

the joy of

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# STEWARDSHIP

## Teaching Stewardship to Our Youth

ROMAN CATHOLIC  
DIOCESE OF ROCHESTER



**“Let** the children come to me, and do not prevent them; for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.”

*-Matthew 19:14*

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This guide is designed to be a resource for parish and faith formation leaders to help introduce and nurture stewardship for children and youth. The contents include copyrighted material that has been reprinted with permission from the International Catholic Stewardship Council, the Stewardship Education Department of the Archdiocese of St. Louis, and the Parish Stewardship Office of the Diocese of Rockville Centre. This guide is also available at [www.dor.org/sd](http://www.dor.org/sd) and cannot be reprinted and/or customized without permission except by parishes within the Diocese of Rochester.

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# Introduction



**Stewardship**, in its simplest terms, asks us to put God's priorities before our own. At the same time, stewardship is a life-long process. More than a program, it is a practice of giving back of our "first fruits" to the Lord's work in gratitude for many blessings. Stewardship is also an expression of our discipleship. It is what one does after saying "I believe." Often, a change in attitude is required – not unlike a conversion to a new way of life. Learning about stewardship in their formative years will help our youth to become good and faithful stewards of their time, talent and treasure later in life.

# Why Teach Stewardship to Youth?



Stewardship is not just for adults. It is important that young people also learn that they are greatly blessed by God and that God, in turn, expects them to share their blessings.

Due to the extraordinary emphasis on materialism in our society today, there is an increased awareness within charitable organizations across the country, including parishes, that we must teach our children the importance of giving while they are young. Ideally, this should happen before they are caught up in a culture that continually promotes a striving for more and better material possessions for themselves.

Consider the following:

- Many charities are seeing a noticeable decline in giving by young people.
- Typically, giving only happens after all our needs are met.
- Yet, adjusting for inflation, the average young adult spends 5x more than their parents did per year, just a generation ago.
- Kids receive 3,000 ad messages a day via television, internet, radio and social media to name just a few. By the time they are 21 they will have received 23 million advertising messages.
- Advertising trends are convincing young people that new technology, material possessions and lifestyles once considered luxuries and “wants,” are now “needs.”
- As advertisers excel at teaching young people that everything is a need, we must excel at teaching them stewardship.

# Stewardship Is Good for Our Youth



Just as the stewardship way of life is a fulfilling and joyful lifestyle for adults, it is also a very good lifestyle to teach our youth. Consider the benefits:

## Stewardship can help build self-esteem.

The advertisements that our youth hear in the commercial world often carry the underlying, subtle message that you are not good enough the way you are. Therefore, you need to acquire this product or that product to make yourself acceptable. From our faith comes another message our young ones need to hear - that God has already blessed them with many of the gifts and talents that they will need. In fact, God has given them an abundance of good things and they have enough to share.

## Stewardship can make youth happier.

Unfortunately, in today's world, we are bombarded with materialistic messages that often lead to a sense of entitlement and to frustration and dissatisfaction with life. In contrast, stewardship encourages an attitude of gratitude. Experts tell us

that attitudes about sharing usually form sometime between the ages of 6 and 10. They will either develop an entitlement attitude - "The world owes me." "I don't have enough." Or a stewardship attitude - "I have been blessed." "I am happy to share." It is impossible to be grateful and unhappy at the same time. As we count our blessings we naturally find a sense of peace and contentment.

## Stewardship helps youth set priorities.

As children learn that they are called to give back something to God they also learn they must let go of some of their own wants. Stewardship teaches them the difference between needs and wants. Consequently, they learn to concentrate on their blessings rather than on what they want.

## Stewardship prepares our young ones for their adult role in the Church.

Youth need to learn that stewardship is not just a service project they must do before they can be confirmed or graduate. Stewardship is a way of life. It is the way a good Christian lives every day of every year.

# Stewardship Concepts for Youth



Efforts to teach stewardship and giving to the young are most successful if you concentrate on five basic concepts. These concepts can be discussed in faith formation classes, in children's liturgies, in youth ministry programs and at home. The concepts are:

1) Help them see that God has given them many blessings. *(This also teaches good self-esteem.)*

- Challenge children to make a list of all God's gifts to them. There is no wrong answer! Everything is a gift from God.
- Regularly compliment children on their special gifts – simple things like nice handwriting, pretty smile, nice coat to keep you warm, etc. Remind them that this special gift is a blessing from God and offer an idea on how they can be grateful or share that gift with someone else.
- Encourage children to recognize their talents and the talents of other people in their lives. Every talent does not have to be star quality. Talents can be simple, such as: strong to carry a

box, smart to help someone with homework, or a good listener for someone with a problem.

