

# Planned Giving News

Catholic Diocese of Rockford

October 2007



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**From Greg Urban,  
Diocesan Director of  
Planned Giving**



I hope you enjoy this issue of the Diocese of Rockford Planned Giving Newsletter to learn about ways you can promote planned gifts within your parish or institution.

**Keep planting seeds!**

## Ministry Quicklinks

[Rockford Stewardship web](#)  
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## End of Year Giving

Dear Greg:

As you know, many people - for various reasons - make significant charitable contributions at the end of the calendar year. Some would rather give to their favorite charities than to the IRS and so are motivated by the tax benefits of giving. Some have put off giving during the year and now are looking to "catch up" to the giving level they intended to be when the year began. Others may have experienced a particularly successful year financially and are looking to make an "extra gift" beyond their normal giving.

Whatever the reason it makes sense to give our donors a little helpful reminder that the end of the year is approaching and to give them ideas on how to be generous to their parish or school. To assist you in this effort I have provided the 2007 version of the parish [End-of-Year Giving Flyer](#) along with a [memo](#) containing ideas for distributing it to your parishioners. These files are in MS Word format. To download them to your computer, position the mouse pointer over the selected link (above) click the right mouse button and then select "Save Target As" using the left mouse button. Choose a location to save the file (might I suggest the desktop?) and then click the left mouse button with the pointer on "Save."

A planned giving expert has noted recently that for charities to be successful in the future, they will need to be "near, dear, and clear" to their donors. He meant that they will need to be physically near for frequent visits, dear to them in terms of touching their heart, and clear about what their mission is. There cannot be a better description about a committed parishioner's connection to his or her parish! I encourage you to use this material.

## Bulletin Blurbs

### Take Advantage of the IRA Charitable Rollover

If you are 70 1/2 or older and eligible to take advantage of the IRA Charitable Rollover provision of the Pension Protection Act of 2006, we encourage you to do so before it expires at midnight on December 31, 2007. The next step is to get more information and coordinate any decision you decide to make with your own needs, situation, and objectives. Talk to your advisors, who understand the details of your own situation and priorities, about this special one-time opportunity.

## Why am I receiving this newsletter?

This monthly e-newsletter is targeted to priests, deacons and stewardship leaders within the Rockford Diocese. Encouraging planned gifts to benefit our parishes and schools is all our responsibility. My intent is to keep planned giving always on your mind. I encourage you to forward this e-mail to others whom you think may be interested in this topic. If you do not wish to receive future newsletters, you can opt-out following the

instructions at the bottom of this page.

## A Lesson in Stewardship

by Marcellino D'Ambrosio, Ph.D.

Our society tolerates religion, as long as it keeps to itself. After all, America is about the separation of Church and state, right? Education, entertainment, employment, and politics are supposed to be "religion-free." The removal of a statue of the Ten Commandments from an Alabama courthouse several years ago was just one sign of this misguided divorce between faith and life.

Like it or not, we are subtly influenced by this attitude and often exile God from entire areas of our everyday lives. Twenty years ago, a Gallup poll called "Religion in America" demonstrated that 89% of regular churchgoers live their lives exactly in the same way as non-churchgoers - the same rate of marital infidelity, cheating on income taxes, etc.

One area we keep God-free is politics. We've heard prominent Catholic politicians say they are personally opposed to abortion, but cannot bring their faith into their political decision making. Another "God-free zone" is the financial arena. It is interesting that Jesus speaks much more in the gospels about money than about sex. And yet, should politics or money be mentioned from the pulpit, many become indignant. If we do hear about money in Church, it is often in the context of stewardship, the obligation to give of our "time, talent, and treasure."

In Luke 16, Jesus provides a provocative lesson on stewardship. He presumes we know that a steward is someone entrusted with the administration of his master's property. What is expected of the steward, anyway? It is to conserve his master's property and maintain it, of course. In this story, the master owns an agricultural business. The nature of a business is to turn a profit. The steward's job, then, was not just to maintain the property, but to grow the business. If you entrust hard-earned money to the stewardship of a stock broker, don't you expect him to grow that portfolio? Remember the parable of the talents in Matthew 25 - the master was very stern with the steward who preserved what he'd been given but failed to make it grow.

The steward in Luke 16 did not increase his master's property. He squandered it. It is not clear if he did so through dishonest greed or by foolish business decisions. But in any case, he failed. When he was given a termination notice, he suddenly kicked into gear. To ingratiate himself with those who could provide for him after he lost his job, he wrote off part of their debt. Scripture scholars disagree about the meaning of this. Some say he did this dishonestly at the expense of his master. Others say that he was simply giving away his own commission. I think the latter makes more sense, since rather than rebuking him, his master praised him for his prudence. Prudence means taking initiative to get something done, coming up with a plan, and being willing to sacrifice some present pleasures (his commission on a few deals) to generate long-term benefits.

The moral? How ironic it is that non-spiritual people often take more initiative, exercise more creativity, and expend more effort than spiritual people when it comes to getting what they want. Stewardship means more than just throwing five bucks in the basket and signing up to help with the Lenten fish fry. It means realizing that all we have is entrusted to us by God and that we have an obligation to grow it, making it as fruitful as possible for his glory. The steward asks these questions: How can I free up the most time for the most important things - God, the Church, and family? How can I develop my talents so as to be most effective for God's glory?

When it comes to money, good stewards ask: how can I make better use of the money I already have to further God's work? But another question often needs also to be asked: how can I generate more income so as to give more? Churches need to do this. We call that fund-raising. Christian individuals and families need to do this too. We call this employment, business opportunity, and investment. Making smart and profitable decisions in this regard is a spiritual and holy thing to do.

But what about Jesus' warning that you can't serve both God and Mammon? If financial decisions result in self-indulgence at the expense of honesty and justice (see Amos 8:4), then you are serving mammon. If your increased profits finance your family, your parish, Christian education, evangelization, the crisis pregnancy center, or local homeless shelter, chances are you are serving

God.

## Contact Info

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*Good stewardship is not a calcified formula or a specific recipe. "To four parts time, add two parts talent and sprinkle three parts treasure over the top and serve." Not at all. At various times in our lives, we will be more able to give of our time, our talents, and our treasure.*

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