

The Spirituality of Stewardship

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Beliefs...



- **Personal:** Living out stewardship in my own life
- **Our Parishes:** Parishes who engage in stewardship activities year-round and have stewardship renewal weekends annually find their parishioners become more connected to Christ and more engaged in their parish community. We notice this through signs of spiritual transformation.
- **Our Diocese:** Individual's need to give out of *thanks* rather than the Church's need to *receive* - it IS a way of life for us.

Why Stewardship?

A Disciple's Dozen

1. Based on the spiritual principles of the Old Testament and New Testament
2. Based on our understanding of the Eucharist and the teaching of the Church especially the Pastoral Letter, Stewardship: A Disciple's Response
3. Transforms parish communities....Stewardship as a way of life is transformational, not transactional
4. Helps parishioners develop and use their God-given gifts and talents

Why Stewardship?

A Disciple's Dozen

5. Parishioners reap the benefits of the fruits of stewardship
6. Change of perspective on life's circumstances
7. Enhanced community outreach....evangelization and stewardship and intrinsically linked, we are called as stewards to share our faith
8. More actively meet the needs of parishioners

Why Stewardship?

A Disciple's Dozen

9. Become a holier people—closer to Jesus
10. Helps parishioners overcome the obstacles to holiness
11. Answers the “big questions” of life
 - Who are we?
 - Where are we going?
 - How do we get there?
12. Develops and enhances parish leadership

Focus of Stewardship

- Based on individual's need to give out of **gratitude** – *spiritual way of life* – a conversion process.
- Stewardship recognizes that each person has been given unique gifts and talents from God. Part of our calling is to discern, develop, and use those gifts.
- Stewardship is part of our own religious education.

Focus of Stewardship

- Giving of the first fruits of our time, talent, and treasure.
- Time involves first our time spent with God in prayer and sacraments, then time spent in service to others.
- Should embrace all aspects of our life: family, church and community.
- Stewardship is about putting God **FIRST** in our lives. Our calendars and checkbooks tell our story.

Focus of Stewardship

- Stewardship involves **trust** in God's will.
- Stewardship is **proactive**.
- Embracing stewardship as a way of life inevitably leads to prayerful discernment on giving that is intentional, planned, and proportionate.
- Stewardship brings a sense of personal joy and fulfillment to life.

Ten Principles based on Scripture:

1. The central obligation of stewardship is putting God first in our lives. (Exodus 20:1-3; 1 Cor. 10:31)
2. Stewardship is grounded in faith: the radical conviction that God gifts us and calls us to use those gifts for the building of the kingdom. (1 Cor. 12:4-11)
3. Stewardship is grounded in prayer and conditioned by discipline. (Mt. 6:7-21)
4. We must be stewards of time, talent and temporal goods. (Mt. 25:14-30)

Ten Principles that tie into Scripture:

5. Stewardship faces the obstacles of greed, selfishness, and irresponsibility. (Luke 12:13-21)
6. Stewardship should always direct us to love of neighbor. (Luke 10:25-37)
7. Stewardship is more a way of life than it is a single, particular action. (Mk. 10:28-31)

Ten Principles that tie into Scripture:

8. Stewardship is a dynamic reality that changes according to giftedness and circumstances. (Luke 10:1-16)
9. Stewardship provides a “spiritual technology” by which a person translates faith vision into faith life. (James 1:19-27)
10. Stewardship always requires accountability. (Mt. 25:31-46)

US Bishops' Pastoral Letter – Stewardship: Disciple's Response

Archbishop Thomas J. Murphy and the American bishops who wrote the 1992 pastoral letter, *Stewardship: A Disciple's Response*, firmly believed that the spirituality of stewardship needed to be understood and lived before the financial crises facing dioceses, parishes, and other Catholic institutions could be successfully addressed.

As Archbishop Murphy used to say, first teach the spirituality of stewardship, then address the Church's financial needs.

US Bishops' Pastoral Letter – Stewardship: Disciple's Response

They believed that:

- Stewardship is a source of deepening spirituality.
- Stewardship challenges us to let go of the false idea that we are somehow in control of our lives, our skills and talents, or our material possessions.
- Stewardship teaches that we are not the authors of our own existence. We are not the owners of our spiritual and material gifts. We are stewards of what belongs exclusively and entirely to God.

