

# Stewardship: Living Christianity [Radically]

*A publication for Chicago Catholics  
Archdiocese of Chicago- Department of Stewardship and Development*

## Living Justly, Loving Tenderly, Walking Humbly

The Christian way of living is a life of stewardship. Stewardship is inextricably linked with our baptismal seal to live as "priest, prophet and king." It is what we agree to at confirmation: to witness to our faith through the grace of the Spirit.

Stewardship:

Asks that we help each other recognize the gifts and talents with which God has blessed us and the ways in which we have been blessed through the gifts and talents of others;

Invites us to help discern, call forth, and continually encourage one another to use the gifts and talents with which God has blessed us according to God's will; and

Challenges us to share our time, talent and treasure beyond what we believe we can do or give so we can grow, individually and collectively, as God desires.

### **WE ARE CALLED...**

By virtue of our baptism, we are called to be God's disciples and are invited to do Christ's work on earth. As

disciples, we are granted all of the tools necessary to bring the light, hope and love of God to others.

### **WE ARE DISCIPLES...**

Our relationship with God is strengthened through prayer. In allowing ourselves to be transformed by this relationship, we have the ability to transform.

### **WE ARE GIFTED...**

As God's creation, we reflect God's love and vision for humanity. We each are blessed with unique gifts and talents. In fact, all we have is a gift, all we are is a gift—our very life is a gift. We are asked to be responsible managers of our gifts, utilizing them in a faith-filled spirit of generosity to help fulfill God's mission on earth.

### **WE ARE JUST...**

We are asked to love...to be in right relationship with God, ourselves, our neighbors, and our world by giving practical expression to Gospel values and tangibly witnessing to God's miraculous love.

We have been told what is good and what

God asks of us:

### Who is a Christian steward?

**One who receives God's gifts gratefully, cherishes and tends God's gifts responsibly, shares God's gifts in love and justice with others, and returns these gifts with increase to God.**

*Stewardship: A Disciple's Response*

## Life Lessons From The Christmas Story

*The classic Christmas story - the story of Jesus being born in a manger, shepherds coming to visit and kings following a star to find Emmanuel - is a story filled with stewardship messages. As we begin Advent and recall the Christmas story, consider these lessons:*

### **Lesson from the Infant Jesus: There is no shame in being poor.**

It is interesting to note that while throughout his adult life Jesus always taught us to give and to serve, He first came into this world as one who needed assistance. It was no accident that He was born without a place to lay His head. In coming to our world in this way Jesus shows us there is no shame in being poor. A risk we take when we practice stewardship is that we may begin to think of ourselves as better or luckier than someone in need and consciously or unconsciously look down upon those who need our generosity. When we look down upon the poor we look down upon the infant Jesus Himself.

### **Lesson from the Shepherds: We all have gifts to give.**

The shepherds came from the fields bringing only themselves and their sheep. Yet their interest in Jesus was enough to win them a place in the Christmas story for all times. What is their stewardship message to us? Even if all we have to give is our interest, our caring, and our time; these are important gifts to give.

### **Lesson from the Wise Men: Just worshipping Jesus isn't enough.**

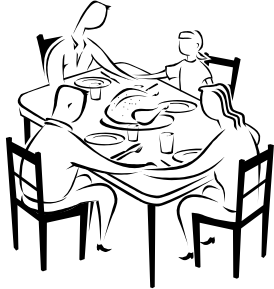
The Wise Men present an entirely different message than the shepherds. Like most of us, these were men with many blessings. They are praised in the Christmas story not just for coming to worship Jesus but also for bringing Him gifts. When we spend time with Jesus at Church, we too are asked to bring our gifts.

*(Adapted from the Archdiocese of St. Louis)*

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## Planting Stewardship Seeds: The Role of Family



Family is the key environment to nurture learning, values formation, and spirituality; family is also the best place to form stewards. Parents are encouraged to model stewardship to their children, reinforce the idea of sharing one's time, talent and treasure, and make children aware of the joy, peace and happiness that come with a commitment to stewardship. Below are some suggestions for family stewardship activities:

1. Teach the "stewardship of time" by praying daily and spending significant quality time with family.
2. Instill gratitude in children by reminding them that all we have, are and will be is a gift from God.
3. Guide children in discerning their own gifts and provide them with opportunities in which to share them.
4. Put children in charge of family recycling efforts.

5. Include care for the poor in family holiday traditions.
6. Help elderly neighbors with mowing, snow shoveling, yard work and housecleaning.
7. Make nature appreciation walks an important part of family time.
8. Work at a soup kitchen or food bank as a family.
9. Teach children Christian money management by setting up accounts marked God (10%), Savings (30%) and Spending (60%) and encourage placing allowances, gifts and earnings in them.
10. Encourage the use of parish donation envelopes as a way of "wrapping" our gifts to God.

*When we think of gifts, we often think of material things. Yet, the greatest gift we can give is the gift of self—time, love, prayer, talents.*

## Family Stewardship Activities

1. Cut out the shape of a heart.
2. As a family, read the poem "What Can I Give Him" by Christina Rossetti.
 

What can I give him,  
Poor as I am?  
If I were a shepherd,  
I would bring him a lamb.  
If I were a Wise Man,  
I would do my part.  
Yet what can I give him?  
Give him my heart.
3. Discuss gifts family members' can share to show one's love for God. Make this a teaching and esteem-building opportunity for children. