

## January 2017 Webinar: Observations and Insights into Parish Stewardship

### Speaker Information

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### Stewardship Terminology People Respond To

- The word “stewardship” can be very polarizing because the term is misused and misunderstood. (It’s about more than money, it starts with prayer).
- Look for other words to use besides time, talent and treasure. Many people “tune-out” when they hear these words.
- In St. Louis we started using other terms 8 years ago – prayer (time), participation (talent) and generosity (treasure).
- Stewardship is not something new the Church just made up. Stewardship is talked about all through the Old and New Testaments – giving from our “first fruits” and “tithing”.
- The U.S. Council of Bishops developed “Stewardship: A Disciple’s Response” back in 1992 as a resource guide for parish stewardship.
- Recognizing everything is a gift from God and being grateful and generous with our gifts.
- Everything we are and everything we have comes from God. We aren’t “owners”, we are “stewards” of our God-given gifts.
- It is a conscious choice to live a grateful and generous lifestyle.
- We are called to be generous with all of our gifts – our time, talent and treasure. Not just one or two gifts, not just the gifts we pick and choose, but all of our gifts.
- We will naturally choose the “path of least resistance” and give the one gift that causes the least discomfort.
- Stewardship is a lifestyle, something we live 24/7, not just something I do on Sunday or whenever I am participating in my parish ministry.
- Focus on our “personal stewardship” as well as our “parish stewardship”. Be good stewards of the 10% we give to the Church, but also the 90% when not at Church. We are all stewards!
- Stewardship is the thread that links all the parish ministries together.
- Stewardship is about helping each other increase our Faith, better our relationship with Jesus Christ and help each other get to Heaven!

### Parish Stewardship

- No two parishes are alike, one approach does not fit all. Use stewardship “best practices” that fit your parish. Be creative and try new things. (It’s OK to fail once in a while).
- We have “stewardship” priests and not necessarily “stewardship” parishes.

- If your pastor does not support stewardship, it will not be successful.
- If you are starting a stewardship effort within your parish, be sure to include your pastor in the beginning stages for his buy-in and support.
- If you have a new pastor, be sure to inform him of your parish stewardship plan to get his support.
- Stewardship activities should fit the “natural rhythm” of your parish. They should not be forced events, they should complement, not compete with current parish events and activities.
- Network with other parishes and the Stewardship office to find out what works in other parishes.

### **Develop an Annual Stewardship Plan**

- Lay out an annual calendar of current religious and parish events.
- List your parish stewardship activities month by month.
- Use Stewardship activities to enhance current religious events and parish activities when possible.
- Do not “force in” stewardship events that do not make sense. If forced, they will be unsuccessful.
- Put your plan in writing and update each year. Many parishes do not write their plan down. This leads to poor communication, poor planning, poor execution and an uninspired stewardship effort. (“Proper planning prevents poor performance.”)
- Concentrate on doing one or two Stewardship activities very well each year. Once you have them down, add one or two new activities the following year.
- Stick to the plan! Determine beforehand what success looks like for your parish.
- Remember, Stewardship takes years to become engrained in the parish culture, do not get discouraged if you don’t see results after the first year.
- Be patient, persistent and creative with your plan.
- To develop an annual parish plan, overlay your individual parish ministry calendars on top of the stewardship calendar. (You will easily see which months have too much activity and which months you could add to.)

### **Develop a Stewardship Culture**

- Generally speaking, 30% of registered parishioners attend Mass regularly, 20 % attend occasionally and 50% do not attend at all.
- So, 50 – 70% of parish does not hear the Stewardship messages at Sunday Mass.
- However, many of the 50 - 70% who do not attend Mass regularly, are active in other parish ministries. (The good news is we have a lot of up-side potential!)
- So, we need to “fish where the fish are.”
- **Conduct a Parish Ministry Leader Meeting at least once a year** (preferably twice):
  - April meeting to educate parish leaders on stewardship education and communicate Fall Stewardship plans and their role in those plans.
  - November meeting to analyze results of recent Fall Stewardship Renewal process and adjust as necessary.
  - Meeting should include opening prayer, introductions, brief stewardship education, other parish objectives, brainstorming session, time for suggestions/new ideas and end with prayer.
  - Consider it a “staff meeting” with all the parish ministry leaders.

