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"Building God's Temple" Parish Stewardship 2003

*By Bob Pfundstein
Director of Parish Stewardship*

In the Gospel, Jesus says, "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up." When we look from the perspective of our faith, the

Resurrection of Jesus Christ is the foundation of our temple, the Church. Over time we have remembered the building of God's temple in many ways. At baptism we are brought to the temple to become members of the Church. At our first Eucharist we are reminded that we become the physical temples that receive the Body of Christ. At Confirmation we are filled with the Holy Spirit and told of the gifts we are to use in building our personal faith and the faith of the community. In a more literal sense, as adults we are called to support the physical buildings of our parish through our regular Sunday giving and occasionally through a special gift to build anew. There are many ways we can build God's temple and each of us, as good stewards of the gifts we have been given, need to be poised to respond to God in gratitude for all we have.

Are your parish stewardship efforts looking like rubble instead of cornerstone material? Do your volunteers feel fresh and excited about their ministries or do they feel they are at the end of a long day of hard labor? Do your Sunday income statistics look flat or even negative? If you responded "yes" to any or all of the above questions, it's time to renew your parish efforts for 2003 and beyond. Parish Stewardship 2003 is your opportunity to join other parishes in the diocese to make a difference in the lives of your parishioners. By making a concerted effort to teach stewardship practices to the parish, together we can expect a more stable base of volunteers and financial donors.

The Office of Stewardship Development is finalizing plans to help you and your parish renew your stewardship appeals. Coming in September, a number of parishes will host regional meetings to put their individualized parish plan together in conjunction with the materials prepared by the Office of Stewardship Development. Your parish is welcome to participate.

The plan of action includes stewardship education through homilies, lay witness talks, and informational brochures. It also includes opportunities for parishioners to volunteer their time & talent to parish ministries and beyond. There will also be an opportunity to pledge financial support to the parish in order to keep the regular income sufficient to meet the needs of the parish. Stewardship of assets will be included in the process, with a focus on wills-awareness and end-of-year giving. There will be strong encouragement to evaluate the efforts and keep some statistical information to compare to past and future stewardship efforts.

A consistent message offered over a number of years creates a significant change of attitude and faith development for those who hear it. Many who have come to understand stewardship are willing to sacrifice to support the building of God's temple. Please help your parish to continue building God's temple for years to come. The appeal materials will be handed out at the regional meetings and should adapt well to any parish schedule. Contact Bob Pfundstein at 815/399-4300 for more information about Parish Stewardship 2003. †

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Help! Our Parish just received a large bequest!!

*By John Sentovich
Director of Planned Giving*

A When you think about it, it's an interesting dilemma. A pastor receives a phone call from an attorney who is handling the estate of one of his deceased parishioners. The attorney informs the pastor that the parishioner had no heirs and has left her entire estate to the parish, no strings attached. The estate is worth \$1.3 million and he wants to know who to make the check out to. It could happen.

Father puts the phone down, and after a minute to calm down from the feeling that he just won the lottery, he begins to think of all the things that could be done to enhance the parish: fix the leaky roof; pay past due debt; pave the parking lot; replace the old boilers; finally hire a full time youth minister; do the much needed tuck pointing; update the technology in the parish; increase teachers' salaries; put some into the Foundation for the future. The list seems endless. There is much work to do.

Then another question crosses his mind. How (and when) do I tell my people about this gift? It is an important question because of the two possible responses his parishioners may have: 1) Thankful for the gift, no impact



on their giving. Many people will share the pastor's excitement for this unexpected windfall. If they are in leadership positions, they will probably have opportunities to offer input regarding the spending/saving of this donor's largesse. They will recognize that this gift was one donor's personal gift-giving decision based on her unique family and faith circumstances. Their giving will not decrease because they believe that no matter what the parish's financial condition, they still have a need to give to their parish. If they are "tithers," they will continue giving 5% to their parish, 4% to the poor and 1%

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Stewardship Events Coming this Fall

Parish Stewardship 2003 Regional Meetings

September 9, 2003

September 11, 2003

September 16, 2003

September 18, 2003

Locations to be finalized

ICSC Conference

October 5 - 8, 2003

Chicago, Illinois

Diocese of Rockford Fiscal Management Conference

October 15 - 16, 2003

Rockford, Illinois

Parish Stewardship 2003 Appeal

October - November

Details to follow

"Stewardship: A Way of Life in the Rockford Diocese"

by David J. Hougan
Director of Office of Stewardship Development

During the first two months of Diocesan Stewardship 2003 these are the results:

Goal: \$5,556,060
Donors: 21,000
Pledges: \$4,150,000 - 75% of goal
Average gift to date: \$198.00
Parishes at goal by the pledges of their people: 16

Comparing these results to Diocesan Stewardship 2002 at this same time, the 2003 appeal is ahead in all categories: 1,200 more donors, \$300,000 more in pledges and 9 more parishes at goal.

