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.

SATURDAY/SUNDAY, OCT. 25/26:  
Stewardship Awareness Weekend

SATURDAY/SUNDAY, NOV. 1/2:  
Accountability Weekend

SATURDAY/SUNDAY, NOV. 8/9:  
Commitment Weekend

SATURDAY/SUNDAY, NOV. 15/16:  
Follow-Up Weekend
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 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.

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On Preaching


DECREE OF PROMULGATION

On November 14, 2001, the Latin Church members of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops approved complementary legislation for canon 766 of the Code of Canon Law for the dioceses of the Latin Church of the United States.

The action was granted recognitio by the Congregation for Bishops in accord with article 82 of the Apostolic Constitution Pastor Bonus and issued by Decree of the Congregation for Bishops signed by His Eminence Cardinal Giovanni Battista Re, Prefect, and His Excellency Most Reverend Francesco Monterisi, Secretary, and dated November 27, 2001.

Preaching the Word of God is among the principal duties of those who have received the sacrament of orders (cc. 762-764). The lay faithful can be called to cooperate in the exercise of the Ministry of the Word (c. 759). In accord with canon 766 the National Conference of Catholic Bishops hereby decrees that the lay faithful may be permitted to exercise this ministry in churches and oratories, with due regard for the following provisions:

If necessity requires it in certain circumstances or it seems useful in particular cases, the diocesan bishop can admit lay faithful to preach, to offer spiritual conferences or give instructions in churches, oratories or other sacred places within his diocese, when he judges it to be to the spiritual advantage of the faithful. In order to assist the diocesan bishop in making an appropriate pastoral decision (Interdicasterial Instruction, Ecclesiae de Mysterio, Article 2 §3), the following circumstances and cases are illustrative: the absence or shortage of clergy, particular language requirements, or the demonstrated expertise or experience of the lay faithful concerned.

The lay faithful who are to be admitted to preach in a church or oratory must be orthodox in faith, and well-qualified, both by the witness of their lives as Christians and by a preparation for preaching appropriate to the circumstances.

The diocesan bishop will determine the appropriate situations in accord with canon 772§1. In providing for preaching by the lay faithful the diocesan bishop may never dispense from the norm which reserves the homily to the sacred ministers (c 767§1; cfr. Pontifical Commission for the Authentic Interpretation of the Code of Canon Law, 26 May 1987, in AAS 79 [1987], 1249). Preaching by the lay faithful may not take place within the Celebration of the Eucharist at the moment reserved for the homily.

Witness Talks

It has been clearly shown that witness talks given by lay persons engaged in a variety of ministries in the parish account for part of the success of a parish’s stewardship renewal effort. These talks may not be given at the time of the homily, nor can they immediately follow the homily. How then might they be used, without diminishing the importance of the homily, or diminishing the importance of the lay witness talk?

There are several considerations that ought to be taken into account:

* the liturgical day;
* the length of the liturgy;
* other additional rites that might be taking place at liturgies on that weekend.

The liturgical day and its texts are provided by the Church. The homiletic notes are designed to assist the preacher in leading into a witness talk that could follow after communion. It would be advantageous if both the preacher and those giving the witness talks had an opportunity to reflect on both the scriptures of the day and the particular stewardship theme of the given weekend. The witness talk should flow from the liturgy of the day and the homily, and lead into the stewardship theme/action.

In order that the liturgy might not be unduly prolonged, the homily ought to be brief and focused. So, too, the witness talk should also be brief and focused. Care should be exercised in the selection of music.

If there is to be a witness talk on a particular weekend, it might be better to delay other rites or actions that would take place at the liturgy to another Sunday (for example, Installation of Eucharistic Ministers, blessing of PreCana couples, etc.). If the liturgy contains too many additional rites, the waters tend to muddy, and the focus of the day could be lost.
OCTOBER 25/26, 2008
30th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Exodus 22: 20-26; Psalm 18; 1 Thes. 1: 5c-10; Matthew 22: 34-40

**Awareness Weekend**

*We are to love the Lord with our whole heart and our neighbor as ourselves. By thus fulfilling these two great commandments, we hope to become models of faith and imitators of the Lord who gave himself totally for our sakes.*

- The community is informed that it is time to enter into the annual renewal process - this time the Stewardship of Financial Resources.

