

IDEAS FOR STARTING: FORMATION

Pastor: THE PASTOR IS THE PRIMARY COMMUNICATOR OF STEWARDSHIP TO THE PARISH. HE TEACHES BY HIS PERSONAL WITNESS THE SPIRITUALITY OF STEWARDSHIP: IN THE PULPIT, IN PARISH GATHERINGS, MINISTRY MEETINGS AND IN EACH AND EVERY INTERACTION WITH HIS PARISHIONERS. OFTEN, A PRIEST MUST JOURNEY THROUGH HIS OWN SPIRITUAL CONVERSION TO EMBRACE STEWARDSHIP COMPLETELY. THIS PERSONAL CONVERSION AS WELL AS HIS VISIBLE SUPPORT FOR THE MESSAGE IS NEEDED TO TEACH THE STEWARDSHIP WAY OF LIFE THROUGHOUT THE PARISH AND WIDER COMMUNITY.

Stewardship Committee: The stewardship committee assists the pastor and Pastoral Council in facilitating the stewardship formation process throughout the parish. Members of the committee work closely with the pastor in executing a well-planned stewardship renewal process; seeking lay witnesses for presentations and to find inviting ways to provide stewardship opportunities to parishioners through other ministries.

Witness Talks: Lay witness talks often take place at Sunday Mass during the parish's annual stewardship renewal. These presentations often inspire parishioners to discern and pray more fervently about embracing a stewardship way of life. By parishioners sharing with the entire parish family their own personal conversion stories to the stewardship way of life, the message becomes real, inspiring and practical. These talks are effective tools.

Pastoral Planning: Stewardship formation should be included in pastoral planning efforts through specific objectives and goals. This inclusion allows an action plan to carry out these goals and objectives based upon the needs of each parish and the mission of the church.

Needs Identification: The needs analysis process identifies the types of educational and formational programs which correspond to the unique demographics of each parish. The goal is to integrate practical, applicable, and vibrant educational programs with solid theological formation. Stewardship formation is tailored to the individual needs and opportunities present within each parish. The parish mission statement serves as the foundation of this formation effort.

Parish Ministries: All parish leaders best teach the stewardship way of life by their own living witness as stewards. One cannot teach well what one fails to live. Leaders should also be prepared to educate those in their respective organizations about the vision, mission, goals and objectives of the parish. The pastor assists in forming parish leaders to nourish and equip them in their ministries. This is accomplished through parish leadership training days and retreats as well as other on-going formation.

Catechesis: Catholic education programs such as Catholic schools, adult education, Parish School of Religion, youth ministry programs and retreats are vital components in the role of faith formation, including the formation of the stewardship way of life. Educating parishioners in the spirituality and beauty of stewardship forms them to become faithful disciples of Jesus to live their Baptismal call. Stewardship parishes begin teaching this way of life to their youngest members and continue this on-going formation through all stages of the lives of their parishioners.

Volunteers: Education, formation and appreciation of parish volunteers build and sustain the stewardship way of life. The pastor, pastoral council, stewardship committee and parish ministry leaders are key people in this effort, though this responsibility is not theirs alone. Volunteers need opportunities to carry out their discipleship. The myriad tasks that stem from the pastoral planning efforts create many opportunities for parish

volunteers to carry out their call to discipleship. If limited opportunities are available, the importance of stewardship loses meaning.

Youth: Forming young stewards begins first in the home by families living a stewardship way of life. As children understand and live stewardship, so too do they grow individually on the journey toward holiness. Catholic schools, religious education programs, and youth ministry need to include stewardship education in their curriculums and objectives to foster lived stewardship among the youth. One cannot run before one learns to walk. One begins to walk at a young age by taking small steps. It is natural for a parish to ask parishioners to take a leap of faith to live stewardship when those parishioners have been continually formed as to the meaning of stewardship.

Evaluation: Continual evaluation of formation and education offerings in the parish helps to determine the effectiveness of such formation. Do the programs teach God's love and mercy and meet the needs of the parishioners? Do the parish programs support the spirituality of stewardship as a way of life to lead all on the path to holiness?

