



STEWARDSHIP

RENEWAL

*A
Journey
in
Faith*

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Foreword

STEWARDSHIP: A JOURNEY IN FAITH (hereafter, **A JOURNEY IN FAITH**) was prepared as a collaborative effort by members of the International Catholic Stewardship Council, Region V. The producers of this work are Stewardship and Development Directors in Dioceses and Archdioceses in a five state area; Alabama, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi and Tennessee.

It is a stewardship education guide and manual to be used as a follow-up to its precursor, **TEACH ME, O LORD, YOUR WAYS**. This guidebook refers frequently to **TEACH ME, O LORD, YOUR WAYS** which contains all basics of beginning stewardship education in a parish and is to be used as a reference.

STEWARDSHIP: A JOURNEY IN FAITH cannot be used independently without extensive adaptation. This model's format is fashioned much like the previous model **TEACH ME, O LORD, YOUR WAYS**. It includes the following educational materials and communication tools which will revisit the three components of Total Stewardship; Stewardship of Prayer, Stewardship of Ministry and Stewardship of Finance:

- *Instructions for using the manual*
- *An introductory stewardship article*
- *Brochures*
- *Commitment cards*
- *Bulletin articles*
- *Sample pastor's letters*
- *Thank-you letters*

In the event you are just beginning stewardship education and formation in your parish, you will want to start the process with the manual **TEACH ME, O LORD, YOUR WAYS** and then follow-up with **A JOURNEY IN FAITH**.

TEACH ME, O LORD, YOUR WAYS contains all basics for beginning stewardship in a parish:

- *Forming a Stewardship Committee*
- *How to Select Stewardship Committee Members*
- *Duties of A Stewardship Committee*
- *Components of a Successful Stewardship Effort*
- *Homily Outline*
- *Tips for the Lay Presenter*
- *Stewardship Resources*

To obtain a copy of **TEACH ME, O LORD, YOUR WAYS**, please contact your diocesan Office of Development.

We hope these materials will help as you go about encouraging your parishioners to live Stewardship as a Way of Life.

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A. GATHER A STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE

Note: See Teach Me, O Lord, Your Ways, pages 6, 7, & 8.

B. REVIEW THE CONTENTS OF THE MANUAL. YOU WILL FIND:

1. Bulletin Articles (*Introductory plus Prayer, Ministry, Finance*)
2. Printed Brochures & Commitment Cards
(PRAYER/MINISTRY/FINANCE)
3. Pastor's letters (PRAYER/MINISTRY/FINANCE)
Note: The letters contained herein are samples. They can be reworded to suit the pastor's writing style.
4. Pastor's thank you letters (PRAYER/MINISTRY/FINANCE)

C. GATHER MATERIALS NEEDED

1. Updated parish census.
2. Letterheads and envelopes in sufficient quantities to complete mailings for each stewardship education phase.
3. Prayer, ministry and finance brochures and commitment cards or photocopies of same.
4. Photocopies of bulletin articles to place in Sunday bulletin.
(PRAYER/MINISTRY/FINANCE)
5. Stamps or postage for mailings.
6. Response envelopes for commitment cards. (Optional but very effective.)

D. ESTABLISH A TIME LINE FOR EACH EDUCATION PHASE,

STICK TO IT! (PRAYER/MINISTRY/FINANCE)

Each phase should have a designated Commitment Weekend and work should begin at least three to four weeks before pulpit phase.

E. HOLD A PLANNING MEETING TO ASSIGN RESPONSIBILITIES.

1. Order brochures (*Brochures should be ordered at least six weeks prior to mailing. Printers normally need that much lead time.*)
2. Prepare letters
3. Address envelopes
4. Stuff envelopes with Pastor's letter, brochures, commitment cards and response envelopes. (*response envelopes optional*)

USE THE TOOLS WISELY

It would be helpful to view the contents of the manual as tools to use in a marketing campaign of Gospel teachings with the goal being to foster conversions to the call of discipleship.

5. Place bulletin articles in bulletin on appropriate weekend.
6. Recruit lay presenters to give witness on how Stewardship of Prayer, Ministry or Finance has helped them live out their faith as disciples of Christ. Real life testimonies are very effective. (*Refer to page 37 & 38 - Teach Me, O Lord, Your Ways.*)
7. Have pastor prepare his homily. (*Refer to page 24-36 - Teach Me, O Lord, Your Ways.*)
8. Establish a follow-up committee to send thank you letters to everyone who turns in a commitment card and to make personal contact with ministry volunteers.

IMPLEMENTATION OF STEWARDSHIP EDUCATION MODEL

This procedure will apply when introducing each stewardship component: Prayer, Ministry and Finance.

THREE WEEKENDS PRIOR TO COMMITMENT WEEKEND

- Place Introductory article, “Stewardship, A Journey in Faith” as an insert in the weekend bulletins.

Note: Someone (pastor, commentator) should make an announcement to the people attending all Masses. Suggested announcement: “This weekend when you take the bulletin home you will find an article on stewardship. I urge you to read this article and give it some thought. It will serve as background information and explain the letters you will soon receive and presentations from the pulpit that you will soon hear as we renew our commitment to stewardship as a way of life in (name your parish).”

TWO WEEKENDS PRIOR TO COMMITMENT WEEKEND

- Pastor gives homily on stewardship (PRAYER/MINISTRY/FINANCE)

*On Monday (after Pastor’s homily weekend), the Pastor’s letter on prayer, ministry or finance is mailed to parishioners including brochure and commitment card. (Response envelope optional)

ONE WEEKEND PRIOR TO COMMITMENT WEEKEND

- Lay witness gives testimony on whatever phase of stewardship that is being introduced.
- Bulletin article corresponding with phase being introduced is placed in all bulletins.
- Announcement is made that the following weekend is Commitment Weekend. Ask for Commitment Cards to be returned either in the mail or in Offertory basket at weekend

Stewardship
Renewal
Timeline

Three Weekends prior:
INTRODUCTORY ARTICLE IN BULLETIN

Two Weekends prior:
HOMILY ON STEWARDSHIP

One Weekend prior:
LAY WITNESS TESTIMONY
BULLETIN ARTICLE CORRESPONDING TO PHASE
REMINDER ANNOUNCEMENT THAT
FOLLOWING WEEKEND IS
COMMITMENT WEEKEND

Commitment
Weekend

Follow Up

collections. It is appropriate to make a big “show” of Commitment Weekend through bulletin and pulpit announcements. Let people know that commitment cards are tangible signs of their solidarity with fellow parishioners and parish leaders who are working to make stewardship a way of life in the parish. Parishioner’s commitment is between them and God and no one will be monitoring or judging them.

FOLLOW-UP AFTER COMMITMENT WEEKEND

- After Commitment Weekend, all people who responded are marked off the list and sent a Thank You letter or card.
- When following up on ministry phase, contact new volunteers immediately. Welcome, affirm and activate them. This may also apply to ministry of prayer if someone indicates they want to join an established prayer group, Bible study group, etc.
- Follow-up on finance phase by sending envelopes to anyone who indicated they wanted to receive them.

*“...for the man who uses well
what he is given shall be given
more and he shall have
abundance.”*

MATTHEW 25:29

STEWARDSHIP: *A Journey in Faith*



Stewardship leaders throughout our nation and beyond embarked upon a magnificent, yet arduous, journey many years ago. In fact, the journey began in the early 1960's and was led by church leaders concerned with church support. The destination and end result of this quest is to transform and convert Catholics into 'good stewards of God's varied graces' (1Pt.4:10) and to begin living and practicing stewardship as a way of life as a means of living out their faith. What does living stewardship as a way of life entail? Simply put, it is nothing more than following the teachings of the Holy Bible. It means acknowledging that all we have and all we are and all we ever will be are gifts from our loving Creator. If we follow His teachings we know we are accountable to God and must answer to Him for the way we use what He has given to us. We, as believers, must tend our gifts responsibly and share them in justice and love with others. We cannot continue to live the myth that we are 'self-made' or that 'we built it from the ground up' or we 'earned it the old-fashioned way' or any of the other clichés that say to others, 'nobody ever gave me anything'. This is simply not true! Without a loving God, who or what would we be or have? Nobody! Nothing!

For stewardship leaders trying to teach the theology of stewardship, this journey has been one wild ride, fraught with peril...How could it not be so when living a life of stewardship virtually challenges us at the very core of our comfort zone?

We don't want to give up our television time, our pursuit of leisure activities and entertainment, our toys, our self-gratifications, indulgences and our financial assets. And we don't want to be challenged to do so. Our own United States Bishops in a 1992 pastoral letter on stewardship spoke of traditional Christian values being degraded and destroyed by destructive 'isms' like materialism, relativism, hedonism, individualism and consumerism. We truly have become a society which never has enough. We want bigger, better, more. We want to accumulate, amass, build, stockpile, hoard. We are constantly bombarded by the media with images of the 'good life'; cruises, cars, fashions, food stuffs, electronics, the ever evolving cell phones, jewelry, homes, home furnishings, lotteries and casinos. The list goes on *ad infinitum*. And if somehow we can't get what we want out of the plethora of offerings flashed before

our eyes day in and day out we feel deprived and inferior. We feel anxious and restless. So, is it any wonder that when stewardship calls us to give instead of to take that we tend to feel uncomfortable and guilty? Is it any wonder that stewardship leaders are looked at as unrealistic? Indeed, is it any different today than it was for the prophets and teachers of old that spread the Word of God? People simply do not want to be challenged to give up all of the aforementioned. People want to hang on to the 'gods' that they have created for themselves. Consequently, when stewardship leaders talk about sharing God's gifts in proportion to their blessings and in justice and love with others as a sign of gratitude to a loving God, it hits people where it hurts the most....their leisure time, possessions and pocketbooks.

Our reluctance is like that of the rich young man to whom Jesus said, "Sell all of your possessions and follow me". The young man, we imagine to have been quite an idealist, was taken with Jesus and filled with zeal and good intentions. But, when he realized what he was instructed to give up, he went away sad. We, truly, are no different! We don't want to leave our comfort zone. But, if we are to be good stewards and good disciples, ones who follow the teachings of Christ, we must listen to the teachings and live these teachings out in our lives if we ever hope to achieve everlasting life. And, more than likely if you are reading this article, you obtained it in church. If you were in church, chances are that you go there to establish a closer and more perfect relationship with the Lord. If you are striving for closeness to Him, then chances are your ultimate desire is to live with Him in heaven for eternity. And stewardship, my dear friends, is how you get there. Stewardship, as our U.S. Bishops defined it, is discipleship. Disciples follow the teachings of Christ. You can't get to heaven if you don't follow the teachings of Christ.

So there it is....stewardship is what you do when you say you believe in God. Stewardship is managing the gifts that God has bestowed upon you. Stewardship is the way you live out your faith.

Stewardship of Prayer calls us to use our gifts of time in prayer. In our fast paced world, prayer life usually takes a back seat to our earthly responsibilities and obligations. However, putting prayer ahead of our daily activities can pave the way for a smoother ride in life's journey. Countless testimonies give witness to how

STEWARDSHIP: *A Journey in Faith*

prayer has helped people through seemingly insurmountable obstacles in their lives. These testimonies also give witness to the peace and serenity that come into people's lives when prayer is a viable and constant part of their daily routine. We have said that stewardship is based on the teachings of the Lord. Look up the following: Mt. 7:7-8, Mt. 18:19-20, Rms. 12:12, Phil. 1:3-4, Phil. 4:6, Col. 4:2, 1Tim. 2:1-4, Jas. 5:13-16. See for yourself what the teachings of the Holy Bible say about prayer. A good steward follows the teachings of Christ.

Stewardship of Ministry calls us to use our talents to serve others. Our talents are gifts from God. Really think about that! All we need to do is look around and see for ourselves how each person we know is so uniquely different. While some people are great cooks, for instance, some people can't boil a pot of water. Some people are great scholars who become scientists, teachers, doctors, lawyers, engineers, astronauts and so on, but can these same people cook a nourishing meal or repair a broken piece of equipment or appliance or create a beautiful garden or nurse a sick child or mend a broken heart? Perhaps they can but the point is as stated in 1 Peter and paraphrased here, "we are all in possession of different gifts and we should put them to use to serve each other, each as we have received them." Just ask people you see volunteering to serve others, what's in it for you? You will be astounded at the responses you get. Most will say they personally have received true joy in giving and a life filled with many graces. A good steward follows the teachings of the gospels and sacred scripture. Read the following if you have any doubt as to what is expected of us: Mt. 5:16, Mt. 10:42, Mt. 20:26-28, John 13:34-35, Ga. 6:10, 1Cor. 12:4-7, Ephesians 3:17-19, 4:1-2, 1Peter 4:10. Can the Lord's directives to us be any clearer? I think not!