- Two parts of the Old Testament Law - love of God and love of neighbor - are joined as one and presented by Jesus as a new teaching, making it the basis of the whole Law. You cannot have one without having the other. How does our love of God manifest itself in concrete action through the love of neighbor? How expansive is God’s definition of neighbor? How limited is our definition? As *(use parish theme)*, how do we reach out to others in need?

- What makes this “new” commandment so unique is that Jesus places the same weight on the love of God as he does on the love of neighbor. How is that weight demonstrated in our lives? In our use of the goods of the earth? In our use of our own treasures?

- The Thessalonians are praised for their belief in the one, true God. What are the issues or things that distract us from the one true God? What are the other gods that vie for our attention? How do these “false gods” show themselves in our stewardship of time, talent and financial resources?

- How does the power of the word preached by Jesus, preached by the Church effect our lives? How do we give glory to God as *(make connection with parish theme)*?

**Notes/Reflections:**

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**NOVEMBER 1/2, 2008**

**Commemoration of All the Faithful Departed**

*(All Souls)*

Wisdom 3: 1-9; Psalm 23; Romans 5: 5-11; John 6: 37-40

**Accountability Weekend**

_The souls of the just are in God’s hands. Christ, the Good Shepherd, died for us while we were still sinners. Jesus is our resurrection and life. Everyone who believes in the Son will have eternal life and will be raised on the last day._

- This season, **Accountability Weekend** falls on the feast of All the Faithful Departed. Depending on your own parish plan, you may choose to present the *Annual Report of Parish Life* during this weekend or postpone it, adding one weekend to the renewal. In either case, it is fitting that as we remember those who have gone before us in faith, we remember that their stewardship enables us to worship in our current buildings, to experience the church’s ministry of education, the Church’s ministry to the poor, and so on. Their memory and the memory of their good works invite reflection on just how we, the present generation, will care for and maintain what we have been given, along with the challenge of what we will leave succeeding generations as a testimony to our faith. A lay witness talk would fit well this weekend.

- If your parish plans on conducting this weekend as Accountability Weekend, parish leadership is given the opportunity to exercise accountability for how the various and collective gifts of the community are being used and shared. This is both a financial report and a report of ministerial activity. The aspect of accountability is always a crucial one.

**Notes/Reflections:**
Commitment Weekend

The waters flowing from the temple, the dwelling place of the Lord, bring forth life and growth. Jesus is the living sanctuary and we are his living body in the Spirit.

- 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 merchants and money changers—as well as the worshippers at the Temple who used their services—lost sight of the true meaning of the Temple. Does my stewardship show that my life priorities are in order?

- The Temple of Jerusalem was the place of sacrifice. Is my current commitment to my parish a true sign of sacrifice? How can the sharing of my gifts help to build up the Kingdom of God here at home, my parish, community and world?

- Jesus speaks of the death and resurrection of the temple of his body but the people do not understand that resurrection follows—giving one’s self totally—personal sacrifice. What are the areas of my life (gifts that I have received from God) where I do not understand the glory that will come from sacrifice?

- The people did not comprehend Jesus’ use of metaphor concerning the prediction of his passion, death and resurrection. What holds me back from understanding the true meaning of sacrifice? Do I see the great things that will come from sharing all my resources/gifts?

- As Ezekiel explains what flows from the Temple makes everything new - wondrous things will happen. Just so, the good works that we perform, the works that flow from our participation in the Eucharist, will bring wonderful things.

Notes/Reflections:
Follow-up 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.

- This weekend serves as both a follow-up to the prior weekend and as yet another opportunity for those who have not yet done so to “take-a-step.” If lay witness talks are used again, they take place after the communion rite has been completed. If they take place, the homilist should be brief, and reference the lay witness talk that will follow.

- Today’s Gospel is one of the pivotal passages concerning stewardship. It gives insight to our call to take the gifts we’ve been given, cultivate them and return them with increase. Those who turn their backs on their God-given gifts, out of fear or selfishness, do not have the Master’s interests in mind. They do not participate in the mission of Jesus. Discipleship requires us to be conscious and responsible with all that has been entrusted to our care.

- Psalm 128 reminds us that disciples who follow the ways of the Lord will discover that sharing their gifts will return with increase. What commitment to sharing have I made?

- St. Paul reminds us that disciples live in the light! The time for action is now! We do not wait for a future time we may not have to share the gifts we’ve received. Did I make my commitment to God or have I put it off?

- Have I realized that the time for action is right now? What may be stopping me from making a commitment to “live in the light of day?”

Notes/Reflections: