

Stewardship of Treasure

Money is more personal than probably anything else in our lives. We don't speak in public about how much money we have in the bank or what our house is worth. It's just too personal.



Jesus knows this. About half of the parables of Jesus have to do with money or with material possessions. Remember the lost coin, the widow's mite, the buried treasure in the field, the Good Samaritan who gives the two silver pieces to the innkeeper, and so on.

Jesus keeps talking about money because He knows how personal it is. He knows that sometimes money is too important and can actually keep us from the fullness of life with Him. Remember the rich young man who went to see Jesus? That young man knew that in order to have eternal life he had to keep the commandments, but then he asked Jesus, "What more must I do?" Jesus looked at the man with love and said, "... sell what you possess and give to the poor ... and come, follow me" (Mt. 19:21). We are told that the rich young man went away sad, because he had so many possessions.



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In going away from Jesus that day, the young man missed out on the opportunity of a lifetime — *the invitation to follow the Master* — all because he had so much "stuff."

Stewardship of treasure is not about the need of your parish, but of your need to give. No matter what windfall a parish might experience — striking oil in the parking lot, coming upon a winning lottery ticket, inheriting a sizeable bequest — the parish must still emphasize stewardship of treasure. Why? *Because stewardship of treasure is not about giving to a need; rather, it is about the need to give*, a need to make sure that material possessions do not dominate our lives.

What Catholics Do: Stewardship

Catholics respond to Jesus' message positively because they know that *this is the way* that the Church has been built up spiritually throughout the years. It is how the Catholic faith has been lived out vibrantly in every age, in every place, in every generation.



W.P. WITTMAN

When the history of our generation of Catholics is written, may it be said of us, "What good stewards they were! They faced economic uncertainty and shifting demographics. They faced threats to the Church from without and scandal from within. And yet they kept investing themselves in the life of the Church. They kept praying. They kept coming to Mass. They kept participating. They kept giving their life's blood for the sake of God and His Church, and through their efforts and the grace of God, *the world around them started to change*. Ever gradually, the culture of death became a culture of life."

For More Information

Conway, Daniel. *Stewardship in America. A Countercultural Way of Life*, St. Catherine of Siena Press

———. *Stewards of Joy: Taking Care of and Sharing the Gift of Faith*, St. Catherine of Siena Press

Lenahan, Phil. *Seven Steps to Becoming Financially Free: A Catholic Guide to Managing Your Money*, Our Sunday Visitor

Mahan, Fr. Daniel. *More Silver than Gold*, St. Catherine of Siena Press

Stewardship: A Disciple's Response: A Pastoral Letter on Stewardship, USCCB

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What Catholics Do: Stewardship



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"Stewardship is not about the need of your parish, but your need to give."



Stewardship is a way of life deeply rooted in Jesus Christ, who by His example has taught us how to live. He came not to do His own will, but the will of the One who sent Him. He came not to be served, but to serve.

God has given each of us something to do that no one else on earth can do.

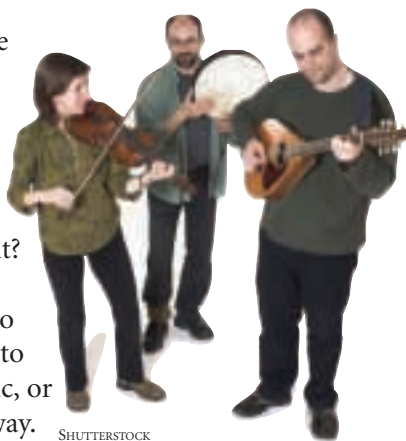
No one can be the parent, the grandparent, or the member of your parish that you are called to be. Through stewardship, Jesus makes clear to each of us our individual mission in the Church, giving us the grace to live *stewardship as a way of life, a way of holiness and spirituality.*

What is a good steward?

When the American bishops wrote their 1992 pastoral letter on stewardship, they defined a good steward as one who embodied four specific qualities:

1) **Grateful:** thanking God daily for the blessings he or she has received. A good steward never stops saying “thank you.”

2) **Responsible** with the blessings that God has bestowed; not only using them prudently, but also making sure that they do not wither away. It’s that way with some gifts, isn’t it? Think about the gift of music. A musician needs to take lessons and continue to work with the gift of music, or it will atrophy and fade away.



It’s that way with every gift, especially the gift of faith. Parents are good stewards when they care for, protect, and nurture their children’s natural aptitude for faith, beginning in the tender years of early childhood.

3) **Sharing.** A good steward knows that it is better to give than to receive, for in giving we receive far more than we could ever have imagined.



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4) **Accountable.** Remember the parable of the stewards to whom the master had entrusted the silver pieces? They had to render an account of their stewardship. One day, you and I will have to stand in accountability before the judgment seat of God. And God will ask: “What did you do with all the time that you had? What did you do with all the gifts that I gave you? What did you do with your life?”

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Where is God?

There once were two fish who lived in a small pond. The older fish spent his days swimming serenely, while the younger fish darted around, peeking under fallen branches and behind rocks. Finally, the older fish asked, “What are you doing? I’m getting tired just looking at you.” The younger one explained, “I’m looking for water! I’ve heard that it’s really good for us fish. We can’t live without it.” The older fish retorted, “You dummy! You’re swimming in it! Above you, below you, around you — it’s all over.” But the younger fish said, “You mean this water that’s supposed to be so good for us is *just right here*? It can’t be that simple.” And he swam away, continuing his search for water.

Where do we look for God? Do we search hither and yon? Do we think that we have to scale a high peak and seek out a guru? Or do we recognize the presence of God in His creation?

Do we recognize God in history? Our God is not one who keeps His distance, but rather enters into the human experience: sending a way of freedom to His enslaved chosen people; sending prophets to foretell the promise of a new covenant; and most especially sending His own Son, the Word made flesh, to dwell among us. Our Lord Jesus stretched out His arms on the cross, suffered and died for our sinfulness, and opened the gates of heaven to us.

Do we recognize God in this age of the Holy Spirit, where we experience the presence of God through His bride, the Church, and through her sacraments, especially the great sacrament of the Holy Eucharist? In this gift of His Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity, Jesus keeps His solemn promise, “I am with you always, to the close of the age” (cf. Mt. 28:20).

Stewardship is an invitation for people to recognize the presence of God in their lives: in their families, in their work, in their associations with the Church, in their reception of the sacraments, in the work that they do for the building up of the Kingdom.

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Hopefully, we will be able to say, “Lord, I tried to thank you every day. I tried to be responsible with those gifts. And I tried to share those gifts with others.” Please God, may He respond, “Well done, good and faithful servant . . . enter into the joy of your master” (cf. Mt. 25:21).

Time, Talent, and Treasure

As we recognize the presence of God in our lives, we set out to live the spirituality of stewardship in terms of *time, talent, and treasure.*

Stewardship of Time

Some people say “time is money,” but that’s not quite right. Time is much *more* valuable than money! We’ve all had the experience of wasting money on poor purchases or bad decisions. We recover from that, but not so with time. Time once spent can never be recovered. Every day, every hour is precious. *We make sure that we take care of the things that matter.*



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Stewardship of time requires us to look at our lives, twenty-four hours each day, as an opportunity to serve the Lord and to build up His Kingdom.

Stewardship of Talent

We can’t think of stewardship of talent only in terms of what we can do to help out around the parish. *Talent is the passion that people have for doing what is good.* Think of people that you know who are passionate about the cause of the poor, who are passionate about pro-life issues. In bringing their passion to all that they do, they make a difference. That’s great stewardship of talent.