Now here comes the part that some find unsettling...Stewardship of Finance. When the church begins to talk to us about the use of our money, we rebel and rebuke. For example, "I quit going to Mass because all the priest does is talk about money." "The Catholic Church is the richest organization in the world, why are they always asking for money?" "Religion is not about money." Of course the leaders of the church talk about money. How do we think churches are built, maintained and services

rendered to people of the faith? Do we think that sacramentals, pews, organs, musicians, priests, communication tools, candles, statues and altars just fall down from heaven each week when we attend mass? Do we think that religious ed buildings and parish facilities for gatherings of the faithful are just on loan to us when we need them? Do we think church personnel work for free and have no homes to sustain or families to feed? How does the roof get fixed? Who pays the insurance premiums of church property? Perhaps it's a gift from some benevolent insurance company. Sure! We each have incomes of some sort whether a paycheck, a welfare check, a pension or inherited wealth. Whatever our source of income, we budget accordingly to run our homes and lives. However, somehow we expect not to be asked to contribute to the expenses necessary to maintain and run our faith homes, which is what our church parish is.

When you are asked to give, first consider how much the Lord gave to you. When your pastor asks for money to run the parish and fund ministries, don't blame him. He's just preaching the Gospel. In 16 of His 39 parables Jesus talked about money. Throughout the Bible in both the old and new testaments, clear directives are given. Read: Leviticus 27:30, Dt. 14:22-29, Dt. 16: 16-17, Pvbs. 3:9-10, Sir. 35:7-10, Malachi 3:10, Mt. 6:24, Mark 10:21, Mark 12:43-44, Luke 3:11, Luke 6:38, Luke 12:52-54. Truly, the giving and sharing of money is addressed throughout the history of our faith.

The stewardship journey for those of us who are trying to convert hearts of the faithful to living stewardship as a way of life is at times trying but in the end extremely rewarding as we observe grace, peace and joy given to those who follow Christ's teachings. The same holds true for those who embrace stewardship as a way of life, a way of living out their faith. Grace, peace and joy are abundant in their lives as they learn to share their gifts in justice and love with others. God bless you on your stewardship journey. May it bring you to a peaceful end, amen!



STEWARDSHIP *of Prayer*



Have you ever ridden a roller coaster ride that left your heart beating so hard you thought it was going to pop out of your chest? When you got off could you even remember all of “the ups and downs?” Were you just glad to make it off alive? A Protestant youth minister once described the life of a Christian as a very difficult roller coaster ride. He said, “Many people feel when they become Christian, life will be easy.” However, he was quick to share that it is more like the wildest roller coaster ride of one’s life – full of challenges, standoffs and other uncomfortable situations. The life of a disciple is not a cake walk. Our prayer life prepares us and gives us the strength to cope with challenges in life.

Our lives are a journey consisting of many “ups and downs”, “joys and sorrows”, “good times and bad”. With a strong Christian faith as our foundation, we are better equipped to handle all of the twists and turns and ups and downs. Our faith is something that needs constant care and stewardship. Nurturing and feeding our faith takes a conscientious effort on our part.

In the United States we are bombarded with media messages from television, radio, cell phone, internet, newspapers and any other medium you can think of. Most of the messages focus on doing or getting something for yourself – they do not focus on God. They sell the concept that things you do for yourself will make you happy. This happiness is usually short lived. The reality is our faith in God brings us true long-term

happiness. Being counter-cultural, denying oneself and focusing on our faith and in what God wants us to do will bring us true and eternal happiness. “I urge that petitions, prayers, intercessions and thanksgiving be offered for all....especially those in authority that we be able to lead undisturbed and tranquil lives in perfect piety and dignity.” (1Tim 2:5)

Our Catholic faith tradition has many wonderful opportunities for us to feed our faith. Most especially we are fed with true food for the journey through the Eucharist, but also through all the Sacraments. Living our lives as Disciples of Christ is not easy; it requires a choice to live a life that is different. We will be challenged by people around us, but we are rewarded with God’s grace.

Try to take time to pray each and every day. Take advantage of the many opportunities to develop a closer relationship with Jesus through daily Mass – not because it is an obligation, but because you want to experience Christ’s real presence in your life. You may prefer the silence of a Perpetual Adoration Chapel in the middle of the day or late at night, where you can lay all of life’s challenges at the altar, and ask for the Lord’s assistance in carrying you through or lifting you out of a particular situation. Maybe you desire to pray the rosary and ask for the intercession of Mary, the Virgin Mother, to appeal to her Son on your behalf.

Another effective way to encourage prayer is to leave your Bible open on a table. An open book inspires you to

pick it up and read more than a closed book on a shelf. You may only read one Psalm or a verse from the Gospels, but that may be the nugget you need to get through the day. This practice may lead other members of the household to follow suit.

In “*The Autobiography of Saint Therese of Lisieux, the Story of a Soul*”, St. Therese describes her realization, while on retreat, of how Jesus feeds us through prayer in our daily lives:

“So this retreat before my Profession was quite barren – like those afterwards. Yet, even though I didn’t realize it, I was then being clearly shown how to please God and be good. I have often noticed that Jesus will never give me a store of provisions. He supplies me continually with fresh food and I find myself fed without knowing how. I believe quite simply that it is Jesus, Himself, hidden deep in my poor little heart, who works within me in a mysterious manner and inspires all my daily actions.”

As you conclude this article, recognize that your faith is critical to eternal happiness. Your faith requires an investment to develop a stronger relationship with God the Father, Jesus the Son and the Holy Spirit. Live your life as a disciple of the One who loves you. Be a good steward of your relationship with God. Strive to put your prayer life at the forefront of your daily life. Pray hard, live well and reap the reward!



The POWER of PRAYER

Prayer



A READING FROM THE LETTER OF SAINT JAMES

Chapter 5:13 – 16

“The Power of Prayer”

“Is anyone among you suffering? He should pray. Is anyone in good spirits? He should sing praise. Is anyone among you sick? He should

summon the presbyters of the church, and they should pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord, and the prayer of faith will save the sick person, and the Lord will raise him up. If he has committed any sins, he will be forgiven. Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The fervent prayer of a righteous person is very powerful.”

