

Frequently Asked Questions about the 2011 Stewardship Renewal

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Below are listed some of the frequently asked questions concerning the annual stewardship renewal that occurs in the parishes of our diocese in November of each year. Perhaps you have asked these questions yourself.

- *Why is there a stewardship renewal?* ○ As a Christian way of living, the steward reflects prayerfully upon the gifts received from God. How am I using these gifts? Am I generous in sharing with others what I have received? The renewal is a time of prayerful discernment on the part of the individual, the family, the parish and the diocese. We seek to be faithful stewards of these gifts and we commit ourselves by sharing of our time, talent and treasure by giving the gift of self to the Church and the wider community.
- *Why is the stewardship renewal in the Diocese of Wichita conducted annually? I filled out my pledge forms last year. Why do I have to do it again?* ○ The commitment that each person makes is a commitment for a one-year period of time. During the year, circumstances may change in the life of an individual or family. Sometimes, individuals have served on the same parish committee for a lengthy period of time and are looking for new ways to share of time and talent. Similarly, financial circumstances may change in a family. The annual renewal invites each one of us to prayerfully consider what gifts we have received in the last year and it invites us to commit specifically how we will share those gifts as stewards for the upcoming year.
- *Why is it necessary to complete a stewardship commitment form of time, talent and treasure?* ○ The completed pledge forms are truly a gift that the parishioners collectively give to the entire parish family. Ministries are often formed to help meet identified needs within and outside the parish. Who in the parish family possess the talents and time to assist in meeting these needs? The truth is that God has given each of us different gifts. "As each one has received a gift, use it to serve one another as good stewards of God's varied grace." (I Peter 4:10). The gifts are not given to us exclusively for our own benefit, but are given for the good of the whole. When I share the gifts I have received, the Body of Christ is strengthened and glorified. When I hoard the gifts I have received, the Body of Christ suffers.
- *What happens on the "Call to Commitment Sunday?"* ○ Our "Call to Commitment Sunday" is the weekend immediately prior to Thanksgiving Day, (this year falls on November 19/20, 2011). Parishioners in our parishes throughout the diocese generously commit to share of their time, talent and treasure by completing and offering their pledge forms to the parish family. This commitment is an offering to God and to our neighbors as we share the material and spiritual gifts we have received from God during the last year.
- *Why is it called "Call to Commitment Sunday?"* ○ The reason it is named "Call to Commitment Sunday" is because the parish and the wider Church call forth the gifts from the parishioners: the gifts of time, talent and treasure. Each parishioner "commits" to share their gifts with others, (the family, the parish, the wider community, the poor, etc.)
- *What is the Church asking of me to commit of my time?* ○ Remember that time itself is a gift from God. During a day, each one of us is given 24 hours of time by God. In a week, each of us have 168 hours of time. The steward discerns, "How am I choosing to use the gift of time that God gives to me?" The Church is asking us to reflect on our use of God's gift of time and to share this gift of time with others. Included in this

question is “Am I spending time in prayer with God each day?” The heart of a Christian steward is choosing to follow Jesus. How can I say I am following Jesus if I am not spending time each day in prayer with the Lord to listen to His voice?

- *What is the Church asking of me to commit of my talents?* ○ Each one of us is given different gifts and talents by God. “As each one has received a gift, use it to serve one another as good stewards of God’s varied grace.” (1 Peter 4:10). The talent that each one has received is not just given by God for the good of the individual. The talent has been given by God to the individual so that the individual may share that talent with others. Because our talents differ, the sharing of all of the talents in the parish by the parishioners strengthens the Body of Christ. “What talents have I received from God? Am I generously sharing those talents with others, or am I hoarding or burying those talents?”

- *What is the Church asking of me to commit of my treasure?* ○ The monetary currency used in our country contains these four important words, “In God We Trust.” Do we? Or do we make money to be our God? The Diocese of Wichita asks each family in the parish to commit 8% of their annual family income to their parish in service to the broad mission of the parish and to commit 2% of their annual family income to other charitable causes of their choice. In turn, each of the parishes in the diocese shares 10% (tithe), of their Sunday offering to the wider diocesan Church. The ways in which these gifts are collected and spent is summarized in the United Catholic Stewardship Financial Report that is printed within this article of *The Catholic Advance*. The Diocese of Wichita also shares of the gifts they receive from the parishes with the wider Catholic Church in the world.

- *Do all of the parishes in the Diocese of Wichita conduct a stewardship renewal in November? Why is the renewal conducted at this time of year?* ○ While most of the parishes in the Diocese of Wichita conduct their stewardship renewal efforts in November, there are a few parishes that choose to conduct the renewal at other times of the year, according to their pastoral need. We choose to conduct the diocesan renewal at a time in which our nation pauses to give thanks to God, (i.e. Thanksgiving Day). For the Christian steward, thanksgiving should not be reserved only for one day, but thanksgiving is a way of life. The heart of a steward is rooted in gratitude to God for all the good He has done for us. Our “Call to Commitment Sunday” is this weekend, November 20-21. This also happens to be the last Sunday of the liturgical year, the Feast of Christ the King. In many ways, the stewardship commitment pledge of our time, talent and treasure is a pledge for the new Church year, which begins on the First Sunday of Advent.

- *What happens if I don’t submit my completed stewardship pledge form?* ○ The heart of a Christian steward is rooted in gratitude. Joy flows from this gratitude. The joy leads one to give the gift of self. The intention of that giving is not done out of obligation or duty, but done out of thanksgiving for the gifts received. The parish calls forth the gifts that the parishioners have received from God. When people do not respond to this call, all of us suffer. When people share of their gifts, all of us benefit. “For it is in giving that we receive; it is in pardoning that we are pardoned; it is in dying that we are born to everlasting life.”

What is this year’s theme? Sharing God’s gifts in love of God and neighbor!

For three years, we have used our Stewardship definition, “Stewardship is the grateful response of a Christian disciple who recognizes and receives God’s gifts and shares these gifts in love of God and neighbor.” Each phrase has been highlighted the past three years as the Stewardship Renewal theme culminating in this year’s 2011 theme reminding us the committed action of “what to do” and “why:” “Sharing God’s gifts in love

of God and neighbor.”

At the Eucharistic sacrifice and celebration we give thanks to God concluding with the bishop or priest proclaiming: “The Lord be with you.” And soon we will respond, “And with your spirit.”

Giving the final blessing, he concludes with the following command: “the Mass is ended, go in peace to love and serve the Lord.” In doing so, he might as well say: “You have responded to God with gratitude, recognizing and receiving God and His gifts at this Mass, now GO, and share them in love of God and neighbor!”

Attending Mass is wondrous indeed, but if we never left the church building to share what we received, we would look pretty silly sitting there forever. From the textbook of Stewardship, the Holy Scriptures, we read James reminding the early church: “For just as a body without a spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead.” (James 2:26) Sharing God’s gifts in love of God and neighbor is the life-giving spirit to a steward.

Our poster this year depicts this life-giving action: the procession from the Mass to go and share God’s gifts, in love of God and neighbor.

A necessary and natural response to what has occurred at the Holy Eucharist.

• **Do you have a question about the stewardship renewal conducted in the Diocese of Wichita** or in your parish? **If so, please call the Office of Stewardship at 316-269-3900 or email me at vanhaverbekek@CatholicDioceseofWichita.org.**