

# Pillar of Prayer

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A stewardship parish strives to nourish the soul through prayer. "Prayer is as necessary to our souls as food is to our bodies." (Wichita). Prayer and the sacraments dispose a soul to receive God's abundant graces, which are necessary to grow in holiness. It is through prayer that we nurture our personal relationship with Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

While parishioners find great fulfillment in giving themselves to parish life, prayer purifies and intensifies the intention of the steward. Prayer increases our yearning to receive the source and summit of our Catholic faith, the Eucharist. As a parish family, we gather together to worship and praise God in the Mass. Nourished by the Word of God and the Eucharist, we are strengthened as a parish family to go and to serve the Lord. Stewardship is a lived response of the disciple to follow this command.

There is a deep connection between the Eucharistic celebration and stewardship. In one of the prefaces of the Eucharistic prayers it says, "Lord, our desire to thank you is itself your gift." The Third Eucharistic Prayer states, "All life, all holiness comes from you through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, by the working of the Holy Spirit... And so, Father, we bring you these gifts. We ask you to make them holy by the power of your Spirit, that they may become the body and blood of your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, at whose command we celebrate this Eucharist."

All we are and seek to become is strengthened and becomes more perfect through the Eucharist. It is in the Eucharist where we again recognize our total dependence upon God for everything. All that is good is a gift from Him. It is not that we have loved Him, but that He first has loved us by giving His Son.

In both our personal and communal prayer, we turn toward God to discern properly our talents and gifts. In a steward's response, we place those gifts at the service of God and one another. At the heart of the steward's prayer is the petition, "Thy Will be done."

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Prayer is one of the *Four Pillars of Stewardship* prepared by the Catholic Diocese of Wichita, Office of Stewardship. We are grateful for their permission to reprint this entire section on prayer to help our parish's stewardship efforts. You may also reference *10 Essentials of Parish Life* (Oakland) – Worship.

*Listed below are some of the "building blocks" a stewardship parish considers as it seeks to grow in prayer:*

**Pastor:** The pastor is a man of prayer, who helps lead his parishioners to be a people of prayer. Spiritual exercises, which promote this prayer life, include: private prayer daily, communal prayer and participation in the sacramental life of the Church. Through his leadership, prayer is the rock foundation of every parish direction and decision. Parishioners see and more readily trust pastoral decisions as they witness the Holy Spirit guiding and directing the parish vision and planning.

**Pastoral Planning:** Prayer is essential to the spiritual life of the individual, the family, the parish and the Church Universal. Prayer needs to precede the development of the parish pastoral plan as well as precede every step of the implementation of the plan. The parish organizations model this for all parishioners by beginning the meeting or activity with prayer, calling each person into a conscious presence with our Almighty God. As a seminary professor once taught, "Do not become so involved in the work of the Lord, that you forget the Lord of the work!"

**Holiness:** Holiness is the perfection of love - to be like Jesus. To grow in holiness is the ultimate desire of our prayer life. This gift and call to holiness is first given to us at our Baptism when we become children of God. Our journey of faith in this life is a spiritual journey to the Lord. If we do not recognize the end to which God calls us, then we are not following the Way, Truth and Life, who is Christ Himself.

**Sacraments:** Frequent reception of the Sacraments, especially Reconciliation and Holy Communion, strengthen us in our journey to holiness. The sacraments are visible signs of God's love that make us grow in grace, in our participation in the life of our God.

**Liturgy:** The celebration of the Sunday Mass Liturgy is the source and summit of our lives as faithful stewards. The liturgical prayers throughout the Mass flow from the heart of stewardship. The Eucharist not only feeds us, but challenges us to share the gifts we have received with others. We are sent "...to love and serve the Lord" at the conclusion of the Mass. A constant challenge exists to help parishioners make the correlation between their call to discipleship as stewards and the liturgies we celebrate in our prayer.

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**Gratitude:** A deep sense of gratitude fills the heart of a steward. The steward understands that everything they are and have that is good comes from God. The recognition of the gifts received daily from God makes us consciously aware of God's Presence among His People. Our desire to thank God is His gift. As disciples, we are called to respond by using these gifts of our time, talent and treasure. Gratitude in our hearts cultivates our prayer.

**Conversion:** Our journey towards holiness requires a lifetime of daily conversion. Prayer helps us see to see ourselves as God sees us and to see who God calls us to become. Without the desire for conversion to become faithful stewards, our spiritual blindness leads to selfishness and pride.

**Virtues:** Through faithful lives of prayer, we grow in virtue. Our prayer takes deep root when we practice the theological virtues, (faith, hope, and charity); the cardinal virtues, (prudence, justice, temperance and fortitude); and seek to live the fruits of the Holy Spirit, (love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control). We grow in virtue when we pray. A steward is a person of virtue.

## Reflection Questions

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1. Is your parish a place of prayer? Is it evident to you that the directions and decisions of the parish are guided by a deep prayer life of the parish community?
2. What can your parish do to help yourself and others make prayer a greater priority?
3. What ideas do you have to strengthen each?