- *Benefits of Parish Ministry Leader Meetings:*
  - Educate leaders on stewardship and other parish goals/objectives.
  - Parish information is communicated at monthly parish ministry meetings to parishioners who may not attend Mass regularly or at all.
  - Opportunity for parish leaders to meet each other and develop relationship.
  - Ministry leaders will support each other and not compete with each other.
  - Source of new ideas (discontinue ministries that have run their course and start new ministries).
- Encourage parish ministry leaders to weave stewardship education into their individual monthly ministry meetings (people that don't attend Mass now hear what Stewardship is about).
- Stewardship message should be communicated every month, not just once a year in September.
- Parish Ministry Leaders should constantly invite their ministry members to join them at Mass.
- *Stewardship Committee Members:*
  - Consists of "seasoned" parishioners (known to others, approachable, will express their own opinion).
  - Should be a composite of your parish so that all voices are represented (elderly, middle age, young adult, male, female, ethnic backgrounds, school parents, PSR parents, etc.)
  - Do not pick 6 – 8 people with the same point of view. Healthy debate is good, however, need to eventually come to a consensus.
  - Give each member a specific role: Chairperson, Secretary, Communication, Appreciation, Finance, Education and Children's Stewardship.
  - Succession planning – target particular demographics needed to round out committee (i.e. grade school parent, PSR parent, male/female, young/elderly, married/single).
  - Have term limits for committee members (minimum of 3 years).
  - Stagger terms so a portion of committee goes off every year and new members are added.
  - Stewardship Committee is on the same level as Parish Council and Finance Committee. (Rotate parish leaders to other committees).
  - Smaller parishes will typically combine Parish Council and Stewardship Committee together.
- Publish agenda and meeting minutes.
- Many parishes have ministries that work together to support the parish mission. Sadly, some parishes have ministries that operate independently of the parish mission and the pastor's goals and objectives.
- If you are in a situation where there is not cohesion among the parish ministry leaders, it may be time to review the ministry leadership and politely ask a ministry leader to step down and provide an opportunity for someone else to lead, but invite that person to join another ministry. (If you lead a ministry for a long time, you only see the parish from a narrow point of view).
- Review your current parish ministries. Are they still active? Is participation dwindling? Does the ministry support the parish mission? If not, it may be time to "sunset" or discontinue that particular ministry.
- Do you have parishioners that have brought new gifts to the parish? Do you have changing parish demographics? It may be time to add a new ministry.

- Don't take the summer off! Many ministries don't meet during the summer months because of vacations. Not everyone goes on vacation at the same time!
- When ministries "close down for the summer" it just reinforces that our parish is also "closed for the summer" (and we wonder why Mass attendance drops). We are not a 9-month church, we are a 12-month church.

### **Parish Marketing**

- Most parishes could do a better job at "marketing" all of the good works that happen at their parish.
- The parish staff and lay leaders are usually aware of the different parish ministries and their activity. However, the average parishioner isn't aware of everything happening at the parish and all the people your parish touches through your ministries.
- Look at your parish calendar and summarize the parish activity and ministry results for the prior month and thank your parishioners publicly and privately for their generosity of prayer, participation and financial support at least once a month.
- Here's an example – "Thank you for your continued generosity of prayer, ministry participation and financial support. Last month 1,000 people celebrated Mass on Sunday and 200 people celebrated Mass during the week. We had over 600 people visit our parish with soccer games we hosted on our fields, 245 children attended school every day and 125 children attended PSR each week. 32 families were provided food and 13 families were provided rent and utility assistance. Each month over 500 parishioners participate in our 37 active parish ministries. Additionally, 27 youth and 5 adults participated in the Pro-Life Rally in Washington DC. Thank you, thank you, thank you for sharing your gifts. Your active engagement keeps our parish truly Alive in Christ!"
- Many parishes show a recap of the previous week's offertory in their bulletin each week. Be sure to include the number of families that give through the parish electronic offertory system and the corresponding dollar amount. Also, use this opportunity to thank the parish for their financial support and list some of ways the money was used to "advance the mission of the parish" (do not list bills that were paid).
- Electronic Offertory – promote monthly and encourage parishioners to use. Develop a Benefits and Sign-Up Guide for frequently asked questions. (University of Notre Dame Study – parishioners that use are 2 X more generous).
- "Word of Mouth" advertising is still the most effective. The more people you can get talking positively about your parish and personally recommending it, the better impact it will have regarding your parish faith life, ministry participation and financial support.

