

Parish Stewardship Update

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Christmas In September

Supporting your parish

In September of 2004, the International Catholic Stewardship Council will be hosting the ICSC conference in New Orleans. One grateful parishioner in our diocese looked at the dates and was unable to attend. However, they felt that the opportunity to participate in the stewardship conference should not be missed by the parish. This individual decided to begin putting aside funds to pay for the conference for someone else. In a letter to the pastor, they indicated that this gift would be for an individual, chosen by the pastor, who would most benefit from the stewardship conference and be able to bring new ideas and energies back to the parish. In that same letter this donor indicated that the gift would not effect their regular donations to the parish.

What a wonderful and thoughtful gift. It speaks of a commitment to the stewardship way of life through grateful giving. The gift, which includes enough to cover all expenses (registration, travel, and hotel), has only one string attached. It is to be used for the ICSC conference and not for other reasons.

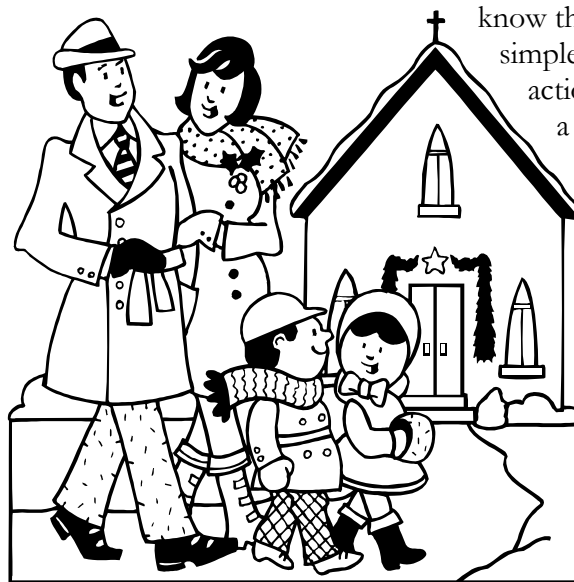
In reflecting on this gift, I was struck by the generosity and was also challenged by the self-less gift. If an individual was willing to share a portion of their sacrificial gift with another simply by appreciating the advantage of this conference, what could a parish do over the course of a year?

How many individuals could benefit from the stewardship conference or conferences on evangelization, liturgy, education, social justice, or other ministries? If individuals and parishes committed a portion of their giving to continue the training of their parishioners who give of their time and talent, the ministries of the parish could change the community it serves.

Similar to the message that is depicted at the end of the movie "It's a Wonderful Life," when George Bailey realizes the almost unbelievable effect on the community of his lifelong generosity in small matters, how can each of us and our parishes become a little more like George and Bedford Falls? We all

know the power of simple words and actions, let's make a commitment to practice building the parish communities in which we live.

Have a wonderful Christmas season!



Good Stewardship ...

Happy New Year!

We have all heard the words and often find ourselves writing down resolutions that we intend to keep at least through the end of the Christmas season on January 11th. The system seems slightly flawed. Rather than establish a grounds for failure, perhaps we should set ourselves up for success. Instead of looking at the future as a blank canvas that we will paint upon, let's review the past first to see the background colors we have already chosen.

Our lives do not occur one year at a time with a stopwatch and referee evaluating our actions. I would like to think that each year allows us to grow in many positive ways and the year should begin with the ways we have succeeded. If I look back over the past year it gives me the opportunity to evaluate my words, my thoughts and my actions. Instead of promising to lose weight, I can say that I have maintained my weight or lost some weight. Instead of saying I am going to go to daily Mass, I can say that I have attended more often in the past year than in previous years. Instead of indicating all the changes I will make in my time management, I can say that I have used my calendar more effectively. Instead of scheduling more time for the children and then being too busy with other things, I can say that



I have done a better job of being with the children. Instead of tearing down our parishes ministries, I can get more involved and realize the amount of good that has already been done by parish staff and other volunteers in education, liturgy, youth ministry, music ministry, and many others. The list can go on and on and should be a positive reminder of all the good we have accomplished rather than all the promises we have broken.

In The Spirit Of Giving...

Stewardship reminds us that all we have belongs to God. This includes our successes, our failures, our time, our talents, our treasure, our families, our church, our very selves. We can be grateful to God for allowing us to experience life and life to its fullest.

There is a time for setting goals and establishing objectives and there is a time for evaluation and review. As the new year begins let's be hopeful that we can use both times more effectively for our families, our jobs, our parishes, and our dioceses.

Let's really have a

Happy New Year!

"The chief joy of fame is the private satisfaction that *you have exercised*, I think, *a God-given talent*. It's the recognition of talent that gives pleasure to many other people."

P.D. James - Author