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# PRAYER - Practical Ideas

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**By focusing on prayer, we naturally recognize God as the source of our being.**

*In the New Covenant, prayer is the living relationship of the children of God with their Father who is good beyond measure, with his Son Jesus Christ and with the Holy Spirit. The grace of the Kingdom is "the union of the entire holy and royal Trinity . . . with the whole human spirit." Thus, the life of prayer is the habit of being in the presence of the thrice-holy God and in communion with him. This communion of life is always possible because, through Baptism, we have already been united with Christ. Prayer is Christian insofar as it is communion with Christ and extends throughout the Church, which is his Body. Its dimensions are those of Christ's love. (CCC 2565)*

Here are some ideas to consider to incorporate the stewardship of prayer into parish life.

## **Mass:**

- The Offertory
  - People naturally make a connection to Stewardship during this time of the Mass. It is important that the collection is taken to the altar and presented to the priest with the bread and wine. The fruits of our time and talent are represented in our sacrificial offer. This procession of sacrificial gifts is one of the strongest opportunities for us to present our self in union with our Creator. This is one way we fully participate in Mass by presenting our sacrificial gifts to the Lord.
- Prayers of the Faithful
  - Include prayers that encourage developing generous and grateful hearts in young people, families, and the world.
- Focus on the Eucharistic Prayer
  - This is our source and summit of our faith as Christians. The prayers flow from the heart of stewardship. The Eucharist feeds us and challenges us to share our gifts with others. We are sent "...to love and serve the Lord" at the end of the Mass.



## Mass continued:

- Music
  - Music often has rich stewardship themes. Music is often in harmony with the scripture readings and the seasons. The call to serve is strong during ordinary time and may prove especially useful to the stewardship effort.

## At home, work or traveling

- Help parishioners host small groups in the home that promote encouragement of our spiritual call to holiness.
- Help parishioners establish the habit of daily prayer and bible reading both as a family and as individuals. Inviting God into your life starting with just 15 minutes a day will have tremendous positive effects.
  - Daily bible readings are available online and downloadable to your computer or MP3 player.
- Provide simple stewardship prayers or psalms during the day to memorize or recite.
- Pray always. Provide lists in the bulletin or on the web site for ways parishioners can pray for others during the day.
- Take in a daily mass at a church near your workplace or vacation stay.
- Practice holiness with your mind
  - Read inspiring books
  - Focus on TV and other media that has uplifting themes.
- Teach your children about how to be a responsible steward with homework time, play time, and prayer time. Help teenagers begin or strengthen their prayer life.

# Your Parish Action Items:

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# Pillar of Hospitality

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“...when I was a stranger, you welcomed me.” (Mt. 25:35). Jesus Christ teaches that whenever we welcome one of the least of our sisters and brothers, we welcome Christ Himself. Parishioners of a stewardship parish seek to see the face of Christ in one another. With special vigilance, parishioners must seek out and welcome new members to the parish family. A stewardship parish is a welcoming parish regardless of the parish demographics: large or small - urban, suburban or rural.

We are all prodigal children longing to be welcomed home. In a hospitable parish, parishioners and guests feel they belong and are appreciated. This is especially true if they were ever absent from the church. Hospitality leads to a sense of ownership among parishioners. This ownership and personal involvement fosters a sense of “belonging.” When parishioners experience a warm and sincere welcome, they in turn become open to give themselves to others. God is love. God gives His love to each one of us. As God loves us, He calls us to love one another. This Divine Love flows through the heart of the faithful steward to love others. When we are recipients of such love from others, we are attracted to follow this example. When others welcome us, we are open to welcoming others. This desire to welcome others is yet another gift of God. The most vibrant stewardship parishes are those in which parishioners know they are welcomed, which fosters a sense of ownership and personal involvement in lived stewardship to the parish family.

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*Listed below are some of the "building blocks" parishioners might consider as they seek to build and maintain a parish of hospitality and welcome:*

**Pastor:** As shepherd of the flock, allowing time for the pastor to meet and come to know his parishioners is an essential element of hospitality. Creating opportunities before and after Mass for the pastor to greet parishioners as well as special events like quarterly welcoming gatherings of new parishioners will help a pastor and parishioners become acquainted with one another.

**Pastoral Planning:** When establishing goals and objectives for the parish, the involvement of both new parishioners and veteran members should be considered in the effective implementation of these objectives. Seeking new ways to improve hospitality and welcome to all members of the parish family is itself a sign of vibrant parish hospitality.

**Invitation:** Whether a new or long-standing member of a parish, parishioners need to be invited to serve in the most personal way possible. It often takes more than one invitation before a parishioner decides to become involved, so perseverance is important when we invite people. Parishioners who are quiet can be misinterpreted as disinterested. Understanding that people often receive information in different ways, varied forms of invitation are necessary. Bulletin and pulpit announcements, personal invitations, personal phone calls, and visits by members of the welcoming committee are effective tools. Noticing a particular talent or gift of an individual parishioner and personally inviting that person to share that gift with the parish family is most effective. Above all, we must persevere in our efforts to invite all parishioners to recognize the gifts given them individually by God and to ask them to share those gifts for the good of the parish family and the wider Church.

**Called by Name:** Because we are a parish family, it is important to know our fellow parishioners by name—even in the largest parishes. No doubt that this is a challenge for all of us. But we know from our own personal experience, that when we are called by our name by other parishioners, we no longer exist anonymously in the parish. At Baptism, when we become children of God, we are called by name! Updated parish pictorial directories are very valuable tools to allow us to know one another. Taking the time to study these pictures and then to leave our "comfort zones" to initiate conversation with these parishioners when we see them at a parish function is one of the most dynamic ways of establishing hospitality and welcome. The welcoming committee of the parish has a special responsibility to model this for other parishioners.

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**Communication:** Consistent, continual, updated, friendly and clear communication of parish events in the bulletin, pulpit announcements, newsletters, parish websites, phone calls, etc. is vitally important to foster hospitality. Where people believe that they are informed, they experience that sense of belonging. Where communication is lacking within the parish, people feel disconnected. Often, this results in inaccurate and destructive conclusions drawn by certain members of the parish family, which when shared among parishioners, leads to confusion, hurt and anger.

**Ministry Fairs:** Ministry or Stewardship Fairs are great ways to invite parishioners to become involved. By having each parish organization set up an information booth for parishioners to see and learn about the various parish ministries, we open them to a world of possibilities in the parish where they can give of their time and talent. These fairs also provide members of each organization an opportunity personally to invite parishioners to become involved. Sign-up sheets at the booth allow contacts to be made efficiently. Stewardship Fairs held shortly prior to the annual parish stewardship renewal are very effective in welcoming and inviting parishioners, new and long-standing, to become personally involved as stewards in the life of the parish family.

**Social Activities:** The parish is a place of many social activities. Participating in these activities nurture our sense of community and belonging. At these events, greeting and talking with parishioners, especially new parishioners, is an important function of all members. If the leaders of the parish committee, which organizes the activity, make the welcoming of parishioners a priority as part of the event itself, this models hospitality for all those who attend.

**Empowerment:** Parishioners have a great sense of empowerment to want to serve the parish when hospitality is present. The pastor's personal invitation and empowerment of committee members to carry out the mission statement help foster a sense of hospitality. Identifying the gifts and talents of parishioners aids their sense of empowerment. Consider having creative programs where people notice a parishioner's talents and gifts, (anonymously or openly), and then invite that parishioner to use those gifts for the greater good of all.

**Direct and Rapid Follow-Up:** Once we have effectively invited parishioners and they have accepted or are open to our invitation, it is imperative that parish leaders follow-up with the invitations. If a parishioner has been inspired to sign up on the time and talent form for a particular parish ministry and we fail to follow-up personally with them in a reasonable period of time, the result will be disastrous. **Next to a lack of invitation, a lack of follow-up is one of the surest sources of poor parishioner involvement.** It is better not to invite parishioner involvement, than to invite and then do nothing when the parishioner offers his/her gift to the parish.

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**Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA):** Individuals desiring entrance into the Catholic Church through the Sacraments of Initiation often experience a close bond with each other and their sponsors during their catechumenate period. Sadly however, too often once these persons are initiated fully at the Easter Vigil into the Catholic Faith, they become lost in the large parish community. These new parishioners are the fertile soil, awaiting an invitation to become active stewards in the parish family. Special care should be given these persons both by their individual sponsors in the RCIA journey, as well as members of the welcoming committee of the parish.

## Reflection Questions

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1. Is your parish a welcoming and hospitable place of worship? How are new parishioners welcomed into your parish family? Do long-standing members of the parish feel welcome and involved?
2. Using the building blocks listed above, how can your parish extend hospitality and welcome to all who come to your parish? What other building blocks might make your parish more welcoming to parishioners?
3. Does the role of hospitality and welcome fall into each of the goals and objectives of the mission of the parish? Does each parish organization recognize its responsibility to practice hospitality and welcome?

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# WELCOMING & HOSPITALITY - Practical Ideas

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**"Belonging leads to believing." Gallup, *Growing an Engaged Church* (Winseman)**

*In Charles E. Zech's book on Best Practices in Parish Stewardship (Zech 120), he states that from 8 Best Practice strategies, a welcoming parish is ranked as first, "Be a welcoming parish that takes community-building seriously. People give to people. Unless a parish is viewed as a welcoming place, a place where there is a real sense of community – a place, as Justin Clements puts it, where people want to be - they are wasting their time talking about stewardship." A welcoming parish is a parish that evangelizes. "Do not neglect hospitality, for through it some have unknowingly entertained angels." Hebrews 13-2*

Here are some ideas to consider with welcoming and hospitality to create a sense of belonging into parish life.

## Mass:

- Allow time for the Pastor or Priests to greet parishioners before and after Mass.
  - Designate consistent scheduled times of hospitality where parishioners are welcomed to gathering after Mass or before events.
  - Have friendly welcoming greeters at every Mass
  - Ushers are useful to help people find seats.
  - Welcome cards in the pews and welcoming tables available after Mass are helpful. Information at the table may include items like: parish directory, registration forms, ministry catalogs, commitment cards and map of campus.
  - Have "How May We Serve You" pew cards available for guests and parishioners.
  - Try to have nursery service during Mass
  - Having lay-testimonials whenever appropriate helps to build community.
  - Review your parish's ministries to look way that create a welcoming parish community:
  - Help your parishioners to identify their gifts and talents.
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## Other general considerations:

