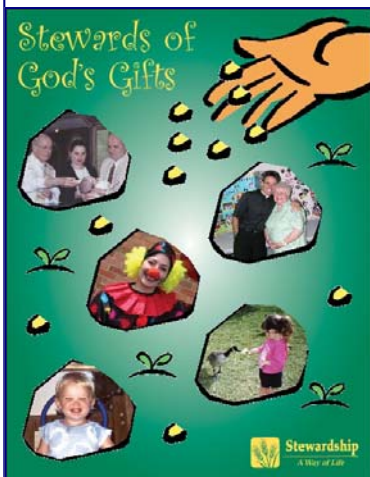


Time and Talent Stewardship Renewal

Spring, 2010

HOMILY HELPS *For Parish Priests and Deacons*

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 Time and Talent Stewardship Renewal.

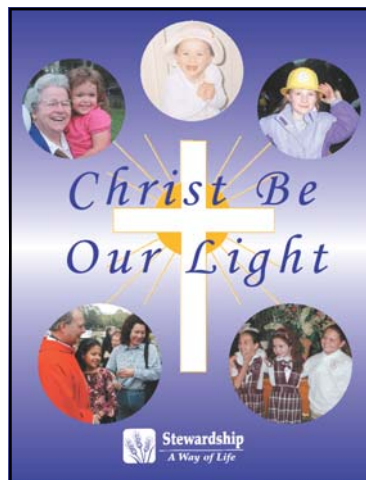
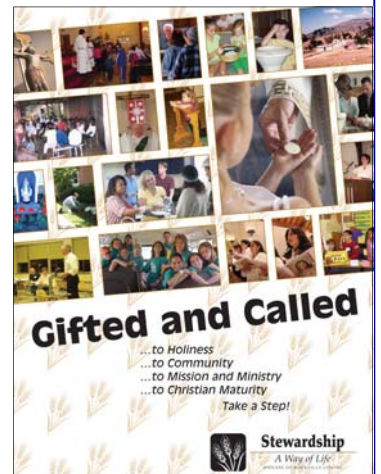


SATURDAY/SUNDAY, MAY 15/16:
Stewardship Awareness Weekend

SATURDAY/SUNDAY, MAY 22/23:
Gifts Celebration Weekend

SATURDAY/SUNDAY, MAY 29/30:
Commitment Weekend (Memorial Day)

SATURDAY/SUNDAY, JUNE 5/6:
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 Spring is on time & talent stewardship renewal. There is a similar, but not identical process for the renewal of financial resources that is articulated in our Fall *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 time and talent 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 Spring, the gifts of time and talent) 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, Celebration, Invitation)

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 Celebration of Gifts which makes known to all parishioners how gifts are shared in the parish community and publicly thanks people for sharing their gifts as well as shows gratitude for the many gifts God has given us. (This part of the process can be expressed through a Ministry Fair, or Litany of Parish Ministries during Gifts Celebration 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 people 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 consider a new action or an enhanced response to how each develops, uses and shares their gifts. For time & talent stewardship renewal, this means a reflection on the ways in which we use our gifts, and possibly, a focus on using those gifts in the parish, but also needs to consider *all* aspects of where we use our gifts (home, family, workplace, community and the world!).

Public Commitments

The time and talent stewardship renewal process culminates in the individual person's/family's response in a communal setting at the weekend liturgy (*Commitment Weekend*). Even though our focus is on parish ministries when it comes to the Commitment Cards people will be invited to complete, the understanding needs to be broad and all-encompassing. This weekend is the time of the Renewal when people are asked to actually make and/or renew commitments to sharing their gifts. The overall idea here is *spiritual renewal, recommitment* and making *new* commitments.

The Commitment is made in writing purposely. In our culture, something written carries more weight or significance. In our faith, public expressions and actions permeate our Catholic identity, so our faith commitments should be just as important as other commitments we make in our lives. And, being that our faith tells us we are not just individuals, but individuals dynamically connected to the Christian community, we make and renew these commitments within the context of community—the weekend Liturgy.