### **Parish Communication**

- Many parishes only talk about Stewardship during their annual Stewardship Renewal initiative (usually in September or October).
- Stewardship should be communicated every month to your parish.
- Stewardship Renewal is another "season" of the Church (i.e. Lent, Easter, Advent, Christmas, Ordinary Times).
- The means of communication you use is often the only window people have into their world of faith.

- 4 C's of communication: constant, consistent, concrete and creative.
- Develop a Parish Communication Strategy:
  - Conduct an audit of all the ways the parish communicates to parishioners.
  - Have procedures in place to update messages for each communication channel.
  - The bulletin is not the main source of information for all of your parishioners.
  - There are many ways people “consume” information these days.
  - Different generations use different communication methods, we have to be good at all of them.
- Marketing Rule of 7 – people need to hear something 7 times and 7 different ways before they actually take any action.
- Website: your parish must have a great one. This is typically the first contact for new parishioners who are “shopping” for a parish:
  - Should invite people to be part of the Church
  - Show joyful, mission-driven articles and pictures
  - Should be “mobile friendly”
  - Google “mobile friendly test” to see if your parish website is mobile friendly
  - Mobile phones are outselling computers. If your website isn't mobile friendly, it's almost like not having one
  - Develop weekly Stewardship column
  - Add Stewardship Reflections
  - Use drone to shoot video
- Annual Stewardship Report: your parish should provide this report annually to all parishioners:
  - Add personal stories
  - Use parishioner quotes
  - Info-graphics make it easy to scan the report
  - Share accomplishments
  - Avoid data overload
  - Include a call to action – attend mass, volunteer or donate
- Monthly Lay Witness Talks: lay witness stewardship talks are a “best practice” during your parish stewardship renewal initiative. Consider expanding these talks each month and let different ministry representatives give their witness. (Tie in with your monthly Donut Sunday). Or, find other parishioners who are willing to share their stewardship story with your parish.
- Social Media: develop a plan on how to use the various social media outlets and incorporate into your overall parish communication plan. Without a plan, your Facebook, Twitter, etc. attempts will be a failure. You should spend the same amount of time every week on your digital presence as you do on your bulletin.
- Advent/Lent postcards – invite parishioners to and inform of upcoming events, include pictures of priests and key parish staff members.
- Parish Logo Assistance: if your parish needs help redesigning a logo, please contact the Diocese for consultation to determine if your request can be handled in-house or requires third party assistance.
- Bulletin: Still one of the primary communication tools, but not the only one!

- Develop weekly stewardship column and spotlight a ministry or parishioner.
- Add Stewardship Reflections ([archstl.org/stewardship](http://archstl.org/stewardship)).
- Other Ideas: email blasts, robo-calls, trifold parish ministry brochures in cart rolled out after Mass or parish events, weekly stewardship articles in bulletins and on website.