2) Teach children to be grateful to God for their blessings. *(This also teaches an overall sense of gratitude and a positive outlook on life. It helps kids see the cup is half full rather than half empty.)*

- Make it a practice to ask children on a daily basis to name something for which they are thankful.
- Ask children to write a prayer of thanks to God.
- Have children write a thank-you letter to God, telling why these gifts are so special and what they will do with them.
- Help children to see that God has given them blessings to share. Discuss the poor and needy. Talk about how God has trusted us to use our gifts to help those who have less.
- Read the Judgment of the Nations (Matthew 25:31-46) together. Discuss all the ways people are in need, and what children could do to help.
- Encourage children to think about and pray for those in need.

# More Stewardship Concepts

3) Show children how stewardship has built our Church. *(This also teaches appreciation and responsibility for our Church).*

- Tell children the history of the parish and the role stewardship played in its development.
- Tour parish facilities looking for signs of stewardship.
- Talk with children about the building up of the Church throughout the world and the role stewardship played in the cathedrals, hospitals, schools and service agencies that we have today.
- Talk with children about the lives of saints and the ways they were good stewards. In most cases children will learn how people used their time, talent or treasure for God to earn the title of "Saint."

4) Help children to recognize that stewardship is something we do all the time. *(This also teaches good time management and budgeting.)*

It is how we live our lives. Every decision we make about how we use our time or treasure is a stewardship decision.



- Encourage children to keep a record of their time – How much time do they give to God in prayer? How much time do they spend learning – developing knowledge and talents they can use later for God? How much time do they spend helping others? How much time do they spend taking care of themselves so they are strong and healthy for God's work? How much time do they waste?
- Talk about shopping decisions; about how we can waste money when others need it. Discuss the concept of the tithe – of giving 10% back to God. Discuss the difference between something we need and something we want. We may need soccer shoes to be part of the team – but having the most expensive or popular brand is only a "want" not a "need."

5) Help children recognize the joy that comes from stewardship. *(This also helps students realize that real happiness cannot be found in possessions.)*

- Have children discuss how they feel when they help someone else.
- Share your own good feelings about helping and giving.
- Invite a young volunteer to talk to your children about their volunteer experiences.



# Opportunities in Faith Formation

This section provides some suggested activities to start and/or advance the concept and practice of stewardship among our youth during the early stages of their spiritual development.

## Elementary Ages:

Writing “Thank-You” notes is an activity that teaches children to be grateful for everything that they receive including their Catholic education. They also learn that someday they, too, will have the responsibility of supporting a parish and its staff so that other children like them can learn about Jesus and our Catholic faith. Notes can be sent to:

- The parish priests for their vocation and service.
- Their parents, grandparents, teachers and/or CYO coaches for all they do.
- The R.C.I.A. candidates at Easter time to welcome them into the Church.
- The parishioners for their financial support of the school and/or faith formation program.

### Other activities include:

- Becoming altar servers at Mass.
- Collecting school supplies for students in mission schools.
- Making stewardship posters that can be displayed in the church lobby, parish center and school building. Students can create posters illustrating biblical teachings on stewardship or simply share their own impressions of what good stewardship, generosity, or sharing means to them.



## Middle School Ages:

Include a regular/monthly service opportunity teaching the children to give without reward. Giving to others is a life skill, which we want them to take into their adult lives.

- Volunteer at a booth during Church Festivals.
- Food Hunt for a food bank – Divide the children into teams and ask the parents to assist.
- Make Valentine’s cards to be distributed to nursing homes.
- Make rosaries for mission churches.
- Collect gifts for the Unborn – mini baby shampoos, lotions, picture frames and booties to make packages which a crisis pregnancy agency can give out to the mothers they serve.

## High School:

The parish Youth Group is a vital ministry that already carries out many of these activities. Incorporating stewardship terminology and concepts will help enhance their awareness and acceptance of this as a way of life.

- Serve as lectors, Eucharistic Ministers, hospitality ministers at Sunday Mass.
- Chair a booth at your parish festival or ministry fair.
- Volunteer in the church nursery.
- Volunteer in soup kitchens, at nursing homes, with Habitat for Humanity.
- Participate in C.R.O.P. walk or other community fund raisers.
- Serve as counselors at middle school retreats.