Follow-Up Weekend is a mini-version of the preceding Commitment weekend. It's an opportunity for those who were not ready or not present during Commitment weekend to make or renew their Commitments. As a process, Time and Talent Renewal in our Diocese is best served when integral components are respected but attention is given to local considerations, nuances or needs.



Office of Parish Stewardship

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On Preaching

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops—United States of America—January 15, 2002.

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.



May 15/16: Seventh Sunday of Easter: Awareness Weekend

Readings: Acts 7: 55-60; Psalm 97; Revelation 22: 12-14, 16-17, 20; John 17: 20-26.

Summary: Stephen, the first martyr of the infant Church, washes his robe in the blood of the Lamb, the Alpha and Omega. He proclaims Jesus Lord and King, Most High over all the earth. In Him may all become one.

Liturgical Orientation:

Today's gospel presents a portion of the priestly prayer of Jesus. As the Lord Jesus stands with hands outstretched between heaven and earth on our behalf, so too, this Sunday stands between the Ascension and Pentecost to remind us of our location: the "already" of the announcement of the reign of God, and the "not yet" of the kingdom's fulfillment. Jesus' prayer makes it clear that it is here in this world that his followers are to do the work of stewardship and evangelization. We are here to build His kingdom!

I. Acts 7: 55-60: *I see the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.*

Stephen's angelic countenance is interpreted in terms of a heavenly vision. Coming right after Stephen's speech, the vision ratifies what was spoken: the indictment of the listeners and the location of God's "glory" in heaven with the risen Christ, rather than in the Temple made by human hands.

Psalm 97: *The Lord is king, the most high over all the earth.*

II. Rev. 22: 12-14, 16-17, 20: *Come, Lord Jesus!*

John has little hope for the repentance of the wicked. Although believers are saved by the blood of the lamb, it is especially those who have died for their faith who are declared blessed. The Lord continues to invite. The bride is not simply a metaphor for the Christian community. Like the Spirit, she is an aspect of the divine which calls humanity to salvation.

Gospel: John 17: 20-26: *That they may be brought to perfection as one!*

In Jesus' prayer for his disciples is a prayer for the unity among all those who will follow him. Jesus asks that the Father keep and sanctify the disciples, who will not assume the place "in the world" that he has held. A new relationship is established: to the Father, to Jesus, and to disciples in every age. And the prayer is extended to those who will come to believe because of the witness of the followers of Jesus.

Stewardship Orientation:

This is the first part of Time and Talent renewal where parishioners are reminded that now is the time when we will all once again begin to think about the many gifts that God has given us, especially our gifts of time and talent and the way we share and use those gifts. Awareness Weekend is designed to bring to consciousness that our annual stewardship renewal is upon us, and that this is what we, as individuals connected to this parish community, will be doing during the next couple of weeks.

Breaking Open the Word:

- * We are coming to the conclusion of the Easter Season, awaiting the coming of the Spirit. We are also preparing to recommit ourselves to a stewardship of time and talent.
- * The stewardship of our time and talent is a concrete manifestation of our witness to Jesus. Stephen witnessed to Jesus in his words, actions, and in the very act of giving up his life. We, too are invited to reflect on how in our words and actions we are Christ's hands and heart to all those around us.
- * Are our words supported by our actions, or do they indict our own inactivity? If not me, who? If not now, when?
- * As we approach recommitment, is our use of talent and time in service of the unity of the local church from my surplus or from my want? Am I able to give back some of what I have received only when I have a few extra minutes, or is it part and parcel of my way of life?

May 22/23: The Solemnity of Pentecost: Gifts (Ministry) Celebration Weekend

Readings: Acts 2: 1-11; Psalm 104; 1 Cor. 12: 3b-7, 12-13 or Rom 8: 8-17; John 20: 19-23 or John 14: 15-16, 23b-26.

Summary: All of us have been baptized into one and the same Spirit, who bears witness that we are children of God. That same Spirit, the Advocate, was given as gift to the disciples to teach them everything and to strengthen them to go forth in the name of the Lord “to renew the face of the earth.”