US Bishops' Pastoral Letter – Stewardship: Disciple's Response

They believed that (cont.):

- Stewardship is not a program. It is a way of life, a way of living the Gospel of Jesus Christ in our contemporary, consumer-oriented, and materialistic society.
- A commitment to stewardship should influence our most basic choices: How we live, how we develop and use the skills and abilities God has given us, how we earn, save, spend and share our money.

US Bishops' Pastoral Letter – Stewardship: Disciple's Response

In the Introduction to the Pastoral Letter, the bishops explain three convictions that are at the heart of stewardship:

- Mature disciples make a conscious, firm decision, carried out in action, to be followers of Jesus Christ no matter the cost to themselves.
- Beginning in conversion, change of mind and heart, this commitment is expressed not in a single action, not even in a number of actions over a period of time, but in an entire way of life. It means committing one's very self to the Lord.

US Bishops' Pastoral Letter – Stewardship: Disciple's Response

- Stewardship is an expression of discipleship, with the power to change how we understand and live out our lives. Disciples who practice stewardship recognize God as the origin of life, the giver of freedom, the source of all they have and are and will be. They are deeply aware of the truth that “The Lord’s are the earth and its fullness; the world and those who dwell in it.” (Ps 24:1). They know themselves to be recipients and caretakers of God’s many gifts. They are grateful for what they have received and eager to cultivate their gifts out of love for God and one another.

(Stewardship: A Disciple's Response)

US Bishops' Pastoral Letter – Stewardship: Disciple's Response

The Pastoral Letter defines stewardship in the following way:

“A Christian steward is one who receives God's gifts gratefully, cherishes and tends them in a responsible and accountable manner, shares them in justice and love with others and returns them with increase to the Lord.”

US Bishops' Pastoral Letter – Stewardship: Disciple's Response

“Each member of the Church shares in responsibility for its mission; each is called to practice Stewardship of the church. Christians are also called to look outward and to place themselves at the service of the entire human community, especially those who are most in need.”

US Bishops' Pastoral Letter – Stewardship: Disciple's Response

In their pastoral letter on stewardship, the bishops speak of the Eucharist in this way: “The Eucharist is the great sign and agent of this expansive communion of charity... we enjoy a unique union with Christ and, in Him, with one another. Here His love — indeed, His very Self — flows into us as disciples and, through us and our practice of stewardship to the entire human race.”

US Bishops' Pastoral Letter – Stewardship: Disciple's Response

In the pastoral letter, the Bishops specifically call out evangelization as an important facet of stewardship. This includes the role of parents as stewards of the domestic church, but also calls us to use our gifts to “proclaim the Good News” through strengthening the faith, and through acts of justice and mercy.

US Bishops' Pastoral Letter – Stewardship: Disciple's Response

There are also other Church documents that describe the notion of stewardship even though they may not specifically use the word:

- Guadium et Spes
- Lumen Gentium
- Apostolical Actuositatem

Engagement in the community and connection to Christ

One of the end results of living the stewardship way of life is individuals become more engaged in their community and more connected to Christ.

Here's what engagement in the parish looks like – 12 items:

- As a member of my parish, my opinions seem to count
- In my parish, my spiritual needs are met.
- In my parish, I regularly have the opportunity to do what I do best.
- In the last month, I have received recognition or praise from someone in my parish.
- The spiritual leaders in my parish seem to care about me as a person.
- There is someone in my parish who encourages my spiritual growth.

Engagement in the community and connection to Christ

Here's what engagement in the parish looks like:

- As a member of my parish, I know what is expected of me.
- The mission or purpose of my parish makes me feel my participation is important.
- The other members of my parish are committed to spiritual growth.
- Aside from family members, I have a best friend in my parish.
- In the last six months, someone in my parish has talked to me about the progress of my spiritual growth.
- In my parish, I have opportunities to learn and grow.

Stewardship Stories in Action

Transforming Parish Life

The Focus is not on Dollars and
Volunteers but on Signs of Spiritual
Transformation in the Parish