IN PREVIOUS WRITINGS ABOUT STEWARDSHIP OF PRAYER WE PRESENTED TO YOU MANY THOUGHTS REGARDING PRAYER AND HOW IT WORKS IN OUR LIVES. TO REVISIT SOME OF THE THINGS WE COVERED, WE OFFER THE FOLLOWING:

- ☞ *Prayer opens our hearts, minds and souls to God’s teachings.*
- ☞ *Prayer converts us from being self-centered to God-centered.*
- ☞ *When prayer becomes an integral part of our lives, circumstances in our lives suddenly are no longer coincidences but God-incidences. We know He is always there with us walking hand in hand.*
- ☞ *We look back on our lives and see clearly how God answered our prayers, sometimes in a way that was not at all expected. We recall the adage, “God might not always come when you call but he always comes in time.” When we pray, we know that God indeed answers prayer.*
- ☞ *Prayer creates grace and blessings in our lives.*
- ☞ *Prayer unites families, communities and nations.*

IN THE LETTER FROM JAMES, HE TELLS US THAT PRAYER HEALS THE SUFFERING AND THE SICK. HE ALSO TELLS US THAT WE SHOULD SING PRAISE. NOT ONLY SHOULD WE PRAY FOR INTERCESSION BUT WE SHOULD PRAY IN THANKSGIVING FOR OUR BLESSINGS.

The following are excerpts from personal testimonies on how prayer has affected some people’s lives:

“My son was ill and tests determined that he had a tumor on his brain. He was only 15 years old. I remember having a conversation with God prior to his surgery. I said, ‘God I understand that you gave my son to me but You know in my heart of hearts that I am not ready to give him back to You. Please help me.’ It was through many conversations with God and much prayer during this ordeal that allowed me to stay strong. My son’s tumor was benign! Thank you, Jesus!”

– Joan, age 36, mother

“My wife and I were told by doctors that we were physically unable to have children. We had tried for nearly nine years without success. Through the trials and tribulations of trying to conceive a child we became closer to God. Our prayer life was stronger than it had ever been. Through prayer, we discerned that it was not up to us to decide when or if we could have children. It was only through God’s grace that it would happen. We surrendered our prayers and desires to God and three months later guess what? Yep, we were pregnant!”

– John, age 31, husband & proud father

“Last year at this time, I made a commitment to God that I would spend one hour a week in Eucharistic Adoration. I am married and we have three children. I thought giving one hour a week would be impossible. I was wrong. I absolutely love it. Putting God first in my life has allowed me to accomplish so many other things during the week. I look forward to my holy hour with God. It makes everything else possible.”

– Bobby, age 42, husband & father

Prayer Covenant



My dear Lord God,
Creator of the Universe, Creator of me, I am filled with humility and gratitude for your bountiful blessings. I want to acknowledge that all I have, all I am and all I will be are gifts from you. I want to thank you by managing your gifts responsibly, as you expect me to. I want to share the gifts you give me with others, as you would have me do. I want to form a closer, more perfect relationship with You by using my gifts of time in prayer. I pledge to put aside time each week that will be devoted to prayer for You, the Church, my family, my faith community and for those who do not know how to pray and have no one to pray for them. I do this as an outward expression of my covenant with You.

Clip out this prayer covenant and place it in your family Bible as a tangible sign that you are committed to a closer relationship with the Lord through prayer. You will receive a commitment card for Stewardship of Prayer. Please fill it in and return it to the Parish office or place it in the offertory collection at Sunday mass.

Stewardship of Prayer COMMITMENT CARD



PRAYER COMMITMENT FOR ADULTS & TEENAGERS

I, _____, promise to make prayer a regular part of my life. Therefore, for the coming year, 20____, I will: _____

PRAYER COMMITMENT FOR CHILDREN

I, _____, will try to pray every day. This means that I will:

Check off or write down your prayer commitment. Make a copy and keep it as a reminder of your commitment. Through your prayer commitment, you become a minister of prayer here in our parish. *(Duplicate as necessary for use by all family members.)*

- Sunday Mass _____
- Daily Mass _____
- Rosary _____
- Shared Prayer _____
- Morning/Night Prayer _____
- Scripture Reading _____
- Way of the Cross _____
- Visits to the Blessed Sacrament _____

- Prayer Before & After Meals _____
- Fasting _____
- Meditation _____
- Centering Prayer _____
- Novena _____
- Retreat _____
- Song _____
- Reconciliation _____
- My Own Method _____

Stewardship of Prayer: Pastor's Letter

(Date)

(Name)

(Address)

(City, State, Zip)

Dear (Parishioner's name),

I write to you today filled with great hope and joyful expectation for a spectacular blossoming of the faith life of the parishioners of *(your church name)* Parish. You may remember it was just last year (mention specific time) when I first spoke with you about Stewardship of Prayer.

Many parishioners came forward to sign up for a prayer ministry to develop their spirituality or made a firm personal commitment to be more faithful to their prayer life by putting prayer first in daily duties and responsibilities. I know that by doing so, many graces have been bestowed upon us by our loving Father. I have witnessed the abounding grace that has become prevalent at *(your church name)*. *(Cite specific examples) (For instance... I have noticed an increased devotion to the Eucharist by many more people attending Sunday Mass and daily Mass. Our Bible study group added 10 new members last year; Prayer groups have been formed to pray for the needs of our faith family.)*

It is through this Stewardship of Prayer initiative that great and good things have occurred in our Parish. We have formed deeper bonds with one another and have grown closer as a community of the faithful. We seem to smile at one another more and raise our voices in song with greater joy at Mass. All of this goodness and greatness has spilled over into many other aspects of our faith family life here at *(your church name)*.

I ask you to read the brochure enclosed with this letter. Reflect on its contents. Please follow the instructions it contains by filling out the commitment card and join others in your faith community as an active member of our Stewardship of Prayer initiative. If you were involved in this last year, simply renew or enhance your previous commitment.

I have planted the seed of hope again and I ask you to join me by being the living water and the living light that will bring the nourishment we need to make *(your church name)* a faith home that will flourish and grow. Indeed, a faith community where we can love together and share together all for the glory of God and to further His Kingdom here on Earth.

May the peace of Christ be with you and abundantly bless you.

