

Parish Stewardship Update

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Diocese of Rockford
Office of Stewardship Development

Phone (815) 964-6711

fax (815) 968-2808

Web Site: www.stewardshiprockford.com

Bob Pfundstein

Director of Parish Stewardship

e-mail: rpfundstein@rockforddiocese.org

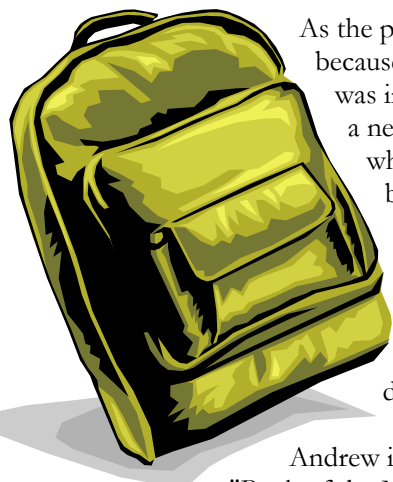
We Are the Hands and Feet of Christ

What happens when the Body of Christ asks for assistance?

*In The
Spirit Of
Giving...*

As we enter the Lenten season in our Church, almsgiving and helping the poor are often highlights of our Lenten spiritual journey. I am sharing a story with you this month that was submitted by a newsletter reader in Florida. The ideas and activities included may be both a challenge and an encouragement to your parish. If you are performing similar actions through your parish stewardship efforts, please let me know and I will highlight those activities in a future newsletter.

About four years ago, as St. Andrew Parish began stewardship, they decided to "twin" with the Parish of Corpus Christi. It began this way, Corpus Christi parish and its school, located about two minutes from the Miami International Airport in a very poor area of the city, is one of the oldest in the Diocese. With no air conditioning, the school had to keep its windows open all year. The airplanes taking off and arriving at the airport drowned out the teachers' voices. One of the associates in the Parish of Corpus Christi called a fellow priest in the Parish of St. Andrew to ask if we could help pay their school textbook bill because they did not have enough tuition money to cover it. St. Andrew Parish paid the bill and so began the involvement with Corpus Christi Parish. St. Andrew made a decision to challenge their parishioners to help air condition the Corpus Christi school. The initial thought was to purchase a window unit for each classroom. Unfortunately because of the structure, only central air conditioning would work. A parishioner from St. Andrew committed to working with vendors to get us the best possible AC price. Two other parishioners, one an architect, the other an electrical engineer, volunteered their time and talent to develop the plans, draw the blue prints, and pursue all the permits and other code issues with the city of Miami. Another parishioner who owns a painting business offered both men and supplies to repaint the entire school at no cost. One other parishioner, who installs tile, volunteered to re-tile the entire school if the tile were purchased.



As the project proceeded, St. Andrew parish had to "put a face on it" for the parishioners because St. Andrew is about an hour away from Corpus Christi Parish. "Backpack" Sunday was instituted at St. Andrew in order to involve more parishioners. All were invited to buy a new backpack, fill it with school supplies, label the appropriate grade level of the child who would receive it, and bring it to Mass. The parishioners were asked to place the backpacks on the altar before each Mass. While they had been told that there were about 275 students at Corpus Christi School, the St. Andrew parishioners brought in over 1500 backpacks. There were enough to give to every "inner city" parochial school child who could not afford a backpack. The pastor of Corpus Christi, the principal and several faculty members were invited to St. Andrew church that Sunday and they were overwhelmed. On Monday, a group of parishioners drove down to Corpus Christi to deliver the backpacks. The air conditioning, tiling and repainting were works in progress and were going to cost at least \$275,000 and so St. Andrew instituted a "Buck of the Month" club, having special envelopes printed indicating "Buck of the Month Club for Corpus Christi Parish." Everyone who comes to Mass on the first

Sunday of the month is encouraged to place a dollar in the envelope to help with all of the costs. Each year Corpus Christi invites St. Andrew to a special Mass and dinner. Also, each year on the Feast of St. Andrew, all of the children from Corpus Christi are invited to St. Andrew for the day. They share Mass, lunch and games. Corpus Christi Parish is as much a part of our lives as St. Andrew. When the air conditioning was finished, our pastor, our school children and every interested parishioner went down to Corpus Christi to "turn it on." St. Andrew parish still takes care of many of the needs of Corpus Christi. One way is to make sure that every First Communicant has a veil and dress, or a suit and tie. Another way is through the Corpus Christi youth celebrating Life Teen Retreats with the St. Andrew youth. The two schools share a First

Communion Prayer experience as well as a Confirmation retreat. "Backpack Sunday" is still occurring and now there is a mountain of backpacks in the sanctuary. While they continue to go to Corpus Christi and other inner city Catholic schools, public school teachers who are parishioners at St. Andrew take backpacks for the children in their classes who cannot afford them. Parishioners still come on the Monday after Backpack Sunday to sort and deliver the backpacks wherever they need to go throughout the Diocese. St. Andrew's stewardship theme is "We are a Stewardship Parish...We are a Servant Parish...We are The Hands and Feet of Christ" and by twinning with Corpus Christi Parish they present a great model of this theme.

Children's Stewardship Ideas:



St. John Neumann Parish in St. Charles has been developing a sense of stewardship among their religious education students by asking them for new or "gently used" toys. The children are encouraged to share from their favorites. The toys are cleaned and delivered to the children of St. Nicholas Parish in Aurora. This sharing has been a great stewardship education for the children



Here is an interesting newsletter insight from St. Charles Borromeo parish in Hampshire

Dear Charlie,

Why do we hear more about Stewardship and Community rather than about Spiritual instruction, faith, morals, ethics and doing what God wants us to do? Who is to tell us what God expects?

Truthseeker

Dear Truthseeker,

Christ is the one who tells us what God expects from us through sacred Scriptures. We are asked to perform the Corporal Works of Mercy; feed the hungry, shelter the homeless, clothe the naked, visit the sick and imprisoned, bury the dead – this is Stewardship. We are asked to perform other works of mercy; to instruct, advise, console, comfort, forgive and bear wrongs patiently – this is Stewardship. Faith, morals, ethics and doing what God wants are all part of the call to serve our fellow man in the example of Jesus, Himself; the epitome of Stewardship, the Master-Steward of time, talent and treasure.