



A Stewardship Witness for the Universal Catholic Church

*E-mail interview by Dave Hougan
Diocesan Director of Stewardship Development*

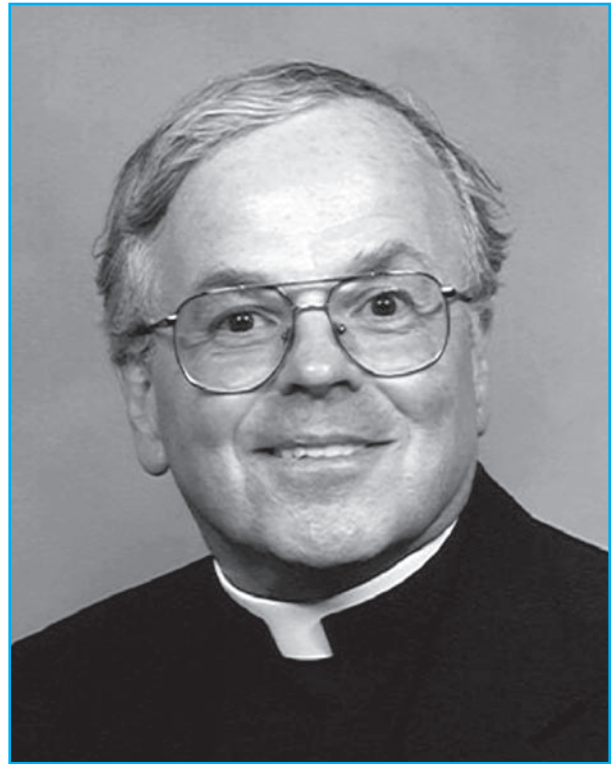
I asked Father Bill Schuessler (WS) to share his witness with us. His gifts of his time, talent, and more than likely, treasure to the people of the Diocese of Chulucanas, Peru is an inspirational testimony of a disciple's response to Christ's call to serve one another.

DH:
Why did you accept/volunteer for ministry in the Mission of Chulucanas, Peru?

WS:
I am grateful to Bishop Doran for the opportunity to be in Peru. The Diocese of Chulucanas and the Diocese of Rockford have had a special relationship since the founding of the Diocese of Chulucanas some forty years ago. I have always had a special place in my heart for Chulucanas since my first time here some 25 years ago and have always had a desire to return. I told Bishop Doran that at my age, although I was happy with my assignments in the Diocese, it's now or never if I were to return to Peru. I think being here helps express the catholicity – the universality of the Church, and broadens the horizons of both dioceses.

DH:
What is your current assignment and some of your duties?

WS:
At the moment, I am the rector of the Cathedral in the town of Chulucanas. In many ways because we are in town rather than in the rural mountain or coastal parishes, life is a little more like a parish in the USA. We have a regular schedule of Masses and the other traditional sacramental and pastoral services. We also have a weekly parish radio program that reaches a large part of the diocese. Our 7 a.m. Sunday Mass is broadcast on Radio Emanuel, la Voz de Esperanza (The Voice of Hope).



Rev. Bill Schuessler

DH:
What are some differences in your priestly ministry that you experience in Peru versus your ministry in the Diocese of Rockford?

WS:
A significant difference is that the diocese is made up of hundreds of rural villages. There are only 31 priests in the entire diocese. There are only 17 parishes. Each parish is made up of numerous

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Consistent Parish Stewardship

Our Lady of Good Counsel, Aurora

By Bob Pfundstein
Director of Parish Stewardship

As Thanksgiving has passed and we are now focusing on the Advent Season, it is always a good time to think of all the good things we have to be thankful for. I can truly say that I am grateful for the way Our Lady of Good Counsel Parish (OLGC) has been consistently sharing the stewardship message with their parishioners and others. The best way to review the work the parish has done is to reflect their use of the eight characteristics of a stewardship parish.

Stewardship Commission

OLGC has a very creative and active stewardship commission which helps direct all aspects of the stewardship efforts at the parish. They have followed the process suggested by the Office of Stewardship Development and created materials that fit with their parishioners needs. The committee meets regularly and is prepared to discuss, create and implement their plans.



OLGC staff at booth in Boston

Stewardship Education

Stewardship language is used often at OLGC by both the pastor and the commission. The bulletin is used consistently to include stewardship information. The pastor incorporates stewardship in his homilies as often as he can. The commission has studied “Stewardship: A Disciple’s Response” the US Bishops’ Pastoral letter and tries to teach others the spirituality of living as stewards. The school has invited speakers in to share the message with the teachers and students.

Stewardship of Time & Talent

The people of the parish are asked annually to share their time and their talent with the parish and the larger com-

munity. This information is gathered and distributed to all ministry heads and they are held accountable to contact all who have signed up. The commission continues to invite people to discern their God-given talents and share them with the parish and community.

Stewardship of Treasure

The annual use of pledge cards to seek the financial gifts of the parishioners is critical to OLGC as they strive to be the best in a community that is changing demographics rapidly. Their ask goes along with the desire to increase the number of people committed to the parish in tangible ways.

Elimination of Second Collections

OLGC has done away with second collections for normal operating expenses. They still have the opportunity to ask to have a special collection if there is a specific need beyond their normal budget.

Parish Tithe

Sharing a portion of their income with those even less fortunate than themselves is a true step in faith for OLGC. They do see the benefit and continue to share with those in need.