Your faithful steward,

(Pastor's name)

Stewardship of Prayer: Pastor's Thank You Letter

(Date)

(Name)

(Address)

(City, State, Zip)

Dear (Parishioner's name),

Thank you most earnestly for participating in our Journey in Faith, Stewardship of Prayer phase. I feel so blessed that you have joined so many others in our parish who have given a tangible sign of their willingness to take part in this endeavor. I feel so hopeful and expectant of the many graces we will share because of our commitment to making prayer an even greater priority in our individual lives.

The entire journey we embark on together reminds me of something I once read that said, "Lord, you spent your earthly days on foot, spreading a message of hope, love and peace. I know that it is not the distance traveled that matters but the quality of the journey."

Knowing that our journey will be paved with prayer, can we not have lofty expectations for many blessings and great awakenings at our beloved (*name parish*)? Thank you for being a part of it.

Your faithful steward,

(*Pastor's name*)

STEWARDSHIP *of Ministry*



Having been raised a cradle Catholic, there were many family and religious traditions in which I took part, but did not always give much thought. Some traditions include family suppers at 6:00 p.m. every night – milk to drink, prayer before meals, family rosaries in the car on road trips, going to Catholic School and going to church on Sunday. Early in my childhood I did not recognize these traditions and activities as the foundation for my life – my Journey in Faith. These were just the “way of life” instilled in us and demonstrated daily by my parents and relatives.

I was taught to respect my parents. I went to Catholic elementary and high school, and then off to college to prepare for a career that would enable me to support a family. All along I was living a life full of Catholic and family traditions, partly because of the faith that was developing and partly because of the habits formed by my parents.

Subsequent to college I secured a job in the profession in which I had been educated. Although I felt I had been responsible and independent, I still had been under the wings of my parents. However, with the onset of full-time employment, the reality of being “out of the nest” unveiled itself with the experiencing of true “ups and downs” of life. Then a metamorphosis took place from living the faith of my parents to owning my own faith.

Recognizing the happiness, joy, and relatively “good life” of our family, I

surmised that my parents must be doing something right. Praying the rosary, going to daily mass, or saying other prayers were the search and desire for a more visible presence of God in my life.

The more I became aware of God’s presence the more He influenced my life. Eventually I felt God inviting me to minister to a high school youth group. Serving the youth allowed me to focus on others rather than myself. My struggles seemed smaller and less important. The joy and grace received by helping others brought true peace and relief. For the first time in my life I truly experienced the saying “the more you put into it, the more you get out of it.” Maybe that is because you cannot out give God.

I learned several things:

When I ministered to others in God’s name rather than pursued money as a goal in my life, joy and peace were everlasting. “No man can serve two masters. He will either hate one and love the other, or be attentive to one and despise the other. You cannot give yourself to God and money.” (Matthew 6:26)

By asking God for help in prayer, He gave me an answer. It may have been an answer that seemed counter-cultural or appeared absurd by human standards, but the result was divine – better than I could have imagined. “I give you my word, if you are ready to believe that you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer, it shall be done for you.” (Mark 1:24)

When focusing serving on others rather than myself, I received true happiness - not the happiness promised by earthly, monetary, selfish solutions. “There are different gifts but the same spirit; there are different ministries but the same Lord; there are different works but the same God who accomplishes all of them in everyone. To each person the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.” (1 Corinthians 12:4-7)

Recently I heard a homily that referred to God as both the anchor and compass on the sea of life. He keeps you grounded when you need to be, and yet He guides you like a compass across the horizon into the future. He leads you to the eternal destination to which we are all called, each on our own path – our personal Journey in Faith.

In prayer, listen to God and be aware of His guidance as He leads you to share your gifts with others in ministry. Make your Stewardship of Ministry journey a priority. He will repay you in ways you never imagined. Be a faithful disciple – a good steward – as you journey to the eternal destination!



The POWER of GOOD DEEDS

Ministry



A READING FROM THE LETTER OF SAINT JAMES

Chapter 2:14 – 18

“Faith, if it does not have works, is dead.”

“What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister has nothing to wear and has no food for the day, and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, keep warm, and eat well,” but you do not give them the necessities of the body, what good is it? So also faith of itself, if it does not have works, is dead. Indeed someone might say, “You have faith and I have works.” Demonstrate your faith to me without works, and I will demonstrate my faith to you from my works.”

NO WORDS FROM THIS WRITER COULD POSSIBLY CONVEY THE MESSAGE OF STEWARDSHIP OF MINISTRY MORE POWERFULLY THAN SAINT JAMES. THE LORD, HIMSELF, HAS BESTOWED UPON EACH OF US UNIQUE GIFTS, TALENTS AND CHARISMS. WE ARE BOUND BY OUR FAITH TO SHARE THESE BLESSINGS IN GRATITUDE TO OUR GOD. CAN WE NOT SHARE THESE GIFTS RIGHT HERE IN OUR PARISH? SHOULD WE NOT TEND TO THE NEEDS OF THE SICK, HOMEBOUND, ELDERLY AND PHYSICALLY CHALLENGED? ARE WE NOT CALLED AS CHRIST’S DISCIPLES TO BRING OUR FAITH TO THE BEREAVED, UNCHURCHED, LONELY AND TO THOSE WHO YEARN FOR THE WORD OF GOD AND ARE HUNGRY FOR THE SACRAMENTS? THE ADAGE “CHARITY BEGINS AT HOME”, MIGHT JUST APPLY TO OUR FAITH HOME, OUR CHURCH PARISH.

WHEN WE FOLLOW CHRIST’S TEACHINGS TO ‘LOVE ONE ANOTHER’, ‘SERVE ONE ANOTHER’, THEN WE ARE GIVING BACK FROM THE MULTITUDE OF GIFTS THAT COME FROM OUR GREAT BENEFACTOR. WHEN WE MINISTER TO OTHERS WITH GRATEFUL HEARTS, THEN WITHOUT A DOUBT WE REAP ABUNDANT GRACE AND BLESSINGS.

Personal testimonies give witness to the joy of giving, rather than receiving.

“About four years ago, I accepted God’s saving grace and since then the Holy Spirit has cultivated my heart with an orchard. He plants trees and He blesses me to enjoy their fruits. One of the trees bears a fruit known as giving. Another tree bears a fruit known as compassion. I am drawn to the elderly who live in nursing homes and I enjoy visiting and sharing the gospel of Jesus with them. I have noticed that when I leave these poor souls I am encouraged by

their sweet gentle spirits and richer in grace through the opportunity to worship with them. I thank God for allowing me the privilege to do a job that only He could prepare me to perform.”

– Reggie, age 56

“I remember being asked to participate in our parish’s youth ministry program. I am 40 years old. I remember thinking, ‘How will I be able to relate to a 15 year old?’ I came to realize that teenagers are extremely prayerful when given the opportunity. I love going on retreats and praying with teens.

Ministry Covenant



Dear gracious and ever-loving Father, I thank you with humble gratitude for the many gifts You have bestowed upon me. Your goodness overwhelms me. Your generosity to me has instilled deep within me a burning desire to serve others with the same spirit of generosity that You have shown me. Therefore, I am making a covenant with You to use my gifts and talents to serve Your people here on earth and within my faith community. I will, in a spirit of good faith and as a sign of my gratitude, sign a commitment card to volunteer my talents to be put to service in this parish for Your glory. Amen!

Clip out this ministry covenant and place it in your family Bible as a tangible sign that you are committed to a closer relationship with the Lord through ministry. You will receive a commitment card for Stewardship of Ministry. Please fill it in and return it to the Parish office or place it in the offertory collection at Sunday Mass.

Getting involved has really deepened my faith.”

– Keith, age 40

“For years I would just go to church on Sundays, until recently I was asked by a friend of mine who was involved with the hospitality committee to help out with a Saturday night ‘feed the homeless’ event. I accepted the offer and since then have been back every other Saturday lending a hand. I wonder who is really being fed?”

– Mary Beth, age 48

Stewardship of Ministry COMMITMENT CARD



As disciples of Jesus and as part of our Christian vocation, I/we are willing to share my/our time and talents with the parish. I/we have indicated those areas in which we are currently active and those ministries on which we would like to serve. *(Duplicate as necessary for use by all family members.)*

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

PHONE _____ EMAIL _____

NAME	<i>wish to continue in</i>	<i>interested in</i>
PARISH LIFE		
SUNDAY NURSERY	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
MAINTENANCE	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
OFFICE HELP	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
PARISH COUNCIL	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
WELCOMING COMMITTEE	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
FESTIVAL	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
FINANCE COMMITTEE	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
FUND RAISING	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
LAWN CARE/FLOWERS	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
SACRISTAN	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
BULLETINS/MAILINGS	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
DIOCESAN ANNUAL APPEAL	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
NAME	<i>wish to continue in</i>	<i>interested in</i>
WORSHIP		
WORSHIP COMMITTEE	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
EUCCHARISTIC MINISTER	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
LECTOR	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
USHER/GREETER	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
GIFT BEARER	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
CHOIR/MUSICIAN	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
ALTAR SERVER	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

NAME	<i>wish to continue in</i>	<i>interested in</i>
SERVICE		
BEREAVEMENT COMMITTEE	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
HOME/HOSPITAL VISITATION	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
SENIOR ACTIVITIES	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
TRANSPORTATION	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
COMMUNION TO SHUT-INS	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
NAME	<i>wish to continue in</i>	<i>interested in</i>
CHRISTIAN EDUCATION		
BAPTISM PREPARATION	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
ADULT EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (1-8)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (9-12)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
RCIA	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
YOUTH MINISTRY	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
YOUNG ADULT MINISTRY	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
BIBLE STUDY	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
PRAYER GROUP	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
EDUCATION COMMITTEE	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
NAME	<i>wish to continue in</i>	<i>interested in</i>
SOCIAL CONCERNS		
PRO-LIFE	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
OUTREACH AND EVANGELIZATION	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
SUPPORT GROUPS	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
ADOPT-A-PARISH	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Other areas of interest/talents/skills:

Stewardship of Ministry: Pastor's Letter

(Date)

(Name)

(Address)

(City, State, Zip)

Dear (Parishioner's name),

May I begin this letter by telling you how very pleased I am at the tremendous response that followed the prayer phase of our Stewardship: A Journey in Faith. Prayer is the foundation for living stewardship as a way of life. Praying together and for one another has made us a stronger family of faith and stronger as individuals.

It is now the time for me to speak about Stewardship of Ministry or how you and I use our God-given talents in service to Him and each other. In the brochure accompanying this letter, St. James tells us in a most profound and compelling way about how we are to demonstrate our faith. He challenges you and me by asking, "What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him?"

When parishioners were asked in our Stewardship of Ministry phase last year to come forward to put their faith into action, they did so in such a generous and selfless way. (*Provide a number*) parishioners came forward to serve as (*name ministries, for example... religious education teachers, Eucharistic ministers, ministers to the homebound, ETC. ETC*) An outpouring of talented people made a commitment to care for the bereaved, sick, lonely, hungry, unchurched, elderly, youth and physically challenged. A multitude of stewards gathered together to uplift, console, teach, minister, give love and hope to so many in need. Gifts of talent to mow, weed, plant, paint, polish and perform so many other tasks helped to keep our faith home and our souls tidy. Faith was demonstrated by good works time and time again.

(*Name Parish*) cannot tire of dispensing works of mercy and compassion. I pray that you will answer the call to serve this year. If you did not have the opportunity to participate in this life-changing initiative last year, then I pray that you will join the others who have found untold joy, satisfaction and rewards from serving.

(*Option #1*) Please carefully read the many opportunities available for you to serve in this parish. Surely there is something that you would like to do that will allow you to use your God-given talents. Renew your commitment made last year, please, or sign up and join so many others who have found such great joy in serving others because by doing so they are serving the Lord. "Whatever you did for the least of my brothers and sisters, you did for me." (Mt. 25:40)

OR

(*Option #2*) Please attend our ministry fair being held the weekend of (date). Then pick up from Option #1: ...Surely there is something that you would like to do...

Please sign the commitment card that was provided to you and: (Option #1) mail to the office or drop in the offertory basket on (date); OR (Option #2) sign the commitment card provided to you at any one of the booths at the ministry fair. If you need someone to contact you to talk more about a ministry that is of interest to you, please contact the church office and we will be happy to assist you.

Please respond. The people of God at (*name Parish*) need you.

May the peace of Christ be with you and abundantly bless you and those you hold dear.

