
A Stewardship Thought for Parents (and Grandparents, too):

Parents can teach stewardship by teaching children to share toys. They can also encourage their children to help others in their own small ways. They can be brought along to help in a soup kitchen or visit an elderly person. Teenagers can serve in parish ministries, be peer counselors at school or on a community hotline. Let them help choose the local charities you support. Teens (and children) should also be encouraged to adopt the “tithing” concept at an early age.



KEEPING THE STEWARDSHIP MESSAGE ALIVE

Parishes frequently ask the question, “Now that we have begun the stewardship education process, how do we keep the message alive?” There are many methods, and each parish must decide which method works best in their unique situation. Below are some suggestions gleaned from parishes here in the Diocese of Saginaw and across the country. Try as many as possible ... see what works for you

✦ **Tape homilies** and lay witness presentations that are part of the stewardship education process. Copies of the taped and written materials can be put into packets to give to new members of the parish.

✦ **Tape all homilies** – Establish a “circuit” to share the messages with parishioners who are shut-ins.

✦ **Shut-ins are Stewards, too** – Invite those who are no longer able to come to church (elderly, health challenged, etc.) to make a commitment of time and talent, such as being part of the prayer line, writing letters for specific causes, etc. – be creative! Help them feel connected to the parish, give them special envelopes with space to record their gifts of time and talent even if they are unable to give of treasure.

✦ **Encourage recycling programs** - Cite statistics that make people aware of the amount of waste we produce each year; stress the importance of being good stewards of the environment.

✦ **Bulletin** – What message is your bulletin giving? Are there reports of time and talent as well as treasure? If visitors read it, would they know that you are a parish committed to holistic stewardship?

✦ **Accountability** – Current research indicates that accountability is important to donors. A monthly list in the bulletin of all parish expenses over a certain dollar amount will help parishioners stay aware of how their gifts of treasure are used.

✦ **Children’s Treasure Gifts** – keep them separate. Later, as part of a Youth Mass, invite the young people to choose how their gifts will be used. It is best to suggest three or four options for voting.

✦ **Finding Talents** – Hold workshops to help parishioners discern their gifts and talents prior to asking them for time and talent commitments.

✦ **Small Group Stewardship** – Consider evening stewardship retreats for specific groups such as families, engaged couples or newlyweds, teens, children preparing to receive the sacraments, etc.

✦ **Health Fair for Seniors** – Possible speakers: volunteer doctors and nurses who could also do simple check-ups such as blood pressure and cholesterol screening; local police and fire people discussing home safety and security; people from the Council on Aging, Social Security, etc. ... there are many options to assist older parishioners.

✦ **15 minutes of Time** – Ask children to give 15 minutes in service to another, write down what they did, and turn it in. Read some as part of a Homily of Stewardship, or publish in the parish newsletter. Conduct the same project with adults.

✦ **Un-served Needs** – Conduct a survey to determine if there are needs in the parish that are not being served with current ministries; also include the surrounding community.

✦ **Stewardship Welcoming** – Introduce stewardship to new parishioners as part of their welcoming kit. Let the newcomers know what services the parish has to offer, how the parish practices stewardship within its faith family, not just how the parishioners practice stewardship. Don’t let the newcomer’s first introduction to stewardship be the receipt of their parish envelopes.

“Spread love everywhere you go: first of all in your own house. Give love to your children, to your spouse, to a next-door neighbor ... let no one ever come to you without leaving better and happier. Be the living expression of God’s kindness: kindness in your face, kindness in your eyes, kindness in your smile, kindness in your warm greeting.” ~ Mother Teresa

We need to hear stories of people who experience the joy and happiness of being a good steward. Here are examples of God working through people just like us!

Caught in The Act of Good Stewardship!

This little story comes from the Diocese of Mobile in Alabama, author anonymous.

Brownie Crumbs

Mrs. Baughman was my 6th grade Sunday school teacher. One morning she brought a pan of brownies to our class. As the goodies sat by her chair, she gave each child a slip of paper marked with a household expense: mortgage payment, utility bill, phone bill, entertainment, etc.

My slip had a car payment. Before long, Mrs. Baughman picked up the tray of brownies and began naming the expenses written on the papers. As we gave her our expenses, she redeemed each one with a brownie.

"Car payment" she announced. I jumped up to get my brownie from the pan. Finally, the last brownie had disappeared.

But one boy named Donald still held his unredeemed slip. "God," called Mrs. Baughman. Donald came forward hoping the teacher had one more brownie hidden somewhere.

With a knife Mrs. Baughman scraped the crumbs from the bottom of the pan into Donald's napkin. He got a pretty raw deal, I thought, just crumbs.

"The brownies represent your money", the teacher explained to us. "If you don't give God his share right away, He probably won't get anything except maybe the crumbs."

I never forgot that illustration, the day my friend Donald got only the brownie crumbs. Even as a child, I learned that God should have the first right to everything I have.

In the years since Mrs. Baughman's class I have struggled with giving and priorities, but whenever I recall the "Crummy Sunday School Lesson," I know who should and must always come first in my life!

Ponderable: It's Human Nature:
we all want to make a difference.

Sometimes the little email messages we get are worth passing on to others. Here's an example of living good stewardship, in living as a disciple of Jesus:

An Important Lesson – The Cleaning Lady

"During my second month of college, our professor gave us a pop quiz. I was a conscientious student and breezed through the questions until I read the last one: "What is the first name of the woman who cleans the school?"

Surely this was some kind of joke. I had seen the cleaning woman several times. She was tall, dark-haired, and much older than me. How would I know her name? I handed in my paper, leaving the last question blank. Just before class ended, one student asked if the last question would count toward our quiz grade.

"Absolutely," said the professor. "In your careers, you will meet many people. All are significant. They deserve your attention and care, even if all you do is smile and say 'hello'." I've never forgotten that lesson. I also learned her name was Dorothy!"

2nd Important Lesson – A Pick Up In The Rain

One night at 11:30 PM an older African-American woman was standing on the side of an Alabama road trying to endure a lashing rainstorm. Her car had broken down and she desperately needed a ride. Soaking wet, she decided to flag down the next car. A young white man stopped to help her, generally unheard of in those conflict-filled '60's. The man took her to safety, helped her get assistance and put her into a taxicab. She seemed in a big hurry, but wrote down his address and thanked him.

Seven days went by and a knock came on the man's door. To his surprise, a giant console color TV was delivered to his home. A special note was attached ... it read: "Thank you so much for assisting me on the highway the other night. The rain drenched not only my clothes but also my spirits. Then you came along. Because of you, I was able to make it to my dying husband's bedside just before he passed away. God bless you for helping me and unselfishly serving others." It was signed: "Sincerely, Mrs. Nat King Cole."

Why Not Stewardship for Children? Young parents never seem to miss Johnny or Janie's soccer game or music lesson, why don't they bring them to church? We need to help parents see the necessity of a strong, religious upbringing for youngsters. Children learn seat belts and recycling easily – why not stewardship?
