

# *Belong More Deeply*

*through Stewardship*  
*A Way of Life*



## *Homily Hints for Financial Stewardship Renewal 2011*

We are pleased to present all deacons and priests in Stewardship parishes in our Diocese with these homiletic resources. It is our hope that these tools will help preachers in the preparation for the weekends of this season's Financial Stewardship Renewal.



**Stewardship**  
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## General Renewal Process - Rationale

Faith-filled Stewardship is a way of life. You've heard that, seen it, read about it, and said it. Each year, more Catholics come to see stewardship as their response to God's generosity in their lives. How do we as parish and diocesan leaders help foster stewardship as a way of life and empower people to make the cultural shift to living as Christian stewards? Well, there are many ways, but chief among them is through annual and regular stewardship renewals.



Regular stewardship renewals, when presented clearly and properly, engage people in a process of introspection and reflection that, hopefully and with God's grace, will lead to a conscious, active response as individuals connected to the community of faith we call the parish (the Church).

In our diocese, for many years now, the renewal process takes place during a four week period. There are basic components to that process. (Our focus this Fall is on financial stewardship renewal. There is a similar, but not identical process for the renewal of time and talent that is articulated in our Spring *Renewal Packet*.) Because each parish has the flexibility to choose one of five themes, these homily helps contain generic language to indicate when the parish's theme should be inserted. If you have any questions, please call the Office of Parish Stewardship at 516-379-4055 x3. Here are integral pieces of the process for financial stewardship renewal:

### Period of Awareness with Targeted Homilies

Everyone in the parish is invited to become aware that it is now, once again, that time of year when each is individually and communally called to reflect upon God's gifts (particularly in the Fall, the gift of money and material possessions) and the cultivation, use, and sharing of those gifts. The content of parish homilies is enhanced to explicitly refer to the regular scriptures (in the normal cycle) in light of our understanding of God's generosity and our need to respond to that generosity responsibly and with gratitude. Normal seasonal and liturgical considerations are also woven into the homilies so that there is a cohesive message regarding the challenge to live as God's people. The targeted homilies continue each week during the entire renewal process. (The renewal process begins with what we call *Awareness Weekend*.)

### Personal and Communal Reflection (Baptismal Call, Discipleship, Stewardship, Responsibility, Accountability)



All materials designed by our Office for the benefit of parishioners (spiritual brochures, letters, bulletin inserts, bulletin and pulpit announcements, and general intercessions) are designed to progressively invite each person, each family, and the parish at large to enter into a reflection for this renewal period. How is each person, family, the parish as a whole responding to our baptismal call, God's generosity in our lives, and the use and sharing of our God-given gifts in an accountable and responsible fashion? Aside from a personal and family reflection and inventory, there is a parish presentation of the *Annual Report of Parish Life* which is an informative document containing a snapshot of how the parish is responsible and accountable for using the shared gifts of the community. (This part of the process is heightened in what has come to be called *Accountability Weekend*.)

## Witness from Members of the Community (Stories of Faith)

Key to the renewal process are witness talks from members of the parish who have struggled to respond to God's call in their lives, accepted the challenge, and entered into the ongoing conversion process of living as Christians. These *Witness Talks* are never requests for money or for volunteers, but are stories of faith and conversion. Witness talks that follow the simple and basic pattern are most effective. The use of Witness Talks best takes place *before* Commitments are completed (either/or the second and third weekends of the renewal process). It is not uncommon that in some parishes here in our diocese, because of the notable effectiveness of Witness Talks and the belief of parish leadership in their essential value, that they are scheduled for more than one weekend during the renewal.



## Invitation to Move Forward in the Journey of Faith (Invitation to Conversion)

All members of the parish community are now invited to “take-a-step” - to consider a new action or an enhanced response to how each develops, uses and shares what God has given. For financial stewardship renewal, this means a reflection on the ways in which I use my money, and possibly, a reorientation or adjustment that would better represent what I profess to believe at this point in my faith journey. (This part of the process traditionally takes place leading up to *Commitment Weekend*.)

## Public Commitments (Parish and “Other Half”)

The financial stewardship renewal process culminates in the individual person's/family's response in a communal setting at the weekend liturgy (*Commitment Weekend*). The response is public, written, and presented/collected (in some parishes as part of local custom or ritual). There are several reasons for this, first being that Christianity is not meant to be a private faith, but meant to be celebrated and lived out in community. Therefore, it is most appropriate that there be a public expression of what has gone on interiorly in each person/family. There is also the issue of accountability. Not only does the institution need to be accountable for the use of its shared gifts, but my parish, my family, and I have to be accountable for what we have been given by God, including our money. The public commitments set the stage for good and responsible accountability, which starts with individuals.