# Conducting a Youth Stewardship Program

All of the components that are used in your annual parish stewardship renewal can also be adapted for youth. This includes Commitment Cards, Time & Talent Catalogs, Ministry Fairs and Lay Witness Talks.

You may want to include a youth component in your parish's regular annual stewardship efforts, or you can conduct a separate stewardship pledge program at the beginning of the faith formation program or school year. This kind of approach might also be used in conjunction with Confirmation preparation. Here's how the basic components of the stewardship education process can be used:

## The Commitment Card

This is basically a listing of every activity for which children and teenagers could volunteer. It would include:

- Liturgy-related activities such as lector, server, choir, usher, gift bearer, etc.
- Service activities such as vacation bible school aide, library aide, bulletin stuffer, babysitting during Mass, helping at parish events and concession stands, etc.
- Outside community activities, if available, such as visiting a nursing home or helping at a food pantry.

The Commitment Card could also include a place for them to sign up for the envelope program and/or commit to a regular weekly or monthly Offertory donation.

*Note: When the younger children sign an intention card you should also include a place for a parent to sign, stating they are in agreement with the child's commitment to any activity and that they will support such involvement.*

## The Time & Talent Catalog

This booklet accompanies the commitment card and explains in detail each of the activities listed on the pledge card. It would include a description of the activity, time commitment, age requirement, name of person in charge, meeting or training times, etc.



## The Ministry Fair

This can be set up as a part of your regular Ministry Fair or a separate event. If possible, booths should represent all the youth activities and ministries. Just as with a regular Fair, representatives of the activity are present to answer questions about what they do, maybe show pictures or give demonstrations. If conducted during school time, classes could be assigned 10 or 15 minutes to visit the Fair, talk with the representatives, maybe have a small snack. Either way, try to make it educational and fun.

## The Lay Witness Talk

Young volunteers could be recruited to talk briefly about how they give time, talent and treasure to the parish and what it means to them. Servers, choir members, classroom aides for pre-school religion, etc., are all good candidates for lay witness talks.

*Note: Do not be tempted to use a student lay witness speaker for your regular parish stewardship program. They might be charming but they will not motivate adults to increase their giving. If the talks are given during the school day, consider including them at an all-school liturgy or special assembly.*

# Best Practices for Youth Offertory Envelopes

One of the best ways to teach youth the habit of giving is to offer them the opportunity to place their own contribution in the Offertory basket each week. Whether you are just introducing children's envelopes or have used them for years, here are some suggestions for making the practice successful.

- If providing envelopes for every child does not seem practical, allow families to sign up for the envelope program so that only those who support the concept will receive envelopes.
- Before mailing out children's envelopes invite an older student to witness to the families about the joys and importance of giving. Again, this should not replace your annual adult lay witness talk.
- Be sure to educate families to the fact that the idea is not to raise more money but to teach children the joys of giving. Thus, it is more important that children give a quarter from their own bank than \$5 from a parent's wallet.
- Envelopes that are mailed to students monthly or quarterly encourage continued interest in the program as compared to envelopes that are just sent once a year or distributed at faith formation class or at school.
- Many designs of children's envelopes also encourage kids to share talent – a picture they have drawn or a prayer they have written – or to write down ways they have been good stewards.
- Involve student representatives in picking out the envelope design and in selecting the recipient of children's gifts. Youth giving can be used for a parish project, for support of families in need, for a local charity or for an overseas mission. When given a choice in where the money goes, children often prefer activities that help other children.



- If possible, invite children to come to the sanctuary to place their gifts in a special basket that is held by the celebrant or placed in a visible location. This witness of the children's giving is a powerful reminder to those in the pew who do not give.
- Be sure to include a report on children's giving in your regular parish Offertory reports and in your annual report.
- Occasionally invite older children to assist in taking up the collection. This is another way to involve them in the entire Offertory process.

# Educating Families about the Importance of Giving



**Stewardship** should be a regular topic in all parish educational efforts. A weekly or monthly bulletin column that also addresses family and children's stewardship might be another way to help teach parents and children the importance of good stewardship. Many good resources are available that can provide your parish with talking points, lesson plans and other ideas about teaching stewardship to children. These include:

Learning To Give website: [www.learningtogive.org](http://www.learningtogive.org)

A wealth of resources for teachers and parents, including quotes, stories and lesson plans all designed to teach children to be generous.

