

STEWARDSHIP



Opening Prayer

Heavenly Father, you have given us gifts and talents to build up your kingdom. Make us worthy and wise in the use of our talents to serve you. May we always recognize you as the source of our gifts and use them to do your will and not our own. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Scripture Reading *Luke 16:1-13*

In this Gospel, Jesus tells the parable of the unjust steward who was devious in the usage of his employer's wealth. We are called to make proper use of the gifts and talents that God has given us in this life to serve God well. Jesus also reminds us that we cannot have an unhealthy attachment to money.

What is the Catholic understanding of stewardship?

- We express our discipleship by living as God's faithful stewards. Stewardship and discipleship are life-long processes.
- Stewardship is based on the spiritual principles of Scripture. It is a way of life, a way of thanking God for all His blessings by returning a portion of the time, talent, and treasure given to us. Stewardship forms a spirituality that deepens our relationship with the Lord. Stewardship involved intention, planned, and proportionate giving of our time, talent, and treasure.
- In the use of things individuals should regard the property that is legitimately owned not merely as exclusive to oneself but common to others also, in the sense that they can benefit others as well as personally. The ownership of any property makes its holder a steward of God, with the task of making it fruitful and communicating its benefits to others, first of all one's family. (CCC, 2404)
- As Christian stewards, we receive God's gifts gratefully, cultivate them responsibly, share them lovingly in justice with others, and return them with increase to the Lord.
- Stewardship applies to individuals, families, and parishes themselves.
- Stewardship is a response to our faith in God's love for us and our ability to place our trust in Him.

Incarnating THE **KERYGMA** STEWARDSHIP

How is stewardship presented in the Bible?

- Stewardship is a common topic throughout Scripture. The Bible primarily discussed stewardship as household management, which designated the task of controlling finances and supervising servants and workers fairly.
- Stewardship is first discussed in the Bible in Genesis, when Adam and Eve are entrusted to be stewards of creation.
- God promises great blessings to those who are faithful in their stewardship:
 - "Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house, and try me in this, says the Lord of hosts: Shall I not open for you the floodgates of heaven, to pour down blessing upon you without measure?" (Malachi 3:10)
 - "The just man's sacrifice is most pleasing, nor will it ever be forgotten. In generous spirit pay homage to the Lord, be not sparing of freewill gifts. With each contribution show a cheerful countenance, and pay your tithes in a spirit of joy. Give to the Most High as he has given to you, generous, according to your means" (Sirach 35:6-9).
- Jesus warns his followers to not treasure the things of this world, but strive for heavenly gifts and eternal life:
 - "Do not lay up for yourselves an earthly treasure. Remember, where your treasure is, there your heart is also" (Matthew 6:19, 21).
 - "Avoid greed in all its forms. A man may be wealthy, but his possessions do not guarantee him life" (Luke 12:15).
- Jesus also calls his disciples to recognize the needs of others:
 - "Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or away from home or naked or ill or in prison and not attend you in your needs? He will answer them: 'I assure you, as often as you neglected to do it to one of these least ones, you neglected to do it to me.' These will go off to eternal punishment and the just to eternal life" (Matthew 25:44-46).

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What are the areas of Catholic stewardship?

- God calls us to give all of ourselves, which are represented through our time, talent, and treasure.
 - Time: Giving of time involves being with God in prayer and worship, sharing our love with family and friends, and volunteering our time in church and community activities that help others and promote justice.
 - Talent: God has given each of us the ability and gifts to do certain things well and we are to develop these talents for the good of others.
 - Treasure: Our income is a representation of the fruits of our labors. Throughout Scripture, God calls us to offer Him the best fruits of our work to recognize our reliance of His grace.
- God does not hold back on any area of His giving so we are called to not hold back on any area of our giving in thanksgiving to God. Our gifts are not our own; they belong to God. Our life is not our own; it is God's loving and gratuitous gift to us.

What are the blessings of stewardship?

- When practicing as an active steward, the focus of our giving is primarily on God and our relationship with Him. It is a way for us to be grateful for the gifts that God has given us. We echo the psalm, "How shall I make a return to the Lord for all the good He has done for me?" (Psalm 116:12).
- Our motivation for giving becomes gratitude, which then becomes an integral part of our spiritual life. We give freely because we want to, not because we have to.
- As we practice stewardship, we grow spiritually and discover our faith in God has deepened. We find that our quality of life has improved and we find greater happiness in God's gifts to us.
- When we make God the center of all aspects of our life, we begin to live our lives for God and not for ourselves. When we do this, we are able to share in the joy of the Gospel.



STEWARDSHIP

What are the obstacles to stewardship?

- People who want to live as Christian disciples and Christian stewards face serious obstacles. In the United States and other nations, a dominant secular culture often contradicts religious convictions about the meaning of life. This culture frequently encourages us to focus on ourselves and our pleasures.
- Making a commitment to stewardship is a particular challenge with the current emphasis on materialism, consumerism, and leisure time.
- At times, we can find it far too easy to ignore spiritual realities and to deny religion a role in shaping human and social values. As Catholics who have entered into the mainstream of American society and experienced its advantages, many of us also have been adversely influenced by this secular culture. We know what it is to struggle against selfishness and greed, and we realize that it is harder for many today to accept the challenge of being a Christian steward. It is essential, therefore, that we make a special effort to understand the true meaning of stewardship and live accordingly.
- However, the life of a Christian steward models the life of Jesus. It is challenging and even difficult, in many respects, yet intense joy comes to those who take the risk to live as Christian stewards. Women and men who seek to live as stewards learn that "all things work for good for those who love God" (Romans 8:28).