Spring, 2005

Time and Talent Renewal

HOMILY HELPS

For Parish Priests and Deacons

Stewards of God’s Gifts

The homiletic helps for each of the four weekends are inserted within this document on individual sheets, so as to be a handy weekly reference. Additionally, herein you will find:

3. A summary of diocesan norms that address lay witness talks.
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 year’s Stewardship Renewal of Time and Talent.

Saturday/Sunday, May 7/8:  
Stewardship Awareness Weekend  
(Mother’s Day)

Saturday/Sunday, May 21/22:  
Commitment Weekend  
(Most Holy Trinity)

Saturday/Sunday, May 14/15:  
Gifts Celebration Weekend  
(Pentecost)

Saturday/Sunday, May 28/29:  
Follow-Up Weekend  
(Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ; Memorial Day 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 church 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 our church community of faith.

In our diocese, for many years now, the renewal process takes place during a four week period. There are basic components to this process. (Our focus this Spring is on the time and talent components of stewardship renewal. There is a similar but not identical process for the renewal of financial resources that is articulated in our Fall Leadership Updates.) The annual theme (this year, “Stewards of God’s Gifts”) forms the framework for the entire process and reflection period. Here are integral pieces of the process for time and talent stewardship renewal:

1. **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 the gifts of time and talent, and the development, 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 as well as our current theme “Stewards of God’s Gifts,” 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.*)
2. Personal and Communal Celebration (Baptismal Call, Discipleship, Stewardship, Responsibility, Accountability)

All materials created 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 the shared gifts of the community! We invite people to celebrate God’s generosity (their giftedness) both as individuals and as a community (communal gifts). This celebration takes place at every gathering of the community at Mass on Gifts Celebration Weekend. The theme (this year, “Stewards of God’s Gifts”) forms the framework for the entire process and reflection period.

3. 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 not requests for money or for volunteers, but are stories of faith and conversion. Witness talks that follow the simple and basic pattern (see pages 20 & 37-38 of the Spring, 2005 Time and Talent Renewal Update) are most effective. (The use of Witness Talks best takes place sometime before people are asked to complete a Time and Talent Commitment form.) It is not uncommon that in some parishes here in our diocese, because of the noteworthy 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.

4. 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 time and talent renewal, this means a reflection on the ways in which we use our time and talent, a reorientation or adjustment that would better represent what we profess to believe at this point in our individual faith journeys. (This part of the process traditionally takes place leading up to and then fulfilled on Commitment Weekend.)

5. Public Commitments

The time and talent renewal process culminates in the individual person’s/family’s response in a communal setting at the weekend liturgy (Commitment Weekend). We invite people to make and renew Commitments in writing to the sharing of their gifts, particularly their gifts of time and talent in response to God’s generosity in their lives. Our focus is on using those gifts in the parish, but needs to consider all aspects of where we use our gifts (home, family, workplace, community and parish, and the world!).

The invitation to make or renew Commitments to parish ministries at this time does not conflict with any other commitment or recommitment ritual that may need to take place (for instance, for liturgical ministers), as the time and talent renewal period is for the coming year. It is not a recommitment to an entire term of a particular ministry (for instance, three years). Even though I may be involved in a ministry that has a three year term, I still should renew my commitment to that ministry and to my existing term each year during time and talent renewal.

This part of the renewal process takes place on Commitment Weekend and has a Follow-Up Weekend component to it.
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.
MAY 7/8, 2005

Seventh Sunday of Easter (Lectionary, 59)
Acts 1:12-14; Psalm 27; 1 Peter 4:13-16; John 17:1-11a

Stewardship Awareness Weekend
(Mother’s Day)

As we await the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost, parishioners are reminded to think about the many gifts that God has given to each of us, especially our gifts of time and talent, and the way we share and use those gifts with our family, our parish community, and the wider community. How will our faith be evident as we live as stewards of God’s gifts?

Acts 1:12-14: The church, gathered in prayer, awaits the coming of the Spirit who will empower them to continue the mission of Jesus in the world. We, too, await the celebration of the coming of the Spirit, bestowing on us a marvelous diversity of gifts, creating an even more wondrous unity to build up the body of Christ.

1 Peter 4:13-16: God’s Spirit rests upon us, and nothing can take that away. How do we live life joyously in the power of the Spirit? What are the concrete signs of the power of the Spirit at work in my life?

John 17:1-11a: The Father is glorified in Jesus. Jesus is glorified in his disciples. He has united them to Himself and transformed them into his likeness. The glory of the Son is also our glory as well. Jesus prays for those in the world - that they might remain faithful to the Word they have heard, seen, and believed. We, too, are called to remain faithful. How does our fidelity show itself as we use and care for God’s many gifts?

Notes/Reflections:

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MAY 14/15, 2005

Pentecost Sunday (Lectionary, 63)
Acts 2:1-11; Psalm 104; 1 Cor. 12:3b-7, 12-13; John 20:19-23

Stewardship Gifts (Ministry) Celebration Weekend

On this Pentecost, we celebrate in thanksgiving and gratitude the many diverse and unique gifts God has given to each individual in the community and to the community as a whole. While so many of these gifts are shared in the parish through ministries and activities, these gifts are meant to be shared in every aspect of a person’s life: family, workplace, community, parish, and the world. What a fitting way to celebrate Pentecost!

Acts 2:1-11: The experience of the upper room is certainly a formative event in the early community’s life. At Babel, men and women became confused by their own stubbornness of will, and now the Spirit ends the confusion and breaks down the barriers of language and nationality. The Holy Spirit comes upon everyone present...the Spirit instructs and is the driving force in the proclamation of the gospel. The Spirit gives strength and provides the gifts that unite us! Let us give thanks and celebrate!

1 Cor. 12:3b-7, 12-13: The Spirit bestowed on the church is manifest in a variety of ways, with a variety of gifts and talents. The plurality of gifts exist in order to support the unity of the body. We all form that one body, but build it up by placing the gifts of the Spirit, given to each of us, at the service of one another. The gifts and talents bestowed by the Spirit are for the good of all. What are the special gifts given to me? How do I place them at the service of the wider body? Or how do I hoard them? How am I a steward of God’s gifts?

John 20:19-23: Jesus sends his disciples out into the world. In the same way the Father has sent the Son, so now the Son sends his disciples. He sends them not to a place, but on a mission, to be the bearers of forgiveness and peace. They are to continue the work of Jesus in reconstructing the world toward the reign of God. How do my gifts and talents show that I am a bearer of peace and forgiveness?

Notes/Reflections:

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The Christian community is characterized by living the life of the Trinity: grace, peace, and fellowship. We are dynamically linked to each other. On this weekend, people are asked to make or renew their commitments to sharing their gifts with their families, in the workplace, in the community and parish, and in the world.

God’s name is written on our hearts, and our names are written in the very heart of God. The whole notion of something written tends to give it weight and significance. We are asked to make a public commitment or to renew that commitment to living the Christian life in community, by becoming stewards of God’s gifts and placing our gifts at the service of others.

**Exodus 34:4b-6, 8-9:** God, totally Other, is revealed as merciful and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness. Moses speaks of a God who forgives. It is this God, whose name is mercy, that enables us to build up his body.

**2 Cor. 13:11-13:** Paul admonishes his hearers that living in union with God—Father, Son, and Spirit, is the way to achieve the glory promised to the disciples of Jesus. It is out of love the Father sends the Son, in whom we find salvation and life. It is their Spirit that transforms us into adopted children, and His own temples. The characteristics of the Christian community are the very characteristics of the Trinity: grace, peace, and fellowship.

**John 3:16-18:** John presents not abstractions, but a concrete image: God so loved the world... The life of the Trinity is a life of love, placed entirely at the service of the world, being recreated in the very image of God, who is love. Our life in God is not meant to be hidden, but to be both seen and shared. Is it?

**Notes/Reflections:**

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We celebrate the gift of the Body and Blood of Christ to the Church, and our own participation in the Eucharist, and in the very life of God. This weekend is an opportunity for those who were not ready or not present last weekend to make/renew their commitment. We, the body of Christ, receive the body of Christ, to build up the body of Christ, that we might become the living body of Christ for the life of the world.

**Dt. 8: 2-3, 14b-16a:** Past events are recalled with great love - the favors God works for the people of Israel. To recall the past event was to make it present, and give the present the power needed to face the future. The manna stands as a concrete sign of God’s love, life-giving as the very word God had spoken to the chosen people.

**1 Cor. 10: 16-17:** In the bread that is broken and in the cup that is shared, the community is realized in our midst. The one bread and the one cup form us into one body. The unity symbolized in this one bread and one cup is meant to be realized in the lives of those celebrating the Eucharist in this present moment. How am I allowing that to happen?

**John 6: 51-18:** It is Jesus who leads into the mystery: manna was a bread that sustained the people of Israel. The bread that Jesus gives will reveal who He is and sustain us to life everlasting. We are projected into our future: we must seek this bread which brings about our life in Him, through our life with each other, leading into eternal life. Augustine reminds us that it is our own mystery that we celebrate: that we receive the body of Christ to make the body of Christ. How do I participate in the body of Christ? How am I a steward of God’s gifts as I become the Body of Christ?

**Notes/Reflections:**

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