



2019
Catholic Ministries Appeal
Renew Faith. Extend Mercy. Inspire Hope.

Teachings on Stewardship

What is Stewardship?

Stewardship is part of our Catholic belief system. Our hope is for Catholics to embrace the teachings on stewardship, understanding that stewardship is a way of life, a way to give back what God has blessed us with. This giving back isn't limited to the parish or the diocese; rather, it encompasses both and much more.

A full description of 'stewardship' is found in the 1993 pastoral letter from the National Conference of Catholic Bishops entitled *Stewardship: A Disciple's Response*. We are called to:

- Receive God's gifts gratefully
- Cultivate them responsibly
- Share them lovingly with others, and
- Return them with increase to God

Stewardship includes the concept of safeguarding – using wisely and justly – our human and financial resources. It is frequently expressed as a call to give our time, talent and financial resources to God, especially through the Church.

Advocating stewardship does not mean we ask people to relinquish all of their possessions. Stewardship requires education and the effort to connect it with our relationships. Stewardship education is about how we care for the possessions that God has entrusted to us. Stewardship calls us to nurture our relationships with God, our families, our workplace, our environment, our neighbors, and our world.

Stewardship is our personal response to the Gospel's call to conversion of mind and heart. Stewardship is a faith response to share all we have and thus participate fully in God's plan for our world. It is an expression of discipleship – how we understand and live our lives according to Christ's teachings. Whatever we are and have is in actuality God's gift that we hold in trust. God calls us to be collaborators in the work of creation, redemption and sanctification. Christ enjoins us to live in witness to His love with such an enthusiasm that we freely and gratefully share our gifts with others.

Stewardship is part of our Catholic tradition and who we are as a Church. God is the source of all we have and are, and we can learn to see ourselves as carrying on the work of God by the way we live and by the way we use our time, talents and financial resources. Stewardship calls for commitment and, for some of us, that might mean a radical conversion. We need to avoid the temptation to make giving an end in itself – it is part of something much larger.

Stewardship is Also about Money

We are constantly hearing, "Stewardship is NOT just about money." And it isn't. By embracing the lessons of stewardship, we learn to receive our gifts gratefully from God, tend them responsibly, share them with others, and give back with increase to God. We know in our hearts that if all were to live a life of stewardship, resources would flow as people gave of themselves to the Church without thought or question.



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Reality is, however, that people must learn that money is part of the sharing of resources good stewardship requires. In our zeal to convince people that a stewardship presentation isn't just a "money talk," we may have swung the pendulum too far the other way. Time and talent are now being wonderfully (and rightly) emphasized.

But somewhere along the way, money was branded as a "dirty word" in stewardship efforts and is now sometimes ignored completely!

At the 1999 National Catholic Stewardship Council conference, Fr. Tony Nugent and Marianne Murphy of the Diocese of Joliet, Illinois, spoke eloquently on the importance of talking about money. Their ideas are compelling and thought-provoking.

Our Responsibility to Talk About Money

The Church needs to have a voice in this societal discussion of money. As people are bombarded with the message to spend and borrow, it is the Church's responsibility to let its members know that what they are giving makes a difference. Parishioners need to understand that money is necessary to accomplish mission and vision and that the Church is every bit as important a place to put money as the shopping mall.

People are not going to change their spending habits until they are challenged to do so. They need to learn that when money is asked for, it is because it is needed, that it has an importance and will have an impact on lives.

Too many requests for money are prefaced with, "I hate to ask you this but..." or "I don't like talking about this but..."

Instead, the message should be, "Just think what we could do with..." or "Do you realize what would happen if your giving increased..."

There should be no shame in asking but rather joy in helping people to give of their resources to an important mission, to fulfill their lives as faithful stewards.

We have prevented people from experiencing the good life of a faithful steward. By our reluctance to talk about money, we are not providing the opportunities we should for people to give. And, at the same time, we are not allowing our ministries to realize their full potential because of the lack of adequate funding – funding that may be available if we just ask for it!

To truly realize our potential as a Church and as a people of faith, the issue of money must be addressed. Approach the subject by emphasizing the power of money's potential to affect change. Challenge parishioners to examine their own attitudes toward spending and sharing. And above all, keep the stewardship message front and center throughout the year. In that way, you will change the mind and heart together.



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Role of Parish Leadership

The commitment of the pastor, administrator and parish council is necessary in all phases of stewardship. Generally, people will be lifted to the level of stewardship in the Bible to the extent the pastor and stewardship leaders inspire them. The ideas listed below are some recommendations for you to implement in your parishes.

- Make prayer the foundation of every ministry, including stewardship, flowing from your parish.
- Pray that people in the parish will grow spiritually as a result of embracing stewardship as a way of life.
- Spend time reading about and studying stewardship in order to more fully understand its meaning and focus.
- Encourage the parish council to read about and study stewardship.
- Commit the parish to conduct its own annual stewardship effort of time, talent and financial resources.
- Form a stewardship committee to develop and implement the stewardship program.
- Utilize training and consulting services available through the Catholic Foundation of Southern Minnesota for parish councils and stewardship committees.
- Commit the parish to carry out stewardship awareness efforts throughout the year.
- Prepare stewardship homilies for the stewardship weekends.
- Incorporate comments about stewardship in homilies regularly throughout the year.
- Thank people for all they do to serve God by serving others.
- Encourage the parish to set an example for parishioners by giving a portion of its offertory to other causes and/or by committing to provide volunteers for community projects to serve beyond the walls of the parish.
- Publicly support and work to ensure that stewardship is not just a one-time activity, but an ongoing part of parish life.

Role of the Stewardship Committee

In order for stewardship to be understood, practiced and nurtured in the lives of parishioners and in the life of the parish itself, it is important to have an active stewardship committee. We suggest the parish form a stewardship committee as a standing committee of the parish council, charged with increasing awareness of the annual stewardship efforts, both for the parish and for the Catholic Ministries Appeal.

We also urge that the stewardship committee not be placed under the auspices of the finance committee because that tends to put too much emphasis on the budgetary needs of the parish rather than the proper focus of the individual's spiritual development and the inherent need to give. It also tends to place the emphasis on financial giving and neglects the equally important aspects of time and talent.



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The committee should consist of six or more members. It is recommended for continuity that members be asked to serve a term of 2-3 years. Who is the ideal member? Recruit people who are:

- Involved in the parish
- Spiritually motivated
- Givers of time, talent and financial resources
- Good communicators, both oral and written
- Comfortable talking about money and its relationship to our faith
- Willing to implement accountability in reporting back to parishioners