Your faithful steward,

(*Pastor's name*)

Stewardship of Ministry: Pastor's Thank You Letter

(Date)

(Name)

(Address)

(City, State, Zip)

Dear (Parishioner's name),

Please be assured of my deepest gratitude to you for answering the call to serve here at *(name parish)*. Your willingness to share your God-given talents is a clear example of the depth of your faith. I know that your good works will be ever so pleasing to God. Indeed, it was He who said, "Anyone among you who aspires to greatness must serve the rest, and whoever wants to rank first among you must serve the needs of all." (Mt. 20:26-27)

And so it is because of your generosity of spirit that I foresee great things happening in our beloved parish as we come together to serve and answer God's call to "Come, follow me."

I look forward to working with you this year as you fulfill your commitment and hopefully for many years to come. May God bless you and all of those who are near and dear to you.

Your faithful steward,

(Pastor's name)

STEWARDSHIP *of Finance*



A MODERN DAY WIDOW'S MITE:

Several years ago Louisville, Kentucky received quite a bit of snow. One of the storms was especially bad, and all of the streets had snow piled on the sides from the snow plows. On Sunday morning at Mass, a lady recognized a homeless man she had seen around the church. She could not help but notice how he was bundled in what was probably all the clothing he owned. His pants were wet and stained up to the knee from the salt in the mounds of snow along the side walks and streets. She did not stare, but her heart went out to him. How cold he must have been over the last couple of days of the storm! Yet, there he was on Sunday morning in church. Even more influential on her was seeing him place one dollar in the collection basket during the offertory. This man of little means and suffering through one of the worst snow storms of the winter placed his trust in God as evidenced by his most generous contribution to the parish. This man demonstrated that God is first in his life. Most likely he did not have any idea how much his actions influenced those around him that day or those of us that have heard the story since.

Currently our parish stewardship education has reached the Stewardship of Finance phase. This phase comes after we have examined our prayer life and our involvement in ministry of the

Catholic Church. How we handle our personal finances is another action that needs to be examined. Like the actions of the widow in the bible and the homeless man in the story above, our stewardship of personal finances demonstrates our faith and our discipleship.

The Bible teaches that everything we have is a gift from God. God's gifts include our family, our children, our ability to learn, and our ability to earn an income. All is a gift from God. In gratitude for these gifts, God asks us to give a portion of our gifts back. "Honor the Lord with your wealth, with first fruits of all your produce; then will your barns be filled with grain, with new wine your vats will overflow." (Proverbs 3:9-10)

You may have heard the expression: "Protestants tithe; Catholics tip". First fruits refer to the tithe or 10% of what has been produced. Many Catholics have been taught to give to the church and to charities, but often times what is given is a "tip" from the leftovers after bills have been paid and most discretionary income spent.

One person, who fairly recently converted to Catholicism, shared the process in which she and her husband prepare their envelope for church. The first thing they do on payday is put their 10% contribution in the envelope. She said, "Do you think God needs us to physically do that first? No, that is just an external sign that reminds us that He is first in our life." She went on to share that all

of their needs had been taken care of even though they may have had to sacrifice some of their wants.

The disciples' examples that have been shared are examples of their love and faith in God and the grace and love received from God. God loves us no matter what we do; however, our financial stewardship should remind us of how much we love God and that He is first in our life.

Take time in your Journey in Faith to examine your giving. Are you giving out of gratitude? Does your giving reflect your love and faith in God? "Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house, and try me in this says the Lord of hosts; shall I not open up the floodgates of heaven to pour down blessings upon you without measure?" (Malachi 3:10) If your giving to God is not out of first fruits; then try Him as described in the book of Malachi. Take the "*leap of faith*" and trust that He will provide for your needs... even if you must sacrifice some of your wants. Your trust in God, your Journey in Faith, your discipleship will be repaid.



The POWER of GIVING

Finance



A READING FROM THE BOOK OF SIRACH

Chapter 35:4 – 10

“Appear not before the Lord empty-handed, for all that you offer is in

fulfillment of the precepts. The just man’s offering enriches the altar and rises as a sweet odor before the Most High. The just man’s sacrifice is most pleasing, nor will it ever be forgotten. In generous spirit pay homage to the Lord, be not sparing of freewill gifts. With each contribution show a cheerful countenance and pay your tithes in a spirit of joy. Give to the Most High as He has given to you generously, according to your means. For the Lord is One who always repays and He will give back to you sevenfold.”

ONE PART OF THE STEWARDSHIP JOURNEY IS TO SHARE OUR FINANCIAL BLESSINGS. HOWEVER, THIS IS THE PART THAT CHALLENGES THE MOST STALWART OF SOULS. OUR TENDENCY IS TO GATHER AND SAVE FOR THAT PROVERBIAL ‘RAINY DAY’. THE LORD TELLS US IN ISAIAH, ‘BE NOT AFRAID’ SO, HOW CAN WE NOT TRUST? THE BEAUTIFUL READING FROM THE BOOK OF SIRACH HOLDS SUCH PROMISE...‘THE JUST MAN’S SACRIFICE IS MOST PLEASING’, ‘IT WILL NEVER BE FORGOTTEN’, ‘THE LORD IS ONE WHO ALWAYS REPAYS’ AND ‘HE WILL GIVE BACK TO YOU SEVENFOLD.’ DO WE NOT TRUST THE LORD TO DO AS HE SAYS?

MANY INDIVIDUALS WHO HAVE ‘TAKEN THE STEP’ AND DEDICATED A PORTION OF THEIR FINANCIAL BLESSINGS TO SUPPORT THE CHURCH’S MISSION HAVE AMAZING TESTIMONIALS.

Excerpts from Testimonials:

Money was always my favorite thing. I cherished it. My life revolved around the almighty dollar until one day I attended a men’s gathering at my local church and a great speaker challenged everyone there to let go of what was holding them back. His first example was money, I felt as if everything he was saying was a direct reflection of my life; the fine clothes, luxury automobiles, the best in hunting and fishing gear, etc. From that moment on I felt the presence of God in my life and have since taken a more active role in my church life

by sharing the financial blessings that God has given me. Nothing prepared me for the satisfaction and peace that entered my life.

