

FAITH SHARING

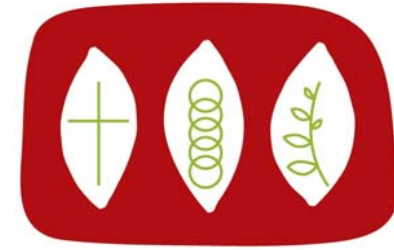
CONVERSATION THAT TRANSFORMS US

In this ever-changing, ever-expanding global world, our awareness that each person has an unique but limited experience continues to grow. Without conversation, honest and respectful dialogue, we have only our own truth. Conversation can call us out of ourselves to hear and consider the points of view and experiences of others.

When Christians gather to share faith and study the scriptures, they are gathering together as church. Jesus promised to be with us wherever two or more gather in his name.

Faith sharing is dynamic and relational. It requires participants to respect and honor one another. As a group, talk about what you value in how participants treat one another. Your group may suggest principles such as:

- ** Respect everyone. Each of us has his or her own unique experience that can contribute to the fuller truth the group sees collectively.
- ** Listen intently; pay attention to others' efforts to communicate their own story. Listening attentively is an act of respect.
- ** Communicate your experience; put it into words, share it with the group. Each must accept responsibility of contributing. Everyone's experience will be richer for it.
- ** Always ask questions when others' contributions do not make sense to you. Restate what you think you heard but ask for affirmation or clarification.
- ** Be comfortable with silent times; do not talk just to fill up quiet space.
- ** Keep conversations confidential. What is said in the room—stays in the room. When people share at a personal level, trust is essential.



ADVANCING
THE MISSION

Small Faith Sharing Group Five Week Program

for the
Stewardship Campaign:
Advancing the Mission

WEEK FIVE COMMITMENT

My Pledge of Prayer, Service, and Sharing

Participant's Guide

GENERAL FACILITATOR NOTES

Prepare for the meeting; calculate a time frame to follow. Have details set and ready ahead of the appointed gathering time.

Welcome everyone at the door. Distribute nametags if needed.

If someone is missing from your session—arrange for a quick check in and inform the rest of the group.

Arrange seating so that everyone can see each other easily.

Encourage people to stay with the group—discourage looking ahead.

Relax, enjoy one another, and let the Spirit do its work!

MATERIALS NEEDED

Bible
CD Player/Boom Box
Candle/Matches
Nametags, markers
Individual taper candles, one for each participant
Music Selections

(borrow from the Parish Media Center, the Choir Director, the Worship Committee, or the Faith Formation Staff)

SUGGESTED MUSIC

The Summons – John Bell, GIA Publications

What Return Shall We Make – Vince Ambrosetti
International Liturgy Publications.

Servant Song – Donna Marie McGargill, OSM, OCP Publications

Center of My Life – Paul Inwood, OCP Publications

Lord, You Give the Great Commission – Jeffrey Rowthorn
Hope Publishing

SUGGESTED READING

Clements, C. Justin, *Stewardship: A Parish Handbook*. Liguori, 2000. See www.liguori.org

Heriot, Peter J., ed., *Catholic Social Teaching: Our Best Kept Secret*. Orbis Books, 1985. See orbisbooks.com

Colleen Smith, *Catholic Stewardship: Sharing God's Gifts*. Our Sunday Visitor, 2001. See www.osv.com

Ron Rolheiser, *Against an Infinite Horizon: The Finger of God in our Everyday Lives*. Crossroads Publishing Company, 1995. See www.cpcbooks.com

Commitment

My Pledge of Prayer, Service, and Sharing
Week Five of a Five Week Series

developed for the
Stewardship Campaign:
Advancing the Mission



Authored by Jackie Staley for the
Department of Stewardship & Pastoral Services
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SENDING FORTH AND CLOSING PRAYER

*Play some prayerful music before the closing prayer.
Spend a few moments of silence in thanksgiving for all the
goodness shared and enjoyed together.*

Distribute the tapers. Light each other's taper from the prayer candle.

- Leader We have spent five weeks together praying and sharing our beliefs and values about the challenge of Christian stewardship as disciples of Jesus.
This closing prayer is our commitment to take the next steps as a family, as individuals.
- Side I Gracious and loving God, you call us to be disciples of your Son Jesus and good stewards of all your gifts.
- Side II Open our minds and hearts to a greater awareness and appreciation of your countless blessings.
- Side I Transform us through the power of your Spirit to nurture a Stewardship way of life that is marked by faith-filled prayer, service to our neighbor and generous sharing.
- Side II Teach us to be faithful stewards of your gifts. With Mary's help, may we return ten-fold the gifts entrusted to us.
- All Bless our stewardship campaign efforts with an ever deepening devotion to prayer, a strengthening of our commitment to service, and an intensifying pledge of generosity as we work to advance the mission for our generation and all to come.
- Leader We pray through Christ our Lord
- All Amen!

