

Children and Youth as Lay Witnesses

Helpful suggestions for using children to present the stewardship message to other children and adults in the form of a lay witness talk or dialogue.

Just as adult lay witness testimony is one of the most effective: means of-presenting the stewardship message, to he adults of he parish, a well-done children's lay witness talk can ` be an effective tool in presenting the stewardship message to the parish., Such a talk should be givers by a young person who is already practicing stewardship can a cad's level in his or her own life; The talk, which is usually given after the homily, should- be directed to the others in the parish as a weans ,of inspiring them to became cheerful givers of their time, talent and treasure. **This talk should be done in addition to the adult lay witness talk, on a separate weekend.**

Tips in Choosing a Child as Lay Witness

- Invite a child who is already active in practicing stewardship in the parish. Children who are altar servers, youth ushers, youth lectors, nursery aides, etc., often show an understanding of stewardship in their lives.
- The child should be someone who attends Mass regularly with his or her family. Often the entire family is involved in stewardship on bath a parish and community level.
- Invite a child who is mature, articulate and at ease in front of large groups.
- The child should be willing to work with the pastor or his designate in preparing the stewardship talk.

Consider a Dialogue or an Interview Rather Than a Talk

Even the most articulate and mature child can sometimes freeze in front of a large congregation at a weekend Mass. To make the child's testimony more effective, consider the following suggestions.

- Invite the children of the parish to come forward and gather around the pastor (or another appropriate adult who is comfortable with children) and the child lay witness. Now the child who is doing the lay witness talk is speaking to a much smaller congregation of peers.
- In parishes that do a children's Liturgy of the Word (separate from the adult Liturgy of the Word), the child's lay witness presentation should take, place at that gathering.

Children and Youth as Lay Witnesses (continued)

- Have the pastor (or another adult who relates to children) introduce the lay witness to the group. He may want to include a little information on the child's family. Many of the children may already know the lay witness, but some may not.
- Using a dialogue format, have the pastor (or other adult) "interview" the lay witness with regard to his or her practice of stewardship. Questions should cover all three aspects of stewardship - time, talent and treasure. The child should be given a copy of the questions and ample time to prepare **answers from his or her own experiences well** ahead of time. Schedule a time with the pastor (or adult interviewer) to actually rehearse the program.

Some Sample Questions for a Child's Lay Witness Interview

- Billy, we have been doing stewardship efforts here at St. _____ for many years. I know you have watched the adults come up here and talk about stewardship. What do you think stewardship is all about?
- If stewardship is really all about "thanking" God for all the wonderful things God has given to us, what are some ways you use your time to thank God?
- We are reminded that all that we have and all that we are all gifts from God. God gives everyone special talents - that's just how God makes us, with special talents. Billy, what are some of the special talents that God has given you?
- How do you use those talents here at St. _____ as a part of stewardship? How do you use your talents in the community?
- When you share your gifts of time and talent with everybody here at Church, how does that make you feel?
- In stewardship; we are told that our money (or treasure) is one part of the many gifts God has given us. If you earn money from doing chores or an allowance, do you feel a part of it should be given back to God in thanksgiving? Have you ever given a part of your money back to God in thanksgiving? Or are you planning to do this?
- Billy, you seem to really enjoy living as a good steward of God's many gifts. Do you have anything more you would like to say to your friends? How would you encourage them to get started in stewardship?

Children and Youth as Lay Witnesses (continued)

The pastor (or other adult interviewer) will help guide and direct the lay witness testimony. Using this format, the child won't have to worry about what comes next. He or she can speak from the heart in a relaxed and comfortable manner.

At the conclusion of the dialogue, the pastor should thank the lay witness for sharing his or her thoughts on stewardship and encourage all the children to think about their own special gifts and talents and how they might use them to serve God and one another.

Tell the children that they will have an opportunity, just like the adults, to fill out an intention card on Intention Sunday. Explain that those children who do wish to make stewardship a way of life, and who fill out an intention card, will soon thereafter receive a box of envelopes. The envelopes will have a place for them to write down those special things they do each week to thank God for everything they have been given. Children always have time and talent to share with others as a way of thanking God, and many children have treasure to share as well.