



## STEWARDSHIP



### ***Ideas for Preparing a Homily or Pastor's Column For Stewardship Sunday – September 24, 2023***

#### ***When:***

All parish priests are encouraged to address stewardship at the following times:

- On **Sunday, September 24th** when the Archdiocese celebrates its 23rd annual Stewardship Awareness Sunday with the theme **Stewardship is a New Beginning**.
- On weekends when your parish is conducting its stewardship educational efforts.
- At various times throughout the year when the Gospel has a stewardship message.

#### ***Why:***

Stewardship is first and foremost a spiritual message. It is the way that Catholics are called to live out their faith. Parishioners need to hear this spiritual message from their ordained leaders. Lay parishioners can have a powerful impact by addressing the practicalities, joys and challenges of a stewardship way of life. However, the ordained clergy must address the spirituality.

#### **The Basic Message:**

- Stress that stewardship is about spirituality – recognizing everything we are and everything we have as a gift from God. Gratefully and generously sharing our gifts without expecting anything in return.
- Discuss the 2023 theme by reminding parishioners that stewardship is a way of life, not just an accounting of how we use our gifts. Of all the gifts God gave us, the one He wants the most is our heart.
- Stewardship is about helping each other get to Heaven. Putting our complete trust in God and living a God-centered life.
- Use the following question to get parishioners to reflect on their own stewardship, “What if you woke up today with only the things you thanked God for yesterday?”
- Encourage parishioners to begin every day by praying this simple prayer, “**Lord, how would You like me to be generous with all the gifts you have given me?**”

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### ***Other Ideas for Talking About Stewardship:***

Reflect on the Stewardship Messages in the Second Reading and the Gospel Reading:

#### **Philippians 1:20 – 24, 27**

- Open your heart to hear how God is calling you to use your gifts to build His kingdom.
- God has a much better plan in store for you than you can come up with on our own.
- Our charisms, our gifts from the Holy Spirit, are meant to be used in the service for others, not for our own self-gratification.
- We were created to be in relationship with God and each other; the goal of stewardship is to help each other get to Heaven!

#### **Matthew 20:1-16**

- We are all at different points on the path of holiness. We are called to be grateful and generous for our gifts and help each other take one step closer to Jesus.
- Stop comparing yourself to others. Be the best person that God intended you to be.
- Generosity means not putting conditions on our love and mercy.

### **Offer Practical Suggestions to support the “Stewardship is a New Beginning” theme:**

- To be generous with our time with God...attending Mass and praying daily.
- Becoming actively involved in a parish ministry or forming a new ministry.
- Participating in spiritual enrichment activities of the parish, such as Bible study groups, prayer groups, retreats, etc...
- Sharing unique talents, charisms, skills or knowledge to help organize, manage and grow your parish mission.
- Reaching out to help a fellow parishioner who may need support – our youth, our shut-ins, our sick, our grieving, new parishioners who come as strangers among us and those who are unemployed.
- Supporting the parish and Church through regular financial contributions to the weekly offertory and Annual Catholic Appeal.
- Reaching beyond our parish boundaries to help those who are hungry, who are homeless, and who are lonely.
- Participating in the teaching and social justice work of the Church through Respect Life activities, sacramental preparation programs, evangelization or St. Vincent de Paul activities.
- Participating more actively in the celebration of the Eucharist by serving in the choir, as a lector, a Eucharistic minister, a greeter or a gift bearer.

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## **Define Stewardship**

The foundation of stewardship is prayer. It is a lifestyle we live every day, not only on Sunday.

1. Everything we have and everything we are is a gift from God. We aren't "owners" of anything, we are merely "stewards" of the gifts God gave us. All He is asking is to return a portion back.
2. Put our complete trust in God by being generous with all of our gifts, especially the one gift that means the most to us. By sharing everything, it helps us from putting other "gods" before God.
3. Regardless of our individual circumstances, we all have been blessed. God has given each of us many gifts. How we use our gifts is our gift back to God.

## **Remind Parishioners of the Benefits of Spending More Time with God**

- We feel how deeply God loves us and recognize how abundantly He has blessed us.
- We recognize God as the Master of our lives, and thus, we are able to give up our need to control everything and surrender to God.
- We can see more clearly how God is calling us to live our lives and share our gifts.
- We establish a close friendship with Jesus that allows us to put our lives into His hands and to trust Him completely.
- When we recognize the other "gods" (money, power, pleasure, ego) that we may have put before God, then we can "re-prioritize" to put God first in all things.
- We become less "self-centered" and more "God-centered"; experience Peace and Joy.

## **Suggest that We See Jesus as Our Guide on the Stewardship Journey**

- Stewardship is a journey and Jesus is our guide.
- We won't know how to get where God wants us to go on our journey if we are not regularly talking and listening to Jesus.
- We consult with Jesus through reading His words in the Gospels, spending time with Him in Eucharistic Adoration, receiving Him into our hearts at the Eucharist of every Mass, quiet prayer, and meditation.
- Place our hand in God's and let Him lead us into greater participation in the life of our Church.

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### ***Use Other Scripture Quotes about Stewardship***

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*“He who is kind to the poor lends to the Lord and He will repay him for his deed.”*

Proverbs 19:17

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*“Amen, I say to you. Whatever you did for one of the least of my brothers of mine, you did for me.”*

Matthew 25:40

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*“But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your alms may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.”*

Matthew 6:3-4

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*“No one can serve two masters. He will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to me and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.”*

Matthew 6:24

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*“How shall I make a return to the Lord for all the good he has done for me?”*

Psalms 116:12

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*“The point is this: he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will reap bountifully. Each one must do as he has made up his mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.”*

2 Corinthians 9:6-7

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### **Share Your Own Stewardship Witness**

Parishioners usually do not realize that the priests who serve in the parish are also often very generous contributors to the financial needs of the parish. Consider the following suggestion:

*“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 the bishop, pastor, parish or diocesan staff, and volunteers.”*

Source: “Stewardship and Development in Catholic Dioceses and Parishes”  
Appendix II of **Stewardship: A Disciple’s Response**  
US Catholic Bishops’ Pastoral Letter on Stewardship, page 59  
Available online at [www.usccb.org/stewardship](http://www.usccb.org/stewardship)

### **Give Specific Directions**

If your parish has specific goals for your stewardship efforts, be sure to stress how important these goals are to the spiritual formation of your parish and the individual parishioners. Tell parishioners exactly what you want them to do or to consider. Examples of goals that should be clearly explained include:

- Ask parishioners to read and reflect on stewardship one-page reflections and pastor letters that may be mailed to their homes.
- Ask parishioners to return the stewardship covenant cards – prayerfully consider increasing their gifts of time, talent and treasure.
- Explain to parishioners the need for giving in terms of “advancing the mission of the Church” versus “paying the bills.”
- Suggest that parishioners plan their giving on an annual basis and determine a percentage of income to contribute to the offertory.
- Ask parishioners to review the parish Annual Stewardship Report and determine how they might like to participate in the next year of the parish’s life.
- Suggest that parishioners sign up for their parish’s Electronic Offertory Program.
- Invite parishioners to attend the Festival of Ministries.
- Thank parishioners for their past generosity and encourage continued parish support.

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