



The Catholic Foundation
of Central Florida

A Guide for the Stewardship Lay Witness



*Evidence-based best practices
to assist in the role of the lay witness*

The Lay Witness has a very important role. The most important goal of living a life based on the principles of stewardship is a deepening of faith – a real spiritual conversion. 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 sharing. *Thank You!*

Role of the Lay Witness

One of the most effective means of presenting a stewardship message is through the Stewardship Lay Witness Talk. Personal stories are always best when coming from the heart. This guide will provide key evidence-based best practices to assist in the role of the lay witness.

The Stewardship Lay Witness Talk is usually given by people who are already practicing stewardship in their own lives. The witness talk can take place during Mass after the Homily “live” or on video. It may be given by an individual, or a couple. In some cases, even children may participate. The talk has two purposes:

1. To inspire people to become good stewards.
2. To share real life examples of how stewardship is lived.

Sample Outline for Composing a Lay Witness Talk

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, talent and treasure.
3. **Describe the Joy of Giving:** You should speak from the heart about the effect that Stewardship has had on your own faith life – including your family.
Use personal anecdotes as much as possible.
4. **Be Realistic:** Parishioners should be able to relate to your situation, regardless of their specific financial circumstances.
Be excited about stewardship but also honest and realistic about the process of working toward a goal.
5. **Invite Participation:** You should invite the congregation to join you in making the parish a stewardship parish.
Affirm the benefits of a regular weekly commitment, regardless of size.
6. **Emphasize the simplicity and security of online giving:**
 - a. Be sure to share that you use it. Let your fellow parishioners know you are personally giving online.
 - b. Explain how the process is easier for you. Draw from your own experiences to show how simple and convenient it is to give in this way. Once a person makes the switch, they may find that their giving experience is even better than before.
 - c. Provide instructions for where (parish web site) and how to give online. Display the instructions through imagery on parish screens/monitors.
7. **Encourage Prayer:** Stewardship and prayer go hand in hand. Ask fellow parishioners to look at all that God has given to them and pray about an appropriate and grateful response.



The Lay Witness Talk

When preparing your talk, ask yourself:

How / When did I become aware of the concept of Christian stewardship?	
Did I have reservations?	
How did my family react to the idea?	
Was the initial “plunge” difficult?	
How did I go about taking that “first step?”	
How has my stewardship helped me in my journey with God?	

Tips for Presenting the Lay Witness Talk

What is **most** important for a speaker to remember?

1. It is your personal witness that makes a successful presentation.
2. Be honest and humble. It’s not about how much you give, but how and why you give.

Consider the following tips when preparing the presentation:

- Remarks should be personal, and you should feel comfortable with them.
- Use your own style, wording and delivery. Be natural.
- Write the talk word-for-word then practice using notes or key words to guide you.
- Rehearse the talk aloud. Practicing by reading it silently will not have the same effect.
- Time yourself. Your talk should be two to three minutes long. Timing yourself prior to sharing will ensure that you keep your talk within the time frame.
- If possible, practice in the church when no one is there. It is especially helpful if you can use the audio system.
- Ask your pastor or a member of the parish staff in charge of the effort if he/she will listen to you in advance and offer their suggestions.
- It’s okay to use your notes but look up as often as possible and make eye contact. In a large church, try to turn to the sides occasionally to include everyone.
- Speak clearly and at an easy pace and use appropriate animation. Let your faith guide you.
- Keep a bottle of water with you in case you need it.
- Above all, be sincere, enthusiastic and friendly!



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

DO...

- Stress the sense of joy and fulfillment that comes from expressing one's gratitude and trust in God.
- Emphasize the importance of all three components of stewardship: time, talent and treasure involving not only church (parish and diocese); but also, community.
- Show empathy. Recognize that not everyone can make the same size gift, but those that are able *can* make the same size sacrifice. All contributions are important – it's about giving from the heart.

DON'T...

- Talk in dollar or time amounts. For example: "If everyone could give \$10 a week." Or, "volunteer 3 hours per week."
- Use threats about the possible consequences of insufficient giving. For example: "We won't be able to air-condition the church." Or, "we may have to close the school."
- Suggest that Parish Stewardship is an obligation.

Sample Lay Witness Presentation

Come, Share This Joy...

My task this morning is to share a little of my joy with you – the joy I have experienced since stewardship became part of my life four years ago. Up until that time, I had never considered that I had a responsibility to God. Oh, I had made a commitment to give a few dollars each week and be a member of the parish's Ladies Guild, but neither were serious commitments. The amount I contributed certainly wasn't sacrificial and my motive was not gratitude for all the blessings God had bestowed on me. Then, I was asked to present a message similar to this to my parish and I began reading and thinking and praying. I came to realize that an issue I had been avoiding for a long time was "rearing its ugly head." It was time for me to come to grips with my commitment to build God's Kingdom.

It was not a good time for me then. I was picking up the pieces from a marriage that had ended a few months earlier. I was the sole supporter of my teenage son and the sole owner of my house with its two mortgages. I had two years left on my car payments and 3 credit cards with chronically unpaid balances. Fully, 70% of my gross income was dedicated to the withholding taxes, the mortgages, the car payments and minimum payments on the charge card balances. With winter coming, the heating bill had no place to go but up. After the 70% was gone – there was food and other day-to-day expenses and the monthly bills. So, I was certain I couldn't afford to give the way the Scriptures described. The only problem was that nowhere in all my reading was there any indication that a person was off the hook because he/she couldn't afford it. There was no one there to pat my hand and say "Oh, that's okay, Sarah, maybe next year when things are looking better for you." No, indeed! Instead, I found myself staring straight into the face of the poor widow as she dropped her two coins into the treasure box in the synagogue. "She gave from her want," Jesus said.

She gave from her want – from her substance – all that she had. Does He ask us to give that much? No. But He does ask us to give that way – from our substance, sacrificially and in trust.

So, I took the plunge. I began giving a fixed percentage of my income to my parish and setting aside the same percentage for other charitable donations.

Well, the blessings have been many – both practical and spiritual. I was simply taking better care of the gifts our Lord provides me. But the biggest change – the greatest blessing I have received – has been my change of heart. Before I began stewardship, I had struggled with a tight-fisted stinginess and hardness of heart with the result that, although I was able to give some of my time once in a while for a good cause, I could not seem to open up that fist and give of my treasure with the same good spirit. Every so-called gift was given with a cold, calculated entry into an imaginary ledger where I balanced Sacrifices Made with Rewards Expected.

However, as I embarked on this adventure of stewardship, dedicating the first part of my time, talent and treasure to the Lord, I immediately sensed a loosening of the grip. As my fist unclenched and as I let go of my dependency on material possessions and put my trust in God's providence, my life has been blessed with a harmony and a radiance that it never had before. My faith is on firmer ground. My heart is in the right place.

Before the pandemic I made a real time commitment to serve the parish through teaching Faith Formation. The smiles I received from all your children gave me a great sense of hope and gratitude. And, I had a better attitude. The joy I experience through my stewardship carries into all my daily activities, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. Now, I serve as a member of the parish's Lady's Guild by contributing to the sewing of masks for the homeless in our community. I found that the joy I receive knowing that I am helping someone of need to take better care of themselves, especially during this time is so much more than I give, and I am able to use my talent for the work of the Lord.

Through the giving of my time, talent, and treasure I feel a sense of sharing in the work that is being done; the good work of the Lord, that's being done through my gifts. And because the giving has been cheerful – it's been fun. And therein lies the joy! I invite you to come, share this joy.

As we continue with our liturgy this **morning (evening)**, and we offer our gifts to the Lord, for all those impacted by the pandemic from illness or loss of job let's continue to pray for comfort, hope, healing and restoration. For those who have not been impacted and are able to continue stewarding the Church at this time, if you haven't considered online giving, I invite you to do as I have and continue your offertory giving by setting up a payment for your parish through your online banking or by taking the next step on by visiting our parish's online giving website at **[Parish URL]** and setting up your recurring gift. Its efficient, easy and secure! Let's ask ourselves if our 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 parish and the community in terms of time and service, and ask ourselves if it is proportionate to God's gifts to us?