Be Faithful

Week Five

Commitment *My Pledge of Prayer, Service, and Sharing*

Display a Bible and a candle, symbols of Christian commitment.

Open the Bible to Psalm 37.

Have enough tapers on the table — one for each of the members of the group.



INTRODUCTION

read by the leader as candle is lit

Jesus yearned that his disciples follow him, in his work with others, in his life with the Father. The Word of God in Sacred Scripture guides our understanding of how to follow Jesus.

The candle, long a sign of the light of Christ, is a committing our lives to spreading the light of God's Good News!

OPENING PRAYER

Psalm 37:3-6; 26; 28

(All pause to recall the presence of God)

- Leader Commit your way to the Lord!
- All Commit your way to the Lord!
- Reader I Trust in the Lord and do good that you may dwell in the land and live secure.
Commit your way to the Lord!
- Reader II Find your delight in the Lord who will give you your heart's desire.
Commit your way to the Lord!
- Reader III Commit your way to the Lord; trust that God will act, and make your integrity shine like the dawn. Commit your way to the Lord!
- Reader IV Neither in my youth, nor now in old age have I ever seen the just abandoned or their children begging bread?
Commit your way to the Lord!
- Reader V The just always lend generously and their children become a blessing.
Commit your way to the Lord!
- All Commit your way to the Lord!

FAITH IN ACTION

1. Spend time in prayer each day for a week, asking God for the wisdom and grace to know how you and your family should respond as Christian disciples. Use some of the scripture references used throughout these faith sharing weeks.
2. List the elements of stewardship: prayer, service and sharing. Under each element, decide what you are already doing and what you will be able to commit to for the future. Under sharing, include the Green Bay Diocese. We have a special opportunity by responding in solidarity with Catholics throughout the Diocese of Green Bay with the Stewardship Campaign: *Advancing the Mission*.



FAITH SHARING

1. Name your beliefs and values connected to charitable giving that you want to pass on to your children, grandchildren, or other family members.
2. What has been your plan to transmit those beliefs and values?
3. What will it cost you in terms of personal sacrifice and hardship to be an effective Christian steward of God's gifts? What is your next step to work towards your goal?
4. What means are available to help you reach your stewardship goal?



A READING

excerpted from the
U.S. Catholic Conference of Bishops' Pastoral Letter
"Stewardship: A Disciple's Response" (1992)

The life of a Christian steward, lived in imitation of the life of Christ, is challenging, even difficult in many ways; but both here and hereafter it is charged with intense joy. Like Paul, the good steward is able to say, "I am filled because of all our affliction."
(2 Corinthians 7:4)

excerpted from the National Catholic Stewardship Council's
*Stewardship: Disciples Respond -
A Practical Guide for Pastoral Leaders* (1997)

Stewardship, in its simplest terms, asks us to put God's priorities before our own. Good stewards give the first portion of their gifts of time, talent, and treasure to the Lord's work in gratitude for God's many blessings. This practice of giving of our "first fruits" incorporates the aspect of sacrificial giving.

I say to you, this poor widow put in more than all the other contributors to the temple treasury. For they have all contributed from their surplus wealth, but she, from her poverty, has contributed all she had, her whole livelihood.
Mark 12:43-44

**God does not judge us by how much we give,
but by how faithful we are in making the gift.**

A REFLECTION

“God does not judge us by how much we give, but by how faithful we are in making the gift.”

Dan and Mary like their parish where their family attends most weekends. Dan’s job has been steady, but recent rumors of cutbacks have left him uneasy. The family finances have been stable, but the future is his concern. Dan and Mary have discussed money values with their children, such as buying out of need rather than want, sharing with others, and giving some of their allowance to the church.

But they’re concerned about their own sacrificial giving to the church and other charities they value.

How should they balance budget concerns with their desire to be a family that values generosity?

Their discussion is typical. All of us who value generosity need to sit down and “do the math.” But it’s the context that makes the difference.

For the past five weeks, we have discussed stewardship in the context of being good stewards of prayer, service and sharing, recognizing that everything we have and are is a gift from God for us to use, to protect and to develop. With that foundation, we turn to making the actual commitment to living that kind of life.

When we were baptized and confirmed, we committed ourselves to follow Jesus, to be his disciples. Now, in the context of the broad, spiritual understanding of stewardship, we are asked to make a commitment to *stewardship as a way of life*.

That *way of life* includes pledging ourselves to daily prayer, to service of others and to sharing of the treasure that we enjoy. What amount of our budget can we offer to God through our parish and other charities?

We have a special opportunity by responding to the Diocese of Green Bay’s Stewardship Campaign: *Advancing the Mission*.

We believe that God is faithful to us. Let us be faithful to God in pledging from the gifts that God has given us.