- Follow-up immediately after invited parishioners that have inquired about a ministry.
  - Promote the use of Ministry Fairs to communicate information about the various Ministries at the parish.
  - Always remember the sick, hospitalized, home-bound parishioners.
  - Welcome new parishioners to the community
    - New parishioners' social which may be a potluck dinner or wine & cheese after evening Mass. The pastor, other clergy, councils and staff should also attend.
    - Provide information about the parish
    - Introduce activities and opportunities to become involved
    - Practice hospitality-name tags at gathering.
    - Include a tour of parish property.
    - Recognize new parishioners at Mass
    - Welcome new parishioners in the bulletin with a short introduction about them
    - Reserve a space on the vestibule's bulletin board for new parishioners' picture and introduction.
  - Make it easy for guests and parishioners to find you:
    - Have your church listed in various directories, i.e., travel guides and hotels
    - Include directions to your parish on your website
    - Insure your current Mass times are listed on the diocesan and parish websites.
    - Inspect your campus signage for clear directions around the parish campus
  - Considering offering a Returning Catholics class.
  - Clearly define everyone's responsibility for being a welcoming community.
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## Other general considerations:

- Celebrate your parish's diversity.
  - Communication is the most important aspect to being welcoming community and the most challenging to do. Explore new ways of communicating with use of technology, update the format of the bulletin or even consider creating a quarterly newsletter.
  - Family activities should be encouraged in as many events as possible.
  - Consider personal visits with new parishioners and existing parishioners.
  - Recognize special days in parishioners' lives.
    - Send cards for anniversaries, weddings, birthdays, baptisms, etc.
    - Announce significant days in the bulletin (25th, 50th anniversary, etc.)
    - Announce baptisms, first reconciliations, first Eucharist, confirmations and weddings, holy orders in the bulletin or parish newsletter.
    - Thank parishioners who have moved away and wish them well
    - Have a parish directory available with pictures, phone numbers and emails. Parish directories are useful for helping people to know one another.
  - Provide regular social gatherings; picnics, open houses, annual appreciation dinner, movie nights, holiday celebrations of your diverse populations.
  - At least three times a year send seasonal flyers listing upcoming activities and review of past activities.
  - Send out calendars and invitations for Advent and Lent. Another good time to send out notices is just before school session begins.
  - Use email to further expand Sunday's homily message in the upcoming week.
  - Use email to communicate upcoming events.
  - Timely follow-up on all inquiries is imperative. Have a double check system in place to insure that parishioners are follow up with after inquiring about serving in a ministry.
  - Websites are excellent as an added form of communication, information and resources.
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Other general considerations:

## Your Parish Action Items:

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# Pillar of Formation

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As the steward grows in the life of prayer, God reveals Himself more intimately in this personal relationship. The steward also sees that the gifts received from God are to be shared and not buried. The steward remains deeply rooted in humility, recognizing that the gifts one has been given come not from self, but from God. Those gifts are to be shared with others. Here lies the heart of the steward's personal response as a disciple – to share what one has received and to share with a generous, grateful and loving heart.

This formation of each individual becomes part of the formation of the parish community. As members of the Body of Christ, the parish recognizes that it has a call from God to give. Inherent within each individual is the need to give – to move from selfishness to selflessness. This formation is a life-long journey of conversion. The stewardship parish journeys constantly in this formation of conversion. As one grows more deeply in this formation to a life of stewardship, the more deeply one loves as God loves us. This is true for the individual steward and for the stewardship parish.

Such formation is a formidable task, involving education of the mind and conversion of the heart. To know the “stewardship way of life”, does not make one live a “stewardship way of life.” Formation includes quality education, but the knowledge itself is not enough. Ongoing Catholic education, (for children and adults), is important if we are to grow in our lives as stewards. This formation should include a proper knowledge and understanding of stewardship since it is a primary means to lead the faithful to holiness. Catholic schools, Parish Schools of Religion, youth ministry programs, adult education offerings and parish stewardship committees are wonderful and essential places where this faith formation begins. Yet, it is foolish to think that these are the only parish organizations responsible for this faith formation of parishioners to grow.

Every parish organization has a role to play in nurturing the faith formation of the parishioners. It is in this collective parish effort and the grace of God at work through our sincere efforts that faith formation thrives. The meaning of faithful stewardship and how to live this way of life is at the core of the disciple's response to the gift of faith we freely receive from our loving God.

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*Listed below are some of the "building blocks" a stewardship parish considers as they form individual stewards within the parish:*

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**Pastor:** The pastor is the primary communicator of stewardship to the parish. He teaches by his personal witness the spirituality of stewardship: in the pulpit, in parish gatherings, ministry meetings and in each and every interaction with his parishioners. Often, a priest must journey through his own spiritual conversion to embrace stewardship completely. This personal conversion as well as his visible support for the message is needed to teach the stewardship way of life throughout the parish and wider community.

**Stewardship Committee:** The stewardship committee assists the pastor and Pastoral Council in facilitating the stewardship formation process throughout the parish. Members of the committee work closely with the pastor in executing a well-planned stewardship renewal process; seeking lay witnesses for presentations and to find inviting ways to provide stewardship opportunities to parishioners through other ministries. The Diocese of Wichita provides beneficial resources to parishes to facilitate a successful stewardship renewal.

**Witness Talks:** Lay witness talks often take place at Sunday Mass during the parish's annual stewardship renewal. These presentations often inspire parishioners to discern and pray more fervently about embracing a stewardship way of life. By parishioners sharing with the entire parish family their own personal conversion stories to the stewardship way of life, the message becomes real, inspiring and practical. These talks are effective tools to the wider parish congregation as well as to smaller groups or parish organizations.

