

# 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](http://www.stewardshiprockford.com)

Bob Pfundstein

Director of Parish Stewardship

e-mail: [rpfundstein@rockforddiocese.org](mailto:rpfundstein@rockforddiocese.org)

## Simple Living

by Bob Pfundstein

When was the last time you looked at all you had, all your calendar held, and all you had forgotten to do on your task list and asked the question – How did life become so busy? There is the need to occasionally review our lives and “simplify” the order of importance.

There are numerous solutions to simplifying your life and your schedule. There are books about prioritizing your tasks, books about using your time most effectively, books about stretching your dollar or getting the most for your money, books about raising your children, books about cooking gourmet meals “in a few minutes,” books about saving time washing the dishes, changing light bulbs, storing the china, cutting the grass, raking the leaves, and walking the dog. There are now computer programs which balance your checkbook, transfer your funds so you don’t have to waste time going to the bank, keep your calendar, synchronize with your pocket computer, and on and on and on. For me, many of these solutions have created more busyness rather than a simplified lifestyle.

I am beginning to ask myself some basic questions about being a good steward of all that God has given me. Do I make the time to thank God for the gift of life? Do I thank God for my health, my family, my wife, my children? Does my faith in God direct my life as a steward?

I am reminded that the sun rises and sets each day, I am trying to remember the last time I set aside time to watch and enjoy those events. I know that the sunset has fallen into my lap a few times when I have been so task oriented and one of my children looks up and oohs and aahs over the colors in the sky and challenges me to stop my task to discuss what colors we see.

Shouldn’t that be the task of the parent teaching their children about the wonders of God rather than the child teaching the parent about their lack of wonder? I could share many stories that indicate how busy I have become and how my children have often brought me to recognize God’s gifts. I would rather offer some simple ideas which have helped me, at times, remember God’s goodness.

### Making God’s Priorities Our Priorities

Spend on-the-road driving time in silence, praying and listening to God’s direction.

If you have small children, sit in their room at night as they fall asleep and watch the peace which surrounds them and thank God for them.

The next time you attend Mass, really listen to the Eucharistic Prayer and give thanks to God.

Call your parents more often with no agenda other than telling them you love them.

Invite a family to dinner on Sunday and share the Lord’s day with them. One of the best times of the year is during Advent. This is a great way to open your door to the Holy Family as they travel to Bethlehem.

Open a “tithing” account where the money that you deposit should be given away to others including your parish, the diocese, and other local, national and international causes.

Perform random acts of kindness in your daily activities especially in situations where you are unknown and won’t be recognized.

Thank God for the simple pleasures which surround us.



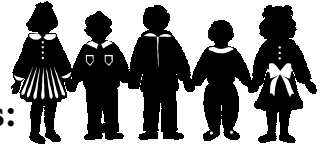
## Good Stewardship ...

One of our faithful readers sent us the following story about personal stewardship of treasure:

She belongs to a Catholic organization that decided to require dues in order to meet their projected expenses. As they were planning for next year's budget, they reviewed the last year, took their expenses, created a preliminary budget and divided by the number of members to determine membership dues. The group was shocked at the unexpectedly high cost of their dues. They decided to investigate outside funding sources and other means of support. When they came together as a whole, the decision was made to follow one stewardship method, which was to collect what each member was able to contribute, add up the total, and build their budget on what was available. They completed this task at a meeting and when they totaled the collected "dues," they found that they were \$100 over their projected budget. There was even one person who was deciding whether to join the group who was not required to pay dues who made a contribution to the organization. Her response to me was, "So you see what prayerful discernment does, it lets the bounty of God spill forth."

Send some of your parish or personal sharing stories so they can be published to inspire others.

### Children's Stewardship Ideas:



St. John Neumann Parish has translated a creative idea into a practical application for their religious education teachers. Three members of the Stewardship Commission made the time to review the teacher's manuals that were being used by the religious education department for each of the different grade levels. In cooperation with Jan Donovan, the parish Director of Religious Education, they purchased ink stamps, which read, "time," "talent," and "treasure." These volunteers then took the time to stamp each manual on the appropriate lesson with one or more of the simple stewardship messages. The teacher will no longer have to look for possibilities to incorporate stewardship into the already existing materials. We hope this simple addition will help the teacher and children understand stewardship as part of our faith development and as a core message of the Gospel.