## Welcoming/Engagement

- Most parishes are “friendly”, but very few are “welcoming”. This is the number one priority for many parishes.
- If you were a newcomer to your parish would you feel welcome?
- Does your parish have a welcoming environment for current/new parishioners and visitors?
- Engagement begins with personal contact and continues with follow through.
- People have a desire to be wanted, needed and engaged.
- An emotional connection is stronger than a rational one.
- Archbishop Thomas Murphy – “Belonging leads to believing”.
- When attending Mass or parish events, be on the look-out for people that look “new”, “lost”, or “need help”. Approach them and ask how you can help. Take the little extra step to introduce yourself.
- Sit in different areas of church when attending Mass. You will probably notice people you haven’t seen before. Are these people welcomed?
- When attending Mass or other church activities, move to the middle of the pew and leave the end open so others can join you.
- Don’t assume all of the regular parishioners feel welcome. Remember the elderly of your parish that built the church.
- Try this exercise: Look at Mass and other parish events through the eyes of a new parishioner. Welcoming opportunities will magically appear. Compare notes and discuss with your spouse. Or, ask a friend to attend and offer their thoughts.
- Constantly invite family, friends and people you meet to join you at Mass.
- Make sure your weekend Mass is a welcoming event:
  - Greeters before and after Mass.
  - Ushers walk people to their pews (especially people they don’t recognize)
  - Parishioners introduce each other at beginning of Mass
  - Priest greets people as they are leaving
- Do you have a parish “welcome” committee? Encourage all parish ministries to have a welcoming procedure.
- “Mentoring” Families – match new parishioners with a current mentor family (by demographics) to attend Mass and parish events together throughout the year and develop a personal relationship.
- Registration process – encourage all new parishioners to register. Make sure new parishioners are visited by parish priest, deacon or staff during the registration process. Does the pastor/priest call or visit new parishioners?
- Welcome Packets:
  - Facts/figures about the parish (annual stewardship report)
  - Schedule of Masses, other sacraments and parish activities
  - List of parish ministries

- Contact information for parish staff and lay leaders
  - Copy of parish mission statement
  - Stewardship brochures and prayer cards
  - Parish newsletter
  - Any parish trinkets to give away
- Welcome letter from the pastor – within a week or two after they are registered.
  - Welcome letter to new school parents.
  - Welcome letter to new PSR families (in most parishes, PSR families feel like “second-class” citizens).
  - Welcome visit – from priest, deacon or welcome committee. Keep the visit short and no more than a couple of people.
  - Welcome Event – schedule a periodic event to get to know people better. Schedule after Mass or during the evening. Each new parishioner should receive an invitation. Have nametags, have a couple of parish ministry leaders give brief talks, allow for questions and answers, take pictures and post on website. (i.e. New Parishioner Dinners, Meet the Priest, schedule home parties and invite new parishioners and new priests).
  - List new parishioners in bulletin, on the website and in the annual stewardship report.
  - Does your parish provide for cultural diversity?
  - Does your parish reach out beyond its parish borders? Invite the local community to attend events?
  - Easter and Christmas postcard or hand-out with pictures of parish staff and calendar of upcoming events.
  - Prior to Mass, priest asks everyone to introduce themselves to those around them.
  - Train parish ministry leaders and current parishioners to look for new parishioners and introduce themselves and invite them to activities.
  - Before Mass, priest asks parishioners for things to pray for and incorporate into Prayers of the Faithful.
  - Annual Volunteer Appreciation Breakfast
  - Annual Stewardship Renewal Process – call new volunteers within first week of sign-up.
  - Lobby of church has information desk like a concierge at a hotel.
  - Funerals, weddings, events with many non-Catholics: have priest explain what is happening during the ceremony and what it means for Catholics.
  - “Instructional” Mass – better formation of all Catholics.
  - Catholic Schools Week – have school children hand-out “thank you” cards to all parishioners at all Masses.
  - Stewardship Committee Member – oversee welcoming activities of all ministries.
  - From the book “Rebuilt”:
    - Look at things from an “unchurched” person’s point of view
    - Provide a wonderful weekend experience
    - Get church-goers to be active
    - Give homilies in a 5 – 6 week series throughout the year. Helps “connect the dots” and reinforce messages each week by building upon it.
  - Name tags for all parishioners to wear at Mass and temporary tags for visitors.

