parish ministries in the fall, with the summer behind them, and the rush of the holidays not yet upon them.
- The success of the stewardship effort depends on parishioners being in the pews to hear the message. Fall is a time when parishioners are most inclined to be in their home parish pews. In spring they may be away celebrating sacraments, graduations and special events at other parishes. In summer, they may be away on vacation. In winter, weather and illness can keep them away from church. Fall is the time when most parishioners are in their own parishes.

### **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 and Development Commission be part of every Pastoral Council. It is the responsibility of that Commission, in collaboration with the pastor, to plan and implement an ongoing stewardship effort in the parish. Help in establishing a Stewardship and Development Commission/Committee in your parish is available via the Interim Director 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 efforts in the fall, then determine what time of year is best and proceed accordingly.