**Pastoral Planning:** Stewardship formation should be included in pastoral planning efforts through specific objectives and goals. This inclusion allows an action plan to carry out these goals and objectives based upon the needs of each parish and the mission of the church.

**Need Identification:** The needs analysis process identifies the types of educational and formational programs which correspond to the unique demographics of each parish. The goal is to integrate practical, applicable, and vibrant educational programs with solid theological formation. Stewardship formation is tailored to the individual needs and opportunities present within each parish. The parish mission statement serves as the foundation of this formation effort.

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**Parish Ministries:** All parish leaders best teach the stewardship way of life by their own living witness as stewards. One cannot teach well what one fails to live. Leaders should also be prepared to educate those in their respective organizations about the vision, mission, goals and objectives of the parish. The pastor assists in forming parish leaders to nourish and equip them in their ministries. This is accomplished through parish leadership training days and retreats as well as other on-going formation.

**Catechesis:** Catholic education programs such as Catholic schools, adult education, Parish School of Religion, youth ministry programs and retreats are vital components in the role of faith formation, including the formation of the stewardship way of life. Educating parishioners in the spirituality and beauty of stewardship forms them to become faithful disciples of Jesus to live their Baptismal call. Stewardship parishes begin teaching this way of life to their youngest members and continue this on-going formation through all stages of the lives of their parishioners.

**Volunteers:** Education, formation and appreciation of parish volunteers build and sustain the stewardship way of life. The pastor, pastoral council, stewardship committee and parish ministry leaders are key people in this effort, though this responsibility is not theirs alone. Volunteers need opportunities to carry out their discipleship. The myriad tasks that stem from the pastoral planning efforts create many opportunities for parish volunteers to carry out their call to discipleship. If limited opportunities are available, the importance of stewardship loses meaning.

**Youth:** Forming young stewards begins first in the home by families living a stewardship way of life. As children understand and live stewardship, so too do they grow individually on the journey toward holiness. Catholic schools, religious education programs, and youth ministry need to include stewardship education in their curriculums and objectives to foster lived stewardship among the youth. One cannot run before one learns to walk. One begins to walk at a young age by taking small steps. It is natural for a parish to ask parishioners to take a leap of faith to live stewardship when those parishioners have been continually formed as to the meaning of stewardship.

**Evaluation:** Continual evaluation of formation and education offerings in the parish helps to determine the effectiveness of such formation. Do the programs teach God's love and mercy and meet the needs of the parishioners? Do the parish programs support the spirituality of stewardship as a way of life to lead all on the path to holiness? Written evaluations by the participants in the programs and self-evaluations by those who prepare these offerings are beneficial tools to answer the above questions.

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## Reflection Questions

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1. Reflect how the pillar of prayer relates to the pillar of formation. Does this connection manifest itself within your parish?
2. What ideas might you have to strengthen the building blocks listed above for deeper faith formation of your parishioners?
3. Do the mission, vision, objectives and goals of your parish include enough emphasis upon faith formation of parishioners? If not, in what area(s) in the parish does greater faith formation need to occur?

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# *Formation and Education*

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## **Moving toward the church mission and personal fulfillment as one.**

*Formation and Education "...aims to bring about in the believer an ever more mature faith in Jesus Christ, a deeper knowledge and love of his person and message, and a firm commitment to follow him." (NDC, 19A) "Formation is a formidable task, involving education of the mind and conversion of the heart. The meaning of faithful stewardship and how to live this way of life is at the core of the disciple's response to the gift of faith that we freely receive from our loving God." Diocese of Wichita, Stewardship Department. "To know Christ better and make Him better known." (Oakland)*

Here are some ideas to help your parish form individual stewards within your parish:

## **Role of the Parish Clergy, Council and Pastoral Staff:**

- Clergy and leaders of the parish must take an active role in support of stewardship formation and education at the parish. Effective and sustained stewardship efforts will be difficult without the leadership's understanding of the spirituality of stewardship and on-going commitment to the process.
- Form a stewardship committee comprised of active stewards from your parish community.
- Commit to annual stewardship retreat days to renew your existing stewardship committee.
- After reflecting on the Pastoral Letter, *Stewardship: A Disciple's Response* (USCCB), assess your current Formation and Education programs where stewardship as a way of life can be integrated. Please consider these areas when you are assessing your current needs. This is a sample list and ideally would include all ministries and councils at your parish.
  - Faith Formation in Catechesis K - 12
  - Parish Elementary or High School



- Confirmation classes
- Youth ministry programs
- Children's ministry programs such as Scouting and CYO
- Ongoing adult faith formation classes
- RCIA program and the mystagogia period.
- Returning Catholics program
- Marriage preparation

### **Other educational opportunities:**

- Use audio-visual media for stewardship education by creating a DVD of your parish's stewardship fruits.
- Proper selection and training/re-training of volunteers.
- Annual Stewardship Retreat or Annual Enrichment Day that focuses on stewardship for parish clergy, councils, staff and ministry chairs.
- Hold morning retreats on stewardship for ministry members and parish.
- Utilize the Pastoral Letter, *Stewardship: A Disciple's Response* (USCCB) in Small Groups Discussions

### **Communication of formation and education**

- Use of parish website and bulletin to promote stewardship as a way of life:
  - Ministry opportunities and training opportunities
  - Ministry catalog on website
  - Newsletter and bulletin on line
  - Using email is an effective way to communicative stewardship reflections, news and opportunities.