Liturgical Orientation:

Pentecost both crowns and concludes the yearly celebration of Easter. The disciples are commissioned to proclaim the Good News to all creation, through the gift of the Spirit.

I. Acts 2: 1-11: *They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak.*

The bestowal of the Spirit on the first community takes the form of a dramatic scene. A representative group (all of Israel) hears the apostles. It is and will continue to be the activity of the Spirit that causes the infant church to grow.

Psalm 104: *Lord, send out your Spirit, and renew the face of the earth.*

II. 1 Cor. 12: 3b-7, 12-13: *In one spirit we were all baptized into one body.*

All of Paul’s hearers have made the same baptismal confession: Jesus is Lord. The body is the organic unity of the Christian community. Diversity is rooted in unity. The different members all share a common existence: life in Christ.

OR

Romans 8: 8-17: *Those who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God.*

The Spirit, as the new principle of Christian vitality, is derived from “God,” the same source as all other manifestations of salvation. The baptized Christian is not only “in the Spirit,” but the Spirit is now said to dwell in him or her. The power vivifying the Christ is traced to its ultimate source, for the Spirit is the manifestation of the Father’s presence and power in the world since the resurrection of Christ and through it. The Spirit not only gives new life but also established for human beings the relationship of adopted son/daughter and heir. Material creation, hope itself, and the Spirit all bear witness to this glorious destiny.

Gospel: John 20: 19-23: *As the Father sent me, so I send you. Receive the Holy Spirit.*

The Spirit is given to the followers of Jesus that they might be disciples. The power of forgiveness is expressed in the bestowal of the Spirit on those who believe as a result of the disciples’ mission and who come to join the community.

OR

John 14: 15-16, 23b-26: *The Holy Spirit will teach you everything.*

The significance that any works of the disciples can have is the same as Jesus’ words: they must serve to testify to the unity between Jesus and the Father. Jesus will dwell in the community that keeps his word. The relationship that exists between Jesus and the Father is the relationship that exists between Jesus and his followers.

Stewardship Orientation:

This is the second weekend of the Time and Talent renewal process that is more celebratory than invitational (more of a celebration of gifts, than an invitation to join a parish ministry). It is the time when, at every gathering of the community at Mass on this weekend, we celebrate in thanksgiving and gratitude the many diverse and unique gifts God has given the individuals in the community, as well as the community as a whole (communal gifts). The celebration usually focuses on gifts that are shared in the parish (particularly through parish ministries and activities), but needs to consider a more holistic application of gifts to all aspects of each individual’s life: family, workplace, community and parish, and the world.

***May 29/30: Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity:
Commitment Weekend
(Memorial Day Weekend)***

Readings: Proverbs 8: 22-31; Psalm 8; Romans 5: 1-5; John 16: 12-15.

Summary: We are at peace with God our Father through our Lord Jesus Christ. God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit. This Spirit, who is Wisdom itself, will lead us into all truth. How wonderful the name of our triune God in all the earth.

Liturgical orientation:

The Solemnity of the Holy Trinity came to be observed throughout the western church during the fourteenth century. While many of the feasts of the church year celebrate events from salvation history, or specific moments in the life of Christ, the Solemnity of the Holy Trinity celebrates an "idea," an observance of a theological concept.

The transcendent God of mystery is intimately involved in the lives of the community and the individual believer. Mighty and wonderful are the awesome deeds of God's creative power and love in the wonder of creation. Paul writes to the Romans that we have sufferings yet to endure until God's plan is brought to completion. But these sufferings should bring forth in us unwavering hope, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Spirit. It is that Spirit, promised by Jesus, that will guide us to all truth.

I: Prov. 8: 22-31: *Before the earth was made, Wisdom was conceived.*
Wisdom is God's going forth from God in revelation and in action.

