

Stewardship: A Disciple's Response Summary

Written By

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Preface

- When we accept our lives as gifts, the Holy Spirit can use us as instruments to spread the Gospel.
- Reflects the Easter message – stewardship always starts with a personal experience of the Risen Christ.
- Good stewards live with joy and gratitude for the blessings they have received and returns those gifts with increase.
- The Eucharist is the center and source of strength to be a disciple of Jesus Christ.

Introduction

- Pastoral letter stresses:
 1. Mature disciples make a conscious decision to follow Jesus no matter the cost to themselves.
 2. Conversion of heart and mind is not a single action, but a number of actions over a life time.
 3. Stewardship is an expression of discipleship – grateful and generous out of love for God and others.
- Our culture often contradicts our Christian values: materialism, relativism, hedonism, individualism, consumerism.
- Many Catholics are generous, but not always in proportion to what they possess, including money.
- Living as a steward involves collaborating with God in the work of creation and cooperating with God in the work of redemption.

The Call

- Each of us must discern, accept and live joyfully in the role that God calls us to live.
- Every human life is a unique, personal vocation.
- Jesus' call is urgent. He does not tell us to follow Him in the future, but in the here and now, in the current moment and in our current circumstances.
- Discipleship is both a privilege and a challenge, it is not a comfortable way of life, putting aside our craving for domination, possession and control.

Jesus' Way

- The Beatitudes and Sermon on the Mount prescribe the disciple lifestyle (Mt. 5:3 – 7:27).
- Stewardship involves trust and accountability, not only for our own lives, but the lives of others.
- Each person will be measured by his or her portion of gifts entrusted to them. You will be judged according to what you did with what you were given.
- Stewards are happy people who have found the meaning and purpose of living – “praise, revere and serve God.”
- Stewardship also involves the “earthly service” to others.

Living As A Steward

- God wants us to be his collaborators in the work of creation, in collaboration with the Holy Spirit.
- Work is a fundamental aspect of the human vocation, it is required for responsible stewardship of the world.
- Profound reverence for the gift of life, our own life and the lives of others.
- Active stewardship of the ecology – cultivating a heightened sense of human interdependence and solidarity.
- Set aside time for prayer, reading Scripture, Sacraments and attending Mass.

Stewards of the Church

- Use our gifts to serve our community of Faith.
- Share in the work of Evangelization.
- Parents must be models of stewardship within their homes.
- Parishes must use sound business practices, including church finances.
- Parishioners must accept responsibility for their parishes and contribute generously.
- Stewardship should extend to other local churches and to the universal Church.

- The Eucharist is the great sign and agent of expansive communion of charity.

The Christian Steward

- The first requirement is to be trustworthy.
- Christian stewards are generous out of love as well as duty.
- After Jesus, the Blessed Virgin Mary teaches the meaning of discipleship and stewardship.

Appendix I

- Stewardship – gratefully receiving God’s gifts, cultivating them responsibly and returning with increase.
- Disciple As Steward - conscious lifestyle, experiencing conversion of heart, recognizing God as the source for all things.
- Steward of Vocation – each one of us is called to carry out a role in the divine plan.
- Steward of the Church – we are not passive beneficiaries, we are “God’s co-workers”.
- Obstacles to Stewardship – secular culture contradicts religious conviction, selfishness and greed.
- A Steward’s Way – the life of a Christian steward models Jesus. After Jesus, we look to Mary.

Appendix II

- God has entrusted humanity with the universe He created.
- This applies to everything: personal talents/abilities, the environment, natural resources, economic order, government affairs and outer space.
- Successful parish stewardship involves the personal stewardship of many people, stewardship education and trust that it will work.
- Stewardship Education:
 - 1) Should be a major priority for every parish and diocese.
 - 2) Should be a life-long process of study, prayer, reflection and action.
 - 3) Should be supported by the local bishop.
 - 4) Involves collaborative leadership with the bishop, stewardship committees should be developed.
 - 5) No single approach fits all parishes. Education should include adults, youth and children.
- Stewardship and Development:
 - 1) Basic elements of the development program: spiritually-based plan with mission statements, goals and priorities; communication plan on how to communicate; fund-raising plan based on stewardship education.
 - 2) Principles for Giving – how much one gives is based on prayerful discernment of the gifts they have been given; giving from one’s “first fruits” and not from what is “left-over” without counting the cost. Voluntary contribution of time, talent and treasure.
 - 3) Annual Giving – annual giving through “commitment Sundays” (in conjunction with annual parish stewardship renewal process).
 - 4) Capital campaign – carefully planned, well-organized, needs-based program designed to raise a substantial amount of money in a specific time frame. Families invited to make multi-year financial commitments.
 - 5) Planned Giving – donors transfer capital assets to a qualified religious, educational or charitable organization, typically through a bequest provision in a will.
- Stewardship Promotion:
 - 1) Personal Witness – individuals tell their own personal conversion stories.
 - 2) Commitment of Leadership – bishop and pastor support is required.
 - 3) Hospitality, Evangelization and Outreach – inspire others to participate in parish ministries.
 - 4) Communication and Education – use all mediums available, seek assistance of qualified professionals.
 - 5) Recruiting and Training – recruit parish volunteers to participate in parish ministries.
 - 6) Stewardship of Treasure – ask Catholics to make financial contributions that are planned, proportionate and sacrificial.
 - 7) Accountability – prepare annual parish stewardship report and communicate to all parishioners.
- Key Concepts:
 - 1) Fund Raising – a very specific set of activities designed to raise money to support a goal, unlike stewardship which includes all aspects of a person’s life.
 - 2) Philanthropy – similar to the concept of stewardship (actions to benefit society) less the prayer component of stewardship.
 - 3) Treasure – stewardship is based on maximum giving. Challenges us to be good stewards not only in how much we give away, but what we do with all our resources.