St. Mary, Maple Park, made its goal on the first Weekend of the Campaign, followed by St. Peter, Geneva, St. Peter, South Beloit, and St. Nicholas, Aurora on the second weekend of the Campaign. Congratulations!

Follow-up phase:

In mid July 65,000 letters and pledge cards were sent to all those who have not participated in the appeal to date. All parishes are included in this diocesan direct mail follow-up

During the weeks between the end of August and the third week of September those members of the Diocese with a giving history in the 2002 and 2000 Appeals and who have not yet made a pledge will be called and asked to support the diocesan church. This year, because of budget cut backs, only those parishes that voluntarily sign up for the telephone follow-up campaign will be included in this effort.

Time and Talent:

In the May 2 and June 13 editions of *The Observer* the diocese published its Time and Talent sign up sheet. Thirteen diocesan ministries posted various ways for people to pledge their time and talent in some form of diocesan activity. Returned sheets from volunteers have been distributed to the appropriate diocesan director. The directors have contacted each respondent with a letter. Anyone interested who has not responded can do so by contacting the Office of Stewardship Development.

Gifts of Stock, Mutual Funds and Grain:

Gifts of appreciated stock, mutual funds and grain are excellent ways to give. These types of gifts are valued on the date of the gift and the donor receives a full tax deduction according to IRS rules.

People wishing to use appreciated stock or mutual funds to honor their pledge, indicate that intention on their pledge card. The Office of Stewardship Development sends them an instruction sheet so that they may electronically transfer the stock from their personal account to the diocesan account. Mutual Funds have special rules for transferring. An instruction sheet is available from the Office of Stewardship Development describing this process.

Farmers can give gifts of grain. A Brochure titled: *Charitable Gifts of Grain – Supporting Your Parish, Parish School, Central Catholic High School, or Diocese of Rockford and/or its Entities* is available describing the process of using grain as a charitable gift and receiving the tax benefits according to the IRS rules. This brochure was sent to each pastor of the Diocese and is also available by contacting the Office of Stewardship Development, Diocese of Rockford. †



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for diocesan ministries. 2) Thankful for the gift, give less in the Sunday Offertory. Some people's response will be "Whew, finally the parish can breathe a little bit and get out of debt! I guess they don't need my money anymore!!" Obviously that is a normal, rational response to such a large gift. Depending on their involvement, these parishioners are aware of the parish's many needs that have gone unmet because of budget shortfalls. In some charitable giving circles, these unexpected gifts are called "savior" gifts. They save the parish because now it can do things it's always wanted to do AND they save parishioners from undue financial strain that their giving may cause. They see this gift as a way for the entire parish to share in one donor's generosity.

Unfortunately for parishes, my experience tells me that response #2 happens more often than parish leaders would like. What typically happens is that the parish spends a large portion of the gift on needed repairs and other significant purchases, perhaps puts some away in their saving account and some into their Foundation account for the future. The problem is that their need for ordinary income has not significantly changed to cover the day-to-day budgetary expenses of the parish. They still have salaries, benefits, utilities, and maintenance expenses to pay, along with making unexpected repairs to equipment and buildings. If a high percentage of committed parishioners give significantly less in the Sunday collection, the parish will soon be back into deficit spending, will have spent their savings, and back into the same financial crunch they were in before the attorney called.

Some practical suggestions:

So, what is a pastor to do in this somewhat delicate situation? First of all communicate openly and honestly about what the gift was and that plans are being made on how to maximize the long-term benefit to the parish. This could be done in a variety of ways: a letter in the bulletin; a letter to every parishioner's home; from the pulpit at Mass; at various leadership gatherings at the parish and social groups. The point is that the news will spread fast once the gift is made, so it is better that communication come from parish leadership than from the rumor mill. Second, gently remind people that their giving is still needed in the Sunday Offertory. Along with information about the gift, tell people that the gift was one person's personal faith response and that our giving as Christians is not determined by what other people do.

We all have a need to give, in good financial times and in bad. Third, create a "suggestion box" for people to offer ideas about how to use the gift. Give them an opportunity to express their creativity – and hopefully their time and talent as well – by suggesting ways the parish can enhance its ministries. Perhaps an idea or two might surface that makes a lasting impact on the parish and surrounding community.

As you can see, gifts like these – rare as they are – can be a mixed blessing. Hopefully as more and more parishes educate about the stewardship of assets and endowment, they will occur more often. The key is education and a willingness to ask. Remember that universities, hospitals and museums are all seeking the trillions of dollars being transferred from the WWII generation to baby boomers. The Church should as well. Just be ready with a plan when they come.



Large bequest or not, the pastor and parish finance council still need to retire past debt, remain current on present bills and plan for the future. This takes time and effort and is often similar to putting a financial jigsaw puzzle together. Remember to leave the church in your will, but also remember to continue to give regularly in your Sunday envelope. One donor's large gift does not make your regular giving less important. †