Psalm 8: *O Lord, our God, how wonderful your name in all the earth.*

II. Rom. 5: 1-5: *To God, through Christ, in love poured out through the Holy Spirit.*

Once justified, the Christian is reconciled to God and experiences a peace that troubles cannot upset, a hope that knows no disappointment, and a confidence of salvation. This peace that the Christian experiences comes from being introduced into the sphere of divine favor by Christ, who has reconciled all people and brought them into the presence of God.

Gospel: John 16: 12-15: *Everything that the Father has is mine; the Spirit will take what is mine and declare it to you.*

Since Jesus has not been able to tell his disciples everything they must know, the Paraclete will play an important role in guiding the community in the truth. The function of the Paraclete is to glorify Jesus and to take what the Father has given Jesus and declare it to the disciples.

Stewardship Orientation:

This weekend is the part of Time and Talent renewal when people are asked to actually make and/or renew commitments to sharing their gifts with their families, their co-workers and employers, and in the local community and parish family—in effect, the world. Even though our focus is on parish ministries (when it comes to the Commitment Cards people will be invited to complete), the understanding needs to be broad and all-encompassing. So, it is critical here that any presentation in homilies or otherwise reflect this.

During this weekend, those present at each Mass will be asked to submit a Commitment Card (even if they are already involved in parish ministries or activities. A goal should be that *everyone* who is already involved in parish ministries *recommits* each year!). The overall idea here is spiritual renewal, recommitment, and making new commitments.

Think of Commitment weekend as the time when, for instance, a married couple would renew their wedding vows. It's like a wedding anniversary. And, being that our faith tells us we are not just individuals, but as individuals who are dynamically connected to the Christian community, we make and renew these commitments within the context of community - at the place where the individuals in the community gather, celebrate, and find their fullest identity (individually and corporately) - the Sunday Liturgy.

June 5/6: Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ: Follow-up Weekend

Readings: Genesis 14: 18-20; Psalm 110; 1 Cor. 11: 23-26; Luke 9: 11b-17.

Summary: Melchizedek, priest of God Most High, offers bread and wine as a blessing upon Abram. Jesus fulfills this offering, giving us his own body and blood under the forms of bread and wine. Thus is our hunger satisfied in abundance, as we make our pilgrim way to the heavenly banquet.

Liturgical Orientation:

This Sunday is often referred to as *Corpus Christi*. It has been extended to the calendar of the universal church since 1264. The 1969 reform of the calendar combined the observances of Corpus Christi and the Precious Blood into this one solemnity that celebrates the Lord's abiding presence with us in the gift of the Eucharist.

I. Genesis 14: 18-20. *Melchizedek brought out bread and wine.*

Melchizedek celebrates a covenant meal; Melchizedek's blessing extols the power of God who brings victory.

Psalm 110: *You are a priest forever, in the line of Melchizedek.*

II. 1 Cor. 11: 23-26. *For as often as you eat and drink, you proclaim the death of the Lord.*

The breaking of the bread is the sacrament of the unseen Presence, recalling the past death of the Lord and pledging future triumph. The Eucharist is celebrated by the Church until the Lord returns, when there will no longer be a need for his sacramental presence.

Gospel: Luke 9: 11b-17. *They all ate and were satisfied.*

Luke manifests the compassion of Jesus, and provides the Eucharistic meal as the model of self-sacrificing, compassionate love.

Stewardship Orientation:

This weekend is a mini version of the preceding weekend. It is an opportunity for those who were not ready or not present during Commitment weekend to make or renew their commitments.

Breaking Open the Word:

- * We celebrate the gift of Jesus to us, His Church, in the Eucharist. He gives us His body and blood as food for our journey, as medicine for our sinfulness, as the pledge and promise of life that will never end. How do we respond to so great a gift?
- * Living a Eucharistic life means living a life of service in community. How do I place my gifts at the service of the parish community? the neighborhood community?
- * What concrete steps am I willing to take to show my Christian living? Where are those places where I can develop and share my gifts by contributing to the building up of the body of Christ?
- * How can I use my gifts to be of service to my neighbor and the wider community for the sake of the kingdom?

Homilist's Notes:
