

A Communication Vehicle of the Office of Parish Stewardship Diocese of Rockville Centre New York

Stewardship

A Way of Life

** Special Issue - December, 2010 **

Stay Awake!

A wise person once told me that if you try hard enough, you can connect anything. Well, you don't need to try that hard to connect Advent and Stewardship.

Advent challenges us to focus on doing something that we, as Americans in the year 2010, do not do very well... wait.

Think of all the things we wait for and how uncomfortable and seemingly unnatural that is. For a society that abhors waiting, we do an awful lot of it—though granted, not as much as in the past. We wait for the mail or a phone call; we wait for a friend or colleague to be ready, for test results or a webpage to load; we wait in traffic, in lines at stores, for parking spaces, “for Christ?”... yes, we wait for Christ.

God promised us that Jesus would come again on the last day and we will celebrate His coming with joy! However, we must also celebrate Christ here and now—that is our promise to God at Baptism and that is our life as Christian stewards.

It is easy to get caught up in the hustle and bustle of not only the holiday season, but of life in general. Many people joke that they are least likely to see something that is right in front of them! This is true for many of us. We “sleep-walk” through life.

In the Gospel reading of Matthew for the First Sunday of Advent, Jesus tells us to “stay awake... and be ready” for the coming of the Son of Man! Advent challenges us to listen for His voice in the

crowds and carolers at the mall; to see His face in the stranger who just snatched the last purple sweater; and, to recognize Him in our family when we visit. We can see and hear Christ in the cards we send and receive, the gatherings we attend and especially in the quiet of our hearts and minds when we lay down to rest. This state of being awake and ready culminates in the joyous celebration of Christmas.

What the seasons of Advent and Christmas have brought to the fore in our minds, is sustained through the spirituality and practice of stewardship. Stewardship challenges us to *remain* awake and ready. Every moment of every day is gratefully lived, conscious of our faith and our responsibility as Christian stewards. We are not only called to see and hear Christ in the everyday, but to be Christ in the everyday. Sound familiar?

We are His eyes, ears, voice, heart and His hands. Let us prepare well for this awesome gift of Christ that has been entrusted to us all.



In This Issue

- Stay Awake! (pg. 1)
- Home for Christmas (pg. 2)
- Best Practices for Faith Direct (pg. 2)
- Merry Christmas! (pg. 2)
- An Epiphany about Epiphany (pg. 3)
- New Year's Gatherings (back cover)



Home for Christmas



Christmas is one of those times when we see many parishioners who may only visit with us during certain seasons. As we prepare to welcome Jesus into our hearts and homes once again, we should also prepare to welcome our distant family members back to our parish. Here are some suggestions to get your creative juices flowing!

Give a little extra attention when planning your Christmas liturgy and choosing your bulletin articles. Use a tone in your writing that is invitational and welcoming. You might choose a few highlights from the year that show the exciting ways the shared gifts of the community are being used.

Communicate upcoming events and publicize your web page. When people visit, whether online or in person, invite feedback and encourage questions. Make information about registering at the parish or events for new families available and easy to find.

Create a welcoming environment, perhaps through a children's gift or something for everyone, a special card, a welcome note or packet, etc. Do what you do so well...even better!

This is a perfect opportunity to reach out to these parishioners and maybe, just maybe, you'll bring them home not just for Christmas, but for always!



Best Practices for Faith Direct!

Faith Direct, even at Christmas? You bet!! Those who may have difficulty worshipping with you on a regular basis for whatever reason, may wish to share their resources with you on a regular basis. What a nice fit!!

Some ideas to consider:

- Place a Faith Direct enrollment form and Q & A in the weekend bulletin.
- Double check that your posters are visible and in good condition.
- Include a quick announcement regarding Faith Direct at all Masses.
- Restock your parish brochure racks with enrollment information.
- Include information for enrollment with your year-end tax statement to contributing parishioners!

If you need any assistance with Faith Direct, please give us a call at 516-379-4055 x3 or email stewardship@drvc.org.

FAITH DIRECT®
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May we conclude our Advent preparations with a joy-filled celebration of God with us - Emmanuel.

A very Merry Christmas to you and yours and a happy, healthy, and "awake" New Year!



An Epiphany about Epiphany



If we define, or at least check the thesaurus, the word journey is synonymous with "traveling around," "exploration," "discovery," "adventure," "voyaging." These are active words. On our active journey as stewards of our faith, we try to remain conscious. Conscious of planned, Christ-centered and responsible decisions. This way of living requires us, at times, to pause-reflect-and then act.

Every time we share our gifts out of love and gratitude to God, God receives, uses and returns them to us as the living Jesus.

As we continue the journey after Christmas and honoring Mary on January 1, we should pause momentarily and celebrate another journey. As scripture enlightens us, three travelers from the east

with only a star as their guide set out to discover and worship the Messiah. They brought gifts as a sign of recognition and gratitude for what God had given them. We learn from these expressions of giving.

Epiphany - "to manifest," "to show," "to reveal." The Feast of the Epiphany celebrates God's revelation to us in Jesus. And like the Magi, we too mark this revelation by the sharing of gifts. God gives us Jesus, we journey to find and embrace Jesus and when we do we share gifts out of gratitude for all God has done. **As Christian stewards, the Epiphany never ends.**

Let's journey further.

Stewardship teaches us that we are to receive God's gifts gratefully, share them generously and return them with increase. God repeatedly gives us the ultimate example! Every time we share our gifts out of love and gratitude to God, God receives, shares and returns them to us as the

living Jesus. Think about it. Bread and wine begin as gifts of wheat and grapes. Through the work of our hands (also gifted by God) they become bread and wine that we offer back to God as gift. We pray that these gifts are accepted. They are not only accepted, but then transformed and given back to us with uncountable increase. God, once again, gives us Jesus.

As Christian stewards, the Epiphany never ends.

When we participate in ministry, we use the gifts God has given us. We offer our time and talents as gift to God. Those gifts are accepted and returned to us as Jesus. This time through the use of our hands, heart and voice we bring the love of Jesus to whom we minister. In doing so, Christ is revealed to us as well in those who receive.

Because we journey as conscious stewards, the revelation of God and the Kingdom are constantly available to us. We must pause and take the time to reflect and use these moments to journey forward.

Speaking of journeying forward, our Christmas season will end shortly with the Baptism of Our Lord-the beginning of Jesus' public ministry. What a time for Christian stewards to pause-reflect-and then-act!





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CONNECTIONS

Stewardship affects all aspects of what we say and do as Church.

New Year Leadership Gatherings!

Wednesday
February 2, 2011
1:00 pm - 3:00 pm
Christ the King, Commack
Parish Center
Lunch will be served!

Friday
February 4, 2011
1:00 pm - 3:00 pm
St. Joseph, Garden City
St. Agnes Room
Lunch will be served!

Don't forget to R.S.V.P. 516-379-4055 X3
(Just in case it snows!)

Christ has no body now but yours. No hands, no feet on earth but yours. Yours are the eyes through which He looks compassion on this world. Christ has no body now on earth but yours. - St. Teresa of Avila

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