– Richard, age 45

I was a young college student living on a slim weekly budget. Money was very precious to me and in short supply. I had a part-time job paying minimum wage. I needed to eat, pay for gas, and have extra money for late night socials. Giving money to God in the Sunday collection basket was not one of the items on my budgetary agenda. As I became more involved in the university’s campus ministry program I

Finance Covenant



Dearest Creator, Giver of all my gifts, I am ever reminded that if it weren’t for you, I would be nothing, have nothing. I thank you for all of my gifts... gifts of intelligence, reason, sound judgment, heart and soul, health, family, friends, the beautiful landscape that surrounds us, the bountiful crops, fruits of the lakes and seas, sunrise, sunsets, abundant wildlife and beautiful flowers. I also thank You for my financial blessings. I gratefully acknowledge that they come from You. It is You who said, “You who follow My teachings will be My disciples.” Your words are very firm on the use of money. I pledge to honor You and Your church with a proportionate, planned and sacrificial share of my financial blessings. I will show good faith by signing a commitment card stating my intentions to my faith community. I do this out of my deep love and gratitude to You, heavenly Father. Amen.

Clip this finance covenant and place it in your family Bible as a tangible sign that you are committed to a closer relationship with the Lord through sharing your financial blessings. Please fill out your commitment card and return it to the Parish office or place it in the offertory collection at Sunday Mass.

began to understand how this tithing thing works. It is all about faith! I began putting one hours pay (\$5.15) in the collection basket on Sunday. With that financial sacrifice I also placed my prayers. As God does so richly, He blessed me with a new higher paying job which allowed me to worry less about how I was going to pay bills! My stewardship of finance has since grown and is now an item on my monthly budget. I’m a believer. You can’t out give God.

– Seth, age 20

Stewardship of Finance COMMITMENT CARD



I/We thank You dear Lord for the blessings we have received through Your kindness. In gratitude for Your blessings, I/We would like to commit a proportionate share in support of our faith home and family.

OFFERTORY
 \$ _____ WEEKLY OR \$ _____ MONTHLY

I/WE WRAP OUR GIFT TO GOD AND HIS CHURCH IN AN OFFERTORY ENVELOPE I/WE WOULD LIKE TO RECEIVE OFFERTORY ENVELOPES TO WRAP OUR GIFT TO GOD AND HIS CHURCH

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY/STATE/ZIP _____

PHONE _____ EMAIL _____

“No one shall appear before the Lord empty handed, but each of you with as much as he can give in proportion to the blessings which the Lord, your God, has bestowed upon you.” (Dt. 16:16-17) Please study this Giving Chart to help you determine what your present percentage of giving is. You may wish to increase your level of giving to a percentage that truly reflects a sacrificial and proportionate gift.

GIVING CHART

WEEKLY INCOME	1%	2%	3%	4%	5%	6%	8%	10%
\$100	\$1	\$2	\$3	\$4	\$5	\$6	\$8	\$10
\$200	\$2	\$4	\$6	\$8	\$10	\$12	\$16	\$20
\$300	\$3	\$6	\$9	\$12	\$15	\$18	\$24	\$30
\$400	\$4	\$8	\$12	\$16	\$20	\$24	\$32	\$40
\$500	\$5	\$10	\$15	\$20	\$25	\$30	\$40	\$50
\$600	\$6	\$12	\$18	\$24	\$30	\$36	\$48	\$60
\$700	\$7	\$14	\$21	\$28	\$35	\$42	\$56	\$70
\$800	\$8	\$16	\$24	\$32	\$40	\$48	\$64	\$80
\$900	\$9	\$18	\$27	\$36	\$45	\$54	\$72	\$90
\$1000	\$10	\$20	\$30	\$40	\$50	\$60	\$80	\$100

One small step can become a giant leap of faith. To a person giving 1% or less of their income to the church, the idea of giving 3 to 5% or more may be daunting. If this is how you feel then simply consider a small step up. Perhaps half or one percent would constitute a giant leap of faith for you at this time. Just be assured you cannot out-give God. “...trust Me in this says the Lord; shall I not open up the floodgates of heaven to pour down blessings upon you without measure?” Malachi 3:10

This card is confidential and used only to plan the future of our parish.

Stewardship of Finance: Pastor's Letter

(Date)

(Name)

(Address)

(City, State, Zip)

Dear (Parishioner's name),

Today I write my final letter to you in our parish stewardship series, **"Stewardship: A Journey in Faith"**. In my two previous letters I challenged you to use your time and talents, all gifts from our benevolent Creator, in service to the Lord and one another. You were asked to show your love and gratitude to God by using your time in prayer to benefit your family, your neighbors and your faith community. You were also asked to use your talents to serve others by volunteering in a parish ministry. So many of you have come forward with an open and generous spirit to pray and to serve. I must tell you the parish and its members have received many graces because of it.

Now it is time to speak to you about sharing your gifts of financial blessings which are an integral part of your journey in faith. In this communication I will be asking you to commit a part of your financial blessings for the support of (*name parish*). But before I do so I would like to share with you some of the graces and blessings our parish has experienced as a result of the increased generosity of our Stewardship of Finance phase last year.

(Here you should cite examples of how the money was spent, i.e. new ministries offered, new equipment purchased, refurbishment or additions to the parish complex, new personnel hired to serve, etc.)

In the brochure accompanying this letter, there is a passage from the Book of Sirach that reads in part, "Give to the Most High as He has given to you generously, according to your means. For the Lord is One who always repays and He will give back to you sevenfold."

Therefore, I ask you today to have faith in this promise. Please dedicate a portion of your financial blessing to (*name parish*) so we can continue and even increase the works of mercy, teaching and healing we do in His holy name. You can make your contribution to this parish and its members by filling out the commitment card contained herein. Once you do so, please mail it to the church office or place it in the Offertory collection at Mass on the weekend of _____.

I know you will be richly rewarded for your generosity and the parish and God's people who worship here will prosper and flourish because of you. May the peace of Christ be with you and may His spirit enrich your life always.

Your faithful steward,

(Pastor's name)

P.S. Your financial commitment will be held in strictest confidence. Thank You!

Stewardship of Finance: Pastor's Thank You Letter

(Date)

(Name)

(Address)

(City, State, Zip)

Dear (Parishioner's name),

I want to extend my most humble gratitude for the outpouring of generosity with which you have so richly blessed this parish. Your commitment of financial offerings will go a long way in extending the love of God to so many in need.

I, too, make a firm commitment to you to tend your gifts wisely and use them in a manner worthy of the trust you have placed in me and all of the parish administration. You can be assured your gift will be held in sacred trust.

Because of you and so many others like you who have come forward to support this parish's mission and ministry, I see great things happening for the future of the faithful here at *(name parish)*.

Thank you and may God bless you abundantly today and always.

Your faithful steward,

(Pastor's name)