

St. John Vianney Catholic Church

Stewardship

Who is Christian steward?

One who receives God's gifts gratefully, cherishes and tends them in a responsible and accountable manner, shares them in justice and love with others, and returns them with increase to the Lord.

Talent

If stewardship means taking care of, and sharing, all God's gifts, then stewardship of the gift of talent means nurturing, developing, and using the God-given ability and characteristics that help to define "who we are" as individual human persons. Most of us know what it means to contribute money or to give away our precious time, but what does it mean to be a good steward of talent?

Our talents are the special blessings that each of us has received from a loving Creator who prizes the diversity and abundant variety of all creation. When we volunteer to work for our parish or diocese or to help a neighbor with a difficult chore, what we have to give is much more than our time. We also give something of ourselves, those characteristics that make each of us distinctive as human beings. We call these our "talents," those things that we're good at or that we especially like to do. When we volunteer to help others by sharing our talents with them, we give them something far more precious than our time and money. We give them something of ourselves, an intimate sharing of "who we are" for the good of others.

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Time

A true understanding of stewardship begins with taking care of and sharing the gift of time. Stewardship of time involves the realization that none of us owns time. Each of us is given only so much of it, and planning a careful schedule in order to have the time to work, to rest, to play, and to pray is vital in the stewardship of our physical, emotional, spiritual, and intellectual lives.

In a busy society like ours, time is one of the most precious possessions we have. How we spend our time is perhaps the clearest indication of our progress in a life of Christian discipleship.

Treasure

True stewardship is taking care of and sharing all that we have and all that we are—our time, talents, and treasure. Why is it so important to share our treasure?

Money and all of the things that we possess (our treasure) are gifts from God that we are asked to care for and generously share for our own benefit and the good of others. It is important for us to share our money and all of our material possessions for two reasons: first, because all the good things that God has made (including money) are meant to be shared, and second, because each of us has a need to give.

Why do we need to give? We need to give our money to individuals and families in need, to the Church, and to other worthwhile charitable organizations because giving money is good for the soul and because we need to return thanks to a loving God for all of the many blessings each of us has received.

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One of the most frequently asked questions in any stewardship educational program is "How much do I have to give?" The answer (from a stewardship perspective) is nothing. We don't have to give anything. "How much do we want to give?" is the question that stewardship asks. Stewardship is not minimum giving. It is maximum giving. That means giving as much as we can, as often as we can, from the heart as a faith response because we are generous stewards who want to share our time, talent, and treasure with others.

Frequently, in discussions of stewardship (or "sacrificial giving"), reference will be made to "the biblical tithe" (giving 10% of income) and other norms that could provide helpful guidelines for generous giving. As disciples of Jesus, each of us has a responsibility to support the Church and to contribute generously to building up the Body of Christ. The emphasis in the bishop's pastoral, *Stewardship: A Disciple Response*, is on giving according to our means. In many ways, this is a far more challenging norm. It challenges us to be good stewards not only in how much we give away, but in what we do with all our resources.