Share Save Spend website: [www.sharesavespend.com](http://www.sharesavespend.com)

A website dedicated to educating young people about wise money management – including saving and giving to charity. The eColumn provides many helpful thoughts and suggestions.

# Appendix Bulletin Samples

Youth Stewardship Corner to be Printed in  
the Weekly Parish Bulletin

## Youth Stewardship Corner

Here are just a few of the many offerings to God  
from the youth of St. Alexander:

### *This is how I Thanked God this week:*

I made Mommy's bed	I practiced the piano and clarinet
I cleaned my room without being asked	I folded clothes
I prayed every morning	I said my prayers at night
I sang in the family choir	I mowed my neighbor's lawn
I served as an altar boy	I gave my dad a gift just because
I washed the car	I played with someone who was lonely
I served 1 hour at the Friendly Kitchen	I brought dinner to the sick

**Gifts from the youth envelopes for last week: \$16.11**

If any parent or youth is interested in being part of the youth stewardship program please contact the parish office at 555-555

## Time and Talent

*Fostering Stewardship as a Way of Life*

This Week's Stewardship Time and Talent Salute

In gratitude for God's gifts of time and talent to us,  
we gratefully acknowledge and salute:

### **Matthew**

Matthew is one of our faithful children, always ready and willing to lend a hand. Matthew and his family were especially helpful this past weekend tidying up the church after Mass. He sings in the children's choir and helps his Mom with refreshing the preschool Gospel Kits!

***Thanks Matthew!***

# Appendix Puzzle Sample 1

## Stewardship: Not for Adults Only

How many times do you hear, "That's for adults," or "You're too young." Well, you're not too young for Stewardship! Jesus loves you no matter how old you are and He invites you to love Him too! Jesus said, "Let the children come to me, and do not prevent them; for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these." (*Matthew 19:14*) Do you know what this means? This means that you are never too young to follow Jesus and His teachings!

Follow the path to where Jesus is calling you.  
There are many temptations along the way.

**Turn Away!** Come to me and you can spend all of your money on video games and candy!

**Think** Come to me and all of your time is yours. You won't need to help anyone!

**Be Careful!** Come to me... I just heard some juicy gossip about...

**You're a Good Steward!** Come to me and you won't need to share your things or yourself with anyone!

**Believe!** Come to me and you won't need to clean up after yourself!

**Stay Strong!** Come to me and you won't need to answer to anyone about anything you do!

**Come to me and you will have**

# Appendix Puzzle Sample 2

## Give Thanks to God!

During November, we celebrate Thanksgiving Day. We thank God for all the many gifts that God has given us. But, how can we thank God? Can we send God a card? No, but we can thank God when we pray and when we take care of, use, or share the gifts God has given us to make the world a better place. As good stewards we give thanks to God every time we share our gifts with God and others.

On the lines given, explain how each picture shows ways of thanking God by taking care of, using, or sharing the gifts God has given us.



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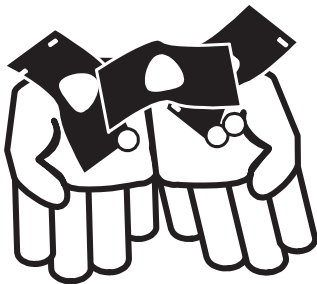
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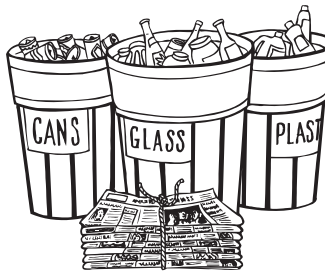
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# Appendix Puzzle Sample 3

## Stewardship Word Search



**Directions:** Fill in the blanks below with the best response and then find the words above in any direction.

1. We are gifted and \_\_\_\_\_ to holiness, community, mission and ministry, and Christian maturity.
2. We are called to be good \_\_\_\_\_.
3. "\_\_\_\_\_ First!"
4. "Stewardship without Spirituality is like eating soup with a \_\_\_\_\_."
5. Stewardship is a \_\_\_\_\_ process.
6. Our bishops call us to invest ourselves in the \_\_\_\_\_ of the church.
7. "Fostering Stewardship as \_\_\_\_\_ of life."
8. The right attitude is \_\_\_\_\_.
9. Time and \_\_\_\_\_.
10. We are called to be disciples by our \_\_\_\_\_.

Answers: 1. Called 2. Stewards 3. Place God 4. Fork 5. Conversion 6. Mission 7. A Way 8. Gratitude 9. Talent 10. Baptism