- Website information in different languages.
- At beginning of Mass, priest leaves the altar and walks up to new people and welcomes them and introduces them. Or, from the altar, the priest welcomes new parishioners and visitors by name.
- Sign of Peace
  - Eucharistic Ministers shake hands and hug when they come to altar (include priest and servers)
  - Smile, shake everyone's hand around you, introduce yourself to people you do not know, including children
- Monthly Ministry Appreciation – first Monday of month, guest speaker and attendance prize (gift certificate).
- Invite new and current parishioners to join small faith sharing groups.
- Bulletins – when writing articles, pretend the reader is new to the parish. Many regular parishioners feel like “outsiders” in their own parish.
  - Spell out acronyms
  - Give directions to meeting rooms
  - List contact name and information
- Have suggestion boxes in multiple locations (i.e. Church, gym, meeting rooms).
- Have a guest book for visitors to sign.
- Display photographs of current parish activities.
- Bulletin Boards – remove “old” information.
- Follow-up with people celebrating sacraments to see if there is anything they need.
- Welcoming information booths at parish events and all Masses.
- Visit other churches and see how they welcome people.
- After Prayers of the Faithful, ask newcomers and visitors to stand and thank them for coming.
- Add a “Family Spotlight” section to the bulletin (new and current families).
- If you see a family “struggling” at Mass with children, talk to them after Mass and reassure them that it's OK. Remind them that their children are welcome at Mass and encourage them to keep bringing their children (“we've all been through it”).
- Usher Training – look to make personal connection with parishioners. For example, help parishioners with their kids or help people to their cars.
- Have “Greeters” at Mass that are separate from the ushers. Greeters make personal connections with Mass attendees – more than just saying “welcome”.
- As Parish Ministry Leaders, we lead by example. If we sing, it will encourage others to sing. If we pray, other's will be encouraged to pray.
- Get to know people around you at Mass – say hello and introduce yourself.
- Make additional handicap parking available.
- Designated “Grandma and Grandpa” to watch kids during Mass.
- Weekly Mass Announcements – we encourage families to keep their kids in Church during Mass and not take them to the cry room.
- Welcoming has a direct impact on your parish stewardship efforts.



## Annual Stewardship Renewal – “Renewing Our Covenant with God”

- Our Annual Stewardship Renewal is another season of the Church.
- Throughout the Old and New Testaments, God and mankind have been making and renewing covenants.
- We should consider the annual parish stewardship process as “renewing our covenant with God.”
- Completing our annual stewardship commitment card with our gift of prayer, participation and generosity, signing our name to it and placing it on the altar is our version of making a covenant with God, we shouldn’t take this so lightly.

### Prayer

- Many parishes schedule an annual outdoor Mass (i.e. “Mass in the Grass”) as part of their stewardship renewal.
- Pray for the success of your annual parish renewal prior to starting the event.
- Develop a parish stewardship prayer and pray it often.

### Participation

- Stewardship Commitment Cards – change name to “Covenant” Cards
  - The word “Covenant” implies a sacred bond with God versus the word “Commitment” which sounds like a process, not a relationship with God.
  - Develop special, sacred ceremony to collect, don’t just throw into offertory basket
  - Call people to the altar to place cards in basket
  - Allow time for parishioners to complete at Mass prior to collecting and provide blank cards in pews
  - Electronic commitment cards on parish website for people who could not attend
  - Have grade school and PSR student hand-out cards and collect them during Mass
  - Keep reminding parishioners to return and have a box in back of Church for later returns
  - Follow-up with non-respondents – attend parish ministry meetings and give them time to complete and collect
- Festival of Ministries
  - Don’t call it a Festival of Ministries
  - Combine with another parish social event
  - Include food, adult beverages and/or kid’s activities
  - Make it a social event instead of a recruitment drive
  - When parishioners see other people in ministry having fun, they are more inclined to join
  - Fall Festivals, Chili Dinners, Taste of “Your Parish”
  - Develop old newspaper boy/girl day to promote ministries
- Develop “props” to promote your stewardship renewal
  - Rowboat – “Get In and Row”

- Fishing Net – “We are Fishers of Men”
- Lay Witness Talks
  - Make a DVD of several speakers to show at all Masses
  - Video your speakers and post on parish website
  - Send video links through social media

#### Generosity

- Consider adding an Increased Offertory Program as part of your annual stewardship renewal – they work!
- Some parishes add the Increased Offertory Program every second or third year, some do it every year.
- Avoid conducting Increased Offertory Program during the Annual Catholic Appeal or any capital campaign because of donor fatigue.
- Add Electronic Offertory as an offertory giving option and promote it every month.