Stewardship: A Disciple’s Response Summary

Written By

Preface
- When we accept our lives as gifts, the Holy Spirit can use us as instruments to spread the Gospel.
- Reflects the Easter message – stewardship always starts with a personal experience of the Risen Christ.
- Good stewards live with joy and gratitude for the blessings they have received and returns those gifts with increase.
- The Eucharist is the center and source of strength to be a disciple of Jesus Christ.

Introduction
- Pastoral letter stresses:
  1. Mature disciples make a conscious decision to follow Jesus no matter the cost to themselves.
  2. Conversion of heart and mind is not a single action, but a number of actions over a life time.
  3. Stewardship is an expression of discipleship – grateful and generous out of love for God and others.
- Our culture often contradicts our Christian values: materialism, relativism, hedonism, individualism, consumerism.
- Many Catholics are generous, but not always in proportion to what they possess, including money.
- Living as a steward involves collaborating with God in the work of creation and cooperating with God in the work of redemption.

The Call
- Each of us must discern, accept and live joyfully in the role that God calls us to live.
- Every human life is a unique, personal vocation.
- Jesus’ call is urgent. He does not tell us to follow Him in the future, but in the here and now, in the current moment and in our current circumstances.
- Discipleship is both a privilege and a challenge, it is not a comfortable way of life, putting aside our craving for domination, possession and control.

Jesus’ Way
- The Beatitudes and Sermon on the Mount prescribe the disciple lifestyle (Mt. 5 3 – 7:27).
- Stewardship involves trust and accountability, not only for our own lives, but the lives of others.
- Each person will be measured by his or her portion of gifts entrusted to them. You will be judged according to what you did with what you were given.
- Stewards are happy people who have found the meaning and purpose of living – “praise, revere and serve God.”
- Stewardship also involves the “earthly service” to others.

Living As A Steward
- God wants us to be his collaborators in the work of creation, in collaboration with the Holy Spirit.
- Work is a fundamental aspect of the human vocation, it is required for responsible stewardship of the world.
- Profound reverence for the gift of life, our own life and the lives of others.
- Active stewardship of the ecology – cultivating a heightened sense of human interdependence and solidarity.
- Set aside time for prayer, reading Scripture, Sacraments and attending Mass.

Stewards of the Church
- Use our gifts to serve our community of Faith.
- Share in the work of Evangelization.
- Parents must be models of stewardship within their homes.
- Parishes must use sound business practices, including church finances.
- Parishioners must accept responsibility for their parishes and contribute generously.
- Stewardship should extend to other local churches and to the universal Church.
- The Eucharist is the great sign and agent of expansive communion of charity.

**The Christian Steward**

- The first requirement is to be trustworthy.
- Christian stewards are generous out of love as well as duty.
- After Jesus, the Blessed Virgin Mary teaches the meaning of discipleship and stewardship.

**Appendix I**

- **Stewardship** – gratefully receiving God's gifts, cultivating them responsibly and returning with increase.
- **Disciple As Steward** - conscious lifestyle, experiencing conversion of heart, recognizing God as the source for all things.
- **Steward of Vocation** – each one of us is called to carry out a role in the divine plan.
- **Steward of the Church** – we are not passive beneficiaries, we are “God’s co-workers”.
- **Obstacles to Stewardship** – secular culture contradicts religious conviction, selfishness and greed.
- **A Steward’s Way** – the life of a Christian steward models Jesus. After Jesus, we look to Mary.

**Appendix II**

- God has entrusted humanity with the universe He created.
- This applies to everything: personal talents/abilities, the environment, natural resources, economic order, government affairs and outer space.
- Successful parish stewardship involves the personal stewardship of many people, stewardship education and trust that it will work.
- **Stewardship Education:**
  1) Should be a major priority for every parish and diocese.
  2) Should be a life-long process of study, prayer, reflection and action.
  3) Should be supported by the local bishop.
  4) Involves collaborative leadership with the bishop, stewardship committees should be developed.
  5) No single approach fits all parishes. Education should include adults, youth and children.
- **Stewardship and Development:**
  1) Basic elements of the development program: spiritually-based plan with mission statements, goals and priorities; communication plan on how to communicate; fund-raising plan based on stewardship education.
  2) **Principles for Giving** – how much one gives is based on prayerful discernment of the gifts they have been given; giving from one’s “first fruits” and not from what is “left-over” without counting the cost. Voluntary contribution of time, talent and treasure.
  3) **Annual Giving** – annual giving through “commitment Sundays” (in conjunction with annual parish stewardship renewal process).
  4) **Capital campaign** – carefully planned, well-organized, needs-based program designed to raise a substantial amount of money in a specific time frame. Families invited to make multi-year financial commitments.
  5) **Planned Giving** – donors transfer capital assets to a qualified religious, educational or charitable organization, typically through a bequest provision in a will.
- **Stewardship Promotion:**
  1) **Personal Witness** – individuals tell their own personal conversion stories.
  2) **Commitment of Leadership** – bishop and pastor support is required.
  3) **Hospitality, Evangelization and Outreach** – inspire others to participate in parish ministries.
  4) **Communication and Education** – use all mediums available, seek assistance of qualified professionals.
  5) **Recruiting and Training** – recruit parish volunteers to participate in parish ministries.
  6) **Stewardship of Treasure** – ask Catholics to make financial contributions that are planned, proportionate and sacrificial.
  7) **Accountability** – prepare annual parish stewardship report and communicate to all parishioners.
- **Key Concepts:**
  1) **Fund Raising** – a very specific set of activities designed to raise money to support a goal, unlike stewardship which includes all aspects of a person's life.
  2) **Philanthropy** – similar to the concept of stewardship (actions to benefit society) less the prayer component of stewardship.
  3) **Treasure** – stewardship is based on maximum giving. Challenges us to be good stewards not only in how much we give away, but what we do with all our resources.