



Lay Witness Guide

One of the most effective means of presenting the Stewardship message is through the Stewardship Lay Witness Talk. This talk is usually given after the homily or at the end of Mass by people who are already practicing Stewardship in their own lives. It may be given by an individual or a couple. In some cases, even children may participate. The talk has two purposes: to inspire people to become good stewards; and to share real life examples of how Stewardship is lived.

Sample Outline

1. Introduce Yourself

While many of your fellow parishioners will know you, some may not. Give a description of your family, the number of years in the parish, etc.

2. Properly Define Christian Stewardship

It is a response we make in gratitude to God for what He has given to us. It is an intentional, planned, proportionate giving of our time, talents, and treasure.

3. Discuss How You Began Practicing Stewardship

When did you first become aware of the concept? Did you have reservations? Be honest about your first reactions. People will relate to any feelings of discomfort. How did your family react to the idea? Was the initial “plunge” difficult? How did you go about it?

4. When Did You Begin to Experience the Benefits?

Speak of the effect that Stewardship has had on your faith life. Use anecdotes from your own family life if possible. How do you and your family give your time and talent? Were you able to give full tithe (10%) right away? If not, how are you working toward that goal?

5. Urge your Fellow Parishioners to get Involved

Invite the congregation to join you and your family in making your parish a Stewardship parish. Ask them to look at all God has given to them and make a generous response to His many gifts.

Tips for Presenting a Lay Witness Talk

An important part of a person's acceptance of the concept of Stewardship is the personal witness and individual testimony you provide with your presence and the way you give your talk. The following are tips you should consider in preparing your comments:

- Prepare your personal remarks so you are comfortable with them. Use your own style, wording, and delivery.
- Write out your talk word for word. Then, if you feel comfortable with the approach, use notes of key words to guide you through your presentation so that it is more natural. But do not hesitate to read it if that makes you more comfortable.
- For you to give a good presentation, it is best for you to rehearse your talk aloud. If you just practice reading it silently, it won't have the same effect. If it is possible, practice in the church when no one is there, using the sound system. It is also recommended that you practice in front of a friend or family member, even if it's a little bit awkward.
- If you are doing a renewal, ask the person who did the talk last year to listen to your talk and make suggestions from their experience. Ask the pastor to listen to you deliver your talk in the church and offer suggestions.
- Be comfortable enough with your material so that you can look up from your notes and make eye contact. In a large church, remember to turn to the sides occasionally.
- Nervousness can make your throat dry. If you think this may happen, have a glass of water in an unobtrusive place, and use it if you need it.
- Above all, be sincere, enthusiastic and friendly!

Some Do's and Don'ts for the Lay Witness

Do

(If time permits and if any of these fit into your talk.)

- Explain that Stewardship means giving of the **first fruits**, not what is **left over**.
- Talk about the personal need of each Christian to **give back in gratitude**.
- Say, "Many of you know from our own experience that what I have told you is true."
(Acknowledging that you are not in this alone.)
- Stress the sense of joy and fulfillment that comes to those who give God the first and share of time, talent, and treasure as a way of expressing their gratitude and trust in God.
- Emphasize that it is important to give all three: **time, talent, and treasure**.
- Explain that Stewardship involves not only church (parish and diocese); it also includes community.

Don't

- Talk in bargaining terms (e.g. "I give this much time or treasure and God gave me this in return.")
- Stress church needs or budgets
- Talk in dollar or time amounts: "If everyone could give \$10 a week" ... "we need \$2 more a week" ... "give our fair share" ... "If everyone could give 3 hours per week"
- Use threats of possible consequences stemming from the failure to give: "We won't be able to heat or air-condition the church" ... "We'll have to close the school"
- Suggest that Parish Stewardship is an obligation

The most important goal of living a life based on the principles of Stewardship is a deepening of faith, a real spiritual conversion. Your sharing your spiritual journey with other members of your parish family is a unique gift and a true statement of your commitment to Stewardship. You are showing your gratitude by this sharing. Thank you.

Getting Started ... and Ending Up

Many find that the hardest part of a talk is getting started and winding up. To open your Stewardship talk, simply introduce yourself:

"Good morning/evening, I'm Jane Doe and this is my husband, John. We are parishioners here at St. Peter's, along with our three children, Matthew, Mark, and Luke. We'd like to share with you what stewardship means to our family and how it has affected our lives..."

The following is a suggested closing paragraph:

"As we continue with our liturgy this morning/evening, and our gifts are brought forward, let each of us ask ourselves if this gift of our treasure which we offer today is truly a measure of the gratitude we have for what we have been given. Let us look at what we give to our church and the community in terms of time and service, and ask ourselves if this, also, is proportionate to God's gifts to us. Let us remember that the God who takes care of the lilies of the field and the birds of the air, will likewise take care of each of us when we give generously and trust in His love."