- Printed resources are also an effective way to communicate stewardship and parish information.
  - Ministry catalog
  - Use the parish bulletin and newsletter to highlight a ministry and their work.
  - Print colorful Banners/Posters with stewardship theme appropriate with the Liturgical calendar.

### **Mass:**

- Use of the pastor as primary communicator of stewardship in the parish
- Lay testimonies are an effective way to inspire and communicate stewardship
- Homilies with stewardship themes support on-going conversion of the heart
- Youth lay testimonies are effective to inspire the heart toward stewardship
- Guests visiting or inquiring about your parish:
  - Have parish packets of new parishioner information available after Mass
  - Follow-up with guests and parishioner requests

### **The Oakland Diocese Stewardship Department:**

- Attend the Diocesan Stewardship Quarterly Networking meetings.
- Attend the annual Region XI Diocesan Stewardship Conference (when offered)
- Utilize your Diocesan Stewardship Office for additional resources, training, retreat facilitation and talks on stewardship.
- Have your parish become a member of the International Catholic Stewardship Council (ICSC).
- Attend the Annual International Catholic Stewardship Conference.



## Your Parish Action Items:

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# Pillar of Service

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Members of a stewardship parish are ready to minister to varied needs of their own parish family as well as the needs of the wider community and Church. Just as the members of a family come together to help one of their own, a stewardship parish family serves those who are hurting or in need, doubting or seeking salvation. The parish family also comes together to celebrate, thank and to return God's gifts—all are needs of parishioners.

Like a blood family, the parish family stands ready and eager collectively to wrap their arms around their brothers and sisters when they suffer in trial and/or celebrate special events in their lives. "God so constructed the body, that there may be no dissension in the body, but that all the members may be concerned for one another. If one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members share its joy." (1 Cor. 12: 24b, 25-26)

Parishioners seek the parish family as a primary community to serve and to be served—to give and to receive. If a parishioner finds they can serve and be ministered to, they have little need to search elsewhere for this fulfillment. Likewise, they have recognized a place where their service is appreciated and utilized for the good of the Church.

But the members of a stewardship parish recognize that they also have a need to give beyond their own members only. They have a need to serve and to give in the diocese, the community and the Universal Church. Failure to have this understanding leads to a selfish parochialism, which is life draining to a parish stewardship way of life. This is a challenge to some parishioners, who are willing to serve their own, but not outsiders. Interestingly, if this is the mindset of a particular parish, chances also exist that such a parish does not embrace fully the first pillar of a stewardship parish – namely, hospitality.

The pillar of service is an opportunity for the parish to put into concrete practice the other three pillars mentioned earlier in this document: hospitality, prayer and formation. To say one is a stewardship parish is not enough to make one a stewardship parish. True stewardship parishes practice all four of these pillars, with Jesus Christ as the model and the foundation from which the pillars arise.

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Service is one of the *Four Pillars of Stewardship* prepared by the Catholic Diocese of Wichita, Office of Stewardship. We are grateful for their permission to reprint this entire section on Service to help our parish's stewardship efforts. You may also reference *10 Essentials of Parish Life* (Oakland) – Reaching Out.



*Listed below are some of the "building blocks" a parish might consider in their construction of service as one of the pillars of stewardship.*

**Pastor:** The pastor serves best by making himself available to parishioners to meet spiritual needs. Being present with parishioners in times of illness, bereavement, loneliness and confusion leave lasting impressions. Sometimes a pastor's care in these matters will mean the most to those who are served. A stewardship parish seeks ways to help the pastor fulfill his mission of service, by reducing parish responsibilities that can be assumed by persons other than the pastor.

**Pastoral Planning:** Good pastoral plans provide opportunities for parishioners to serve in a manner meaningful to them and the parish mission. The identification of the unique needs of each parish is a prime component in good pastoral planning. One cannot resolve a need if it has not been identified. In addition to identification of needs, there may exist a necessity to prioritize those needs. Good pastoral strategic planning looks at the needs that can be met immediately and those that may have to be wait to a later date. Communication among parish organizations is helpful in the pastoral plan so that all are aware of the primary ways that each organization serves within and outside the parish family.

**Stewardship Committee:** The stewardship committee works hand-in-hand with the pastoral council to develop the pastoral plan listed above. Of special importance, this committee helps to structure the manner in which the pastoral plan is implemented. The annual stewardship renewal and the ministry fairs described earlier in this document identify potential parishioners who have the gifts and interests to address new needs within the parish and the wider community.

**Renewal:** The stewardship renewal process is important individually and communally. As individuals renew their stewardship pledge, they commit themselves to God in sharing their time, talent and treasure. It may take some time before a person is ready to make such a commitment of stewardship. This is one reason why the annual renewal is important for the conversion to the stewardship way of life. Yet, the annual renewal is important for every steward no matter where the individual is in the conversion process. The renewal offers a time of discernment. The message of stewardship remains the same each year. But the parishioner receives the message in a different way every year. The change in the situation of life from year to year makes the steward ask, "God, where can I best place my gifts at this time in my life?" The placement of the gifts of time, talent and treasure changes throughout the course of life. This is why the renewal is an annual examination of how faithful one is to living stewardship as Christ has taught us: "I have come not to be served, but to serve."

