

Introduction to Stewardship

God reveals His perfect and infinite love for us most visibly in his Son, Jesus Christ. A steward makes God's love visible by imitating Jesus. As the United States bishops wrote in their pastoral letter, Stewardship is the response of the disciple to God's unconditional love for us. The more deeply one grows in love for God, the more one grows in heart to see Stewardship as a way of life, a way of love, imitating God's love for us. **Stewards see everything good as gifts received from God and they respond in gratitude with the gift of self.**

"How can I repay the Lord for all the good He has done for me?" (Psalm 116:12).

Stewardship is a conversion journey of receiving God's love and returning love to Him. A conversion requires prayer, reflection and time to allow God to show us who we are, and the person of love that we can become. Throughout the conversion experience, the disciple yearns to change and grow into the person God created them to be - a steward uniquely His own, but united in one Body through Jesus Christ. Stewardship transforms lives because of its love, and it is in this transformation process and conversion journey towards love that we give new life to the Church.

"If you wish to come after me, you must deny yourself, take up your cross and follow me. For if you wish to save your life you will lose it, but if you lose your life for my sake you will save it." (Luke 9: 23-24)

God wishes to bestow spiritual gifts to His beloved children. He transforms a steward beyond mere human kindness to a love of sacrifice and detachment, enabling the steward to continually receive God's gifts. **When a steward loves God above treasured earthly possessions, God provides the grace for the steward to love to an even greater depth. This depth of love is a growth in holiness.** This is one of the joyful rewards of a stewardship way of life.

The steward learns to give of self through time, talent and treasure, not out of obligation and duty, but out of sincere desire. The steward recognizes within the very nature of the human person, an inherent need to give. For the steward, this way of life and giving of love becomes as natural as breathing itself.

The conversion to stewardship as a way of life is a journey of the individual, the family, the parish, the diocese and the Universal Church. What makes such conversion possible? It is God's love for us that lies at the heart of such conversion.

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him might not perish but might have eternal life." (John 3:16).

With Jesus as the foundation, there are certain elements that need to be in place within the parish structure, which enable parishioners to convert to a stewardship life through the giving of self in time, talent and treasure. These elements are the pillars that rise from the foundation of Jesus Christ. Recognizing that this conversion is primarily a call from God, made possible through grace He bestows upon us, the task of conversion to stewardship is part of our response to discipleship.

The four pillars of Hospitality, Prayer, Formation and Service invite parishioners to experience, witness and live the stewardship way of life in response to their baptismal call to discipleship.

Individually, each baptized person is called to give of time, talent and treasure to strengthen these four pillars that support the parish community. Conversely, by making our parishes vibrant places of hospitality, prayer, formation and service, we provide greater opportunities for the sharing of time, talent and treasure.

As a parish embraces stewardship as a way of life, the members of the stewardship parish recognize their responsibility not only to their own parish, but also to the diocese, the community and the Universal Church. Strengthening the pillars of hospitality, prayer, formation and service make us faithful disciples to the love given us freely by our loving God. As faithful stewards, our only response to these gifts received is gratitude. Living a stewardship way of life is a disciple's response to our God, who has given us everything that is good!