In our diocesan renewal model, people are asked to make or renew a commitment to financial stewardship at whatever level is appropriate, given their current circumstances and their desire to respond to God's generosity in their lives. The suggestion is that, whatever monetary figure the person/family arrives at, half goes to the parish, and the “other half” goes to charities, organizations, institutions, and others that the person/family chooses.

This part of the renewal process takes place on *Commitment Weekend* and usually has a *Follow-Up Weekend* component to it.

### *Office of Parish Stewardship*

DIOCESE OF ROCKVILLE CENTRE

200 West Centennial Avenue, Suite 202, Roosevelt, NY 11575-1950

Phone: 516-379-4055 x3 Fax: 516-379-3234 e-mail: [stewardship@drvc.org](mailto:stewardship@drvc.org)

[www.stewardshipli.org](http://www.stewardshipli.org)



## A SNAP-SHOT OF THE FOUR WEEKENDS OF THE FALL FINANCIAL RENEWAL PROCESS

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Awareness Weekend</b> October 22/23, 2011 (Mission Sunday)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* A “heads-up” that stewardship renewal time is coming.</li> <li>* It’s time to reflect, pray and plan for the sharing of Financial Resources in all aspects of life this year.</li> <li>* Supported by bulletin inserts, bulletin and pulpit announcements, general intercessions, targeted homilies, lay witness and more!</li> <li>* First Parish Mailing with Spiritual Brochure reinforces what was heard and read at Mass and invites people into further reflection.</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Accountability Weekend</b> October 29/30, 2011</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* A presentation of the <i>Annual Report of Parish Life</i> that makes known to all the impact of the shared gifts of Financial Resources and Time and Talent provided by the parish community.</li> <li>* Publicly thanks people for sharing their gifts and conveys a sense of excitement and accomplishment.</li> <li>* Fosters accountability by modeling accountability.</li> <li>* Supported by bulletin inserts, bulletin and pulpit announcements, general intercessions, targeted homilies, lay witness and more!</li> <li>* Presentation of the <i>Annual Report of Parish Life</i> is followed by a parish mailing inviting people to commit to sharing their Financial Resources.</li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Commitment Weekend</b> November 5/6, 2011</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* A time to take action!</li> <li>* Parishioners make or renew commitments to sharing their financial resources.</li> <li>* Presenting commitments can be an integral and meaningful part of the liturgy.</li> <li>* Supported by in-pew completion, bulletin inserts, bulletin and pulpit announcements, general intercessions, targeted homilies, lay witness and more!</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Follow-Up Weekend</b> November 12/13, 2011</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* A mini-repeat of Commitment Weekend.</li> <li>* Especially for those who were not ready to commit last weekend.</li> <li>* Communicate thanks to those who have already committed.</li> <li>* Begin follow-up, data management, reporting, acknowledgements and so on!</li> </ul>



Stewardship

A Way of Life





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Lined writing area consisting of 6 horizontal lines.



**NOVEMBER 5/6, 2011**  
**32<sup>nd</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time**

Wisdom 6: 12-16; Psalm 63; 1 Thes 4: 13-18; Matthew 25: 1-13



***Commitment Weekend***

*We seek many things in this life, but we should seek first the Lord and his wisdom. By so living, we will keep vigil for the Lord as we await his return in glory.*

- Now that the community has entered into the renewal process and has been presented with an accounting of the use of shared gifts in the parish, it is time to invite members to make or renew commitments to sharing financial resources with the parish and with other charities/organizations. Families are asked to “make a plan” for the year as to how each family unit will share the gift of money. All are invited to take-a-step.
- The use of lay witness talks and the in-pew commitment would take place this Sunday. Since the lay witness talks may not take the place of the homily, the homilist should be brief, and reference the lay witness talk that will follow. Lay witness talks should take place after the communion rite has been completed.
- The gospel challenges us to vigilance. What are the promises we have made and suddenly found ourselves nodding off, neglecting to act on our good intentions? What steps can we take to keep us vigilant and focused? How can we remind ourselves daily that we seek to **belong more deeply**?
- How are we ready? What will we have to show for all that has been given to us?
- The gift of wisdom to be vigilant is there for those who seek it. Do we earnestly seek that insight?
- What grounds my hope? Where is the concrete evidence/action that my hope is grounded in the Lord?
- Those who have gone before us have left many testaments to their faith. How do we, their “successors” in the faith, build upon those who have gone before us? Does my desire to **belong more deeply** give witness to my gratitude?

***Notes/Reflections:***

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