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**Parish Ministries:** The various ministries in a parish extend God's presence, love and mercy to others. Parish ministries should strive to meet the needs of the parish, and where possible, the needs of the wider community and the Church at large. These ministries provide opportunities for parishioners to carry out their call to discipleship. A well-developed parish pastoral plan will ensure this.

**Youth:** Our youth are the present and future generations of stewards. Giving youth opportunities to serve now is important for them as individuals, for the parish family and the community. If they learn the meaning of true stewardship at young ages and naturally mature in their understanding as they grow older, they will be very well prepared to teach their own children about stewardship as a disciple's response to God's love. Being patient and understanding with their development from childhood and adolescence as they grow into their adult vocation is important as they develop a sense of responsibility to their family, parish and community.

**Volunteers:** Providing meaningful opportunities for parishioners to serve and mature individually and as a family is necessary to foster a stewardship way of life. Helping parishioners identify their gifts, talents and treasure enables them to give of these gifts in meaningful, lasting ways. This conversion from, "What can I get?" to, "What can I give?" is a sure indicator that stewardship is taking root in the heart of the volunteer.

**Evaluation:** As mentioned earlier in this document, evaluation of the outreach and services the parish provides will assist in updating and forming parish ministries and the overall parish pastoral plan. The most successful stewardship parishes are constantly asking the question, "Are we seeking to meet the needs of our parishioners?" Once the needs are identified and ministries are established to address those needs, the people served will respond in generous and life-giving ways. For those more advanced in the conversion to stewardship as a way of life, one must remember that not all parishioners are at the same point in the conversion journey. When the needs of the parishioners are met, the parishioners begin to see the vibrancy of the parish life. This initiation is time consuming and at times, even frustrating. But it is proven as a way of effectively converting parishioners to become holy and faithful stewards. Part of the evaluation to build opportunities for service in the parish is to ask, "Do our parish programs support the spirituality of stewardship as a way of life to lead us along the path to holiness?"

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## Reflection Questions

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1. What are some ways Jesus lives his teaching, "I have come not to be served, but to serve?"
2. In what ways in your life have you personally experienced joy and satisfaction in giving of self to another without condition or expecting repayment?
3. As a parishioner, what ideas might you have for establishing or strengthening the building blocks listed above to promote greater service in your parish?
4. How do the pillars of hospitality, prayer and formation manifest themselves through the service ministries offered in your parish? What pillars are strong? What pillars are weak?

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## Service – Practical Ideas

## Time – Talent

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**“Preach the Gospel at all times and when necessary use words.”**

**St. Francis of Assisi**

*“All temporal and spiritual goods are created by and come from God. That is true of everything human beings have: spiritual gifts like faith, hope, and love; talents of body and brain; cherished relationships with family and friends; material goods; the achievements of human genius and skill; the world itself. One day God will require an accounting of the use each person has made of the particular portion of these goods entrusted to him or her. Each will be measured by the standard of his or her individual vocation. Each has received a different “sum”—a unique mix of talents, opportunities, challenges, weaknesses and strengths, potential modes of service and response—on which the Master expects a return. He will judge individuals according to what they have done with what they were given.” Stewardship: A Disciple’s Response (USCCB 20)*

*“...people do not hear the Lord’s call in isolation from one another. Other disciples help mediate their vocations to them, and they in turn are meant to mediate the Lord’s call to others.” Stewardship: A Disciple’s Response (USCCB 14).*

Here are some ideas to help your parishioners recognize their responsibility of time and development of their talents:

### **Mass:**

- The Offertory
  - People naturally make a connection to Stewardship during this time of the Mass. It is important that the collection is taken to the altar and presented to the priest with the bread and wine. The fruits of our time and talent are represented in our sacrificial offer. This procession of sacrificial gifts is one of the strongest opportunities for us to present our self in union with our Creator. This is one way we fully participate in Mass by presenting our sacrificial gifts to the Lord.



## Mass continued:

- Prayers of the Faithful
  - Include prayers that encourage developing generous and grateful hearts in young people, families, and the world.
- Focus on the Eucharistic Prayer
  - This is our source and summit of our faith as Catholics. The prayers flow from the heart of stewardship. The Eucharist feeds us and challenges us to share our gifts with others. At the end of Mass we are sent "...to love and serve the Lord."
- Music
  - Music often has rich stewardship themes. Music is often in harmony with the scripture readings and the seasons. The call to serve is strong during ordinary time and may prove especially useful to the stewardship effort.
- Lay Testimonials
  - Use of lay testimonials by adults, youth and families are an effective way to help build vocation awareness in others.

## The "right people" for the "right ministry":

### The "Right People" - Recognizing and Selecting:

- Offer ongoing opportunities for education and training.
- Offer a talent assessment, *Living Your Strengths* (Winseman) or spiritual gifts discernment, *Called and Gifted* (Catherine) tool with coaching to help parishioners further develop their gifts and discern their vocations.
- Annually offer a discernment process for all existing ministry volunteers to discern either a new ministry or to remain in the ministry they currently are in before they renew. (Councils positions do not change year to year. Their time limits are designated by their by-laws.)
- Lay witness talks. This is a very powerful tool to present the stewardship message. These talks change lives. They help people realize that anyone can serve God and that everyone has something to offer.
- Ministry fairs.
- Offer the rich tradition of Mystagogia to the whole parish after Easter.