Capital Campaigns

As the parish changes, the needs for space change and the desire to transform older buildings into useable space is on the minds of the parishioners. As they begin to review plans for a capital campaign the commission will be reminding people that they should continue giving regularly on Sunday and make their campaign gift over and above their consistent parish support.

Stewardship of Assets

In 1999 OLGC established two endowment funds, for the parish and school. Since then, a third account has been established for tuition assistance. These accounts have grown but can always add more money through gifts. The parish has also promoted wills and annuities and other types of gifts to increase the financial base for active ministries. By following a regular and consistent plan OLGC has been promoting the stewardship way of life to the parishioners. With this consistency they were invited to have a booth at the International Catholic Stewardship Conference in Boston in October 2006. †

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villages. Each parish is divided into zones. There are about 1,000 zones in the Diocese with about 14,000 lay leaders involved in the leadership of these zones. In more remote areas, many villages are still only accessible on foot or horseback. My parish, the Cathedral Parish, has about 45 villages to attend. Some of the “villages” are really medium sized towns. The “campo” or “boonies” is accessible by pick-up during the dry season, so the pastoral staff is able to make monthly visits to the rural chapels to support the local team of lay people who coordinate pastoral activities in the rural chapels. We priests try to get to each village only two or three times a year for Mass. Even that has been a challenge this year, because we are really only 1.5 priests. I’m here full time, but the parochial vicar is also the Vicar General of the Diocese and is often away because of his other duties. Besides celebrating Mass and the sacraments, one of our major tasks is to coordinate the implementation of the diocesan pastoral plan. That means a lot of training sessions of the volunteer catechists, youth ministers, and ministers of the Word who conduct Sunday services in the absence of a priest.

DH:

What about native vocations to the priesthood?

WS:

We have a major effort in the promotion of vocations to the priesthood and religious life. Three men will be ordained diocesan priests on December 16th. Three others, one diocesan and two Augustinians were just ordained a few months ago. These are big numbers for us. Another big difference between Peru and the USA is that we are allowed to go into the public schools to give vocation talks in addition to our other efforts, like weekend vocation retreats. The diocese has a center of formation to prepare post high school men to discern a possible vocation to the priesthood and prepare them for the possibility of advanced studies. Many of the rural high schools are not very good, so there is a lot of catching up to do. Eventually Bishop Turley hopes to have our own diocesan seminary to better prepare men for ministry here in this diocese.

DH:

Besides your assignment at the Cathedral parish, has Bishop Turley asked you to assume some diocesan responsibilities?

WS:

Bishop Turley thinks it is useful that an “older” priest be available as a mentor to the younger priests...most of the Peruvian clergy are young. Some of the seminarians and younger priests come to me for spiritual direction. There still seems to be something of a respect for the wisdom of years in Peru....haaaaaaaa if they only knew! Bishop also has me on a lot of committees like the one that examines seminarians for priesthood.



DH:

Is there a way for members of the diocese to assist and support your ministry and the Mission in Peru in a particular way?

WS:

The people of the diocese can certainly support us by prayer... that’s most important....life and ministry here are very challenging. Although Peru is a culturally Catholic country, in Chulucanas, at least, perhaps 15% of the population actively practices their faith. People, who are able, can always support us financially. There never seems to be enough resources to meet even basic needs of people and supply pastoral materials.

Editor’s note: If you wish to send a donation to support the Mission in Peru, designate your Mission Appeal Combined Collection donation to benefit “Church in Latin America – Diocese of Chulucanas. Or if you wish to send an on-going gift to support the Diocese of Chulucanas, contact: Augustinian Missions, 20300 Governors Highway, Olympia Fields, IL 60461. Or, if you wish to support Fr. Schuessler’s work directly, contact the author, Dave Hougan, at dhougan@rockforddiocese.org for instructions. †

IRA Rollover Provision Gives Donors Alternative Giving Option

By John Sentovich
Director of Planned Giving

This past August, President Bush signed into law the Pension Protection Act of 2006 that includes a provision for making donations directly from a donor's IRA to a qualified charity. Because the provision is temporary and expires on December 31 of 2007, it is imperative that donors are contacted as soon as possible so they have time to take action.

The IRA rollover provision includes the following stipulations:

- Donors age 70½ or older can make direct distributions from their IRAs to qualified charitable organizations (does not include charitable trusts, gift annuities, donor advised funds or supporting organizations).
- The charitable distributions count toward minimum required distributions.
- The distribution generates neither taxable income nor a tax deduction, so even those who do not itemize their tax returns receive the benefit.
- The gifts may be made in addition to any other charitable giving the donor has planned.
- Donors may transfer up to \$100,000 per year directly from their IRAs.
- Checks must be cut directly from the IRA administrator to the charity. Experts are recommending that the check contain notation that the contribution is from the donor's IRA.

IRA administrators are requesting that they are given at least two weeks to process these contributions, so donors should be asked not to wait until the last week of the year to make this gift. Some parishes are doing special mailings to donors at least 70 years old to inform them of this gift opportunity. Others are inserting a message in the bulletin the last several weeks of the year to get the message out.

Many people who are required to make minimum distributions from their IRA at age 70½ do not necessarily need the extra income. This may be an opportunity for them to direct that distribution directly to their parish, school or favorite diocesan organization like Catholic Charities.

If you have any questions about this important gift opportunity, please call me at the Diocesan Administration Building at (815) 399-4300, ext. 358. †