## **The “right people” for the “right ministry” continued:**

- Renewal/Commitment effort every year during Stewardship Sunday
  - Renewal Sunday
  - Commitment cards/Commitment Sunday
  - Follow-up with ministry inquiries.
- Communications on ministry opportunities:
  - Ministry catalog on website and in print
  - Training opportunities in print in newsletters, bulletins, website etc.
- Send out thank you letters. One can never say thank you enough.
- Appreciation Events for volunteers.
- Try asking parishioners to place a sealed note of “What I’ve done for God” or “What I am going to do for God and others” and place these confidential notes at the altar.
- The parish needs to model full transparency and accountability at all times. In addition to the financial reports, offer quarterly or semi-annual reports on time and talent and ministries in the bulletin and other communication sources.

## **Training volunteers for ministry:**

- Consider a Gift Coordinator position. This person will organize volunteers in meaningful ministries and provide appropriate training opportunities.
- Consider having a trained strengths coach available for parishioners.
- Collaborate with ministry volunteers to insure they have the necessary tools and information to complete the job.
- Have ministry volunteer position descriptions for each position in each ministry. This will include ministry expectations in regards to time involvement, travel, special training required, or any other logistics, and length of service.
- Provide an initial orientation and training for new volunteers and existing volunteers.
- Provide mentoring as needed.



## Your Parish Action Items:

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## Service – Practical Ideas

## Treasure

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**“The question becomes not what you do with the 10% you give; rather, what do you do with the other 90%.”** Most Reverend Thomas J. Murphy, D.D., S.T.D.  
Archdiocese of Seattle, (born 1932- died 1997)

“All Christian stewards must consider prayerfully the gifts they have received from God, and they should make a decision (in advance, from the “first fruits” instead of what is left over after other obligations have been met) about what will be given. *Stewardship: A Disciple’s Response* (USCCB 54)

“From the very beginning Christians have brought, along with the bread and wine for the Eucharist, gifts to share with those in need. This custom of the *collection*, ever appropriate, is inspired by the example of Christ who became poor to make us rich.” (CCC#1351)

Here are some ideas to help your parish and parishioners share their gifts that are prayerful, planned, proportionate, and sacrificial.

### Mass:

- The Offertory
  - People naturally make a connection to Stewardship during this time of the Mass. It is important that the collection is taken to the altar and presented to the priest with the bread and wine. The fruits of our time and talent are represented in our sacrificial offer. This procession of sacrificial gifts is one of the strongest opportunities for us to present our self in union with our Creator. This is one way we fully participate in Mass by presenting our sacrificial gifts to the Lord.
  - It is a powerful message when the Presider of the Mass contributes to the offertory basket first to signify that the offertory collection is beginning
- Lay Testimonials
  - Use of lay testimonials by adults, youth and families are an effective way to help build vocation awareness in others.



#### Mass continued:

- Prayers of the Faithful
  - Include prayers that encourage developing generous and grateful hearts in young people, families, and the world.
- Focus on the Eucharistic Prayer
  - This is our source and summit of our faith as Catholics. The prayers flow from the heart of stewardship. The Eucharist feeds us and challenges us to share our gifts with others. At the end of Mass we are sent "...to love and serve the Lord."
- Music
  - Music often has rich stewardship themes. Music is often in harmony with the scripture readings and the seasons. The call to serve is strong during ordinary time and may prove especially useful to the stewardship effort.

#### Leadership:

- Leadership provides on-going teaching of meaning of prayerful, planned, proportionate and sacrificial giving
- Leadership is expected to live the meaning of stewardship as explained in A Disciple's Response
- Parish also gives to the needy from their Sunday Offerings and other gifts. Generally this amount is 5%.
- Transparency is imperative for reporting parish financial statements
  - Quarterly Financial Report in the bulletin and other communication options.
  - Annual Report on all Time, Talent, and Treasure.
  - It is helpful to report a high-level summary of parish finances in the bulletin, ideally once a month. Reporting actual budget to income weekly is helpful. Consider comparing this year to last year's financials for the same period.
- Communicate Second Collections or other Collections in advance.
- Always offer prayerful time for renewal and commitment effort every year
- Considering using children's envelopes to help educate the importance of giving that is prayerful with the less fortunate in mind.

### Leadership Continued:

- Consider envelopes for with a message for the youth to educate prayerful, planned, proportionate and sacrificial giving.
- Allow children to present their stewardship gift to pastor during the offering.
- Provide Planned Giving, Wills and Estate Planning Seminars. Estate planning is the quintessential act of stewardship – giving back to the Lord with return.
- Send out thank you letters to all parishioners regardless of the amount given. IRS Tax Regulation states that any one-time contribution of \$250.00 or more must be accompanied with a letter stating "... that no goods or services were received in connection with this donation." Take this opportunity to sincerely thank the person or family for the generous contribution.
- Send out quarterly financial reports with a short letter from the pastor explaining how the parish gifts are being used. This is in addition to the end of the year letter to parishioners for taxes.
- With all Capital Campaigns, the spirituality of stewardship must be incorporated with the program.



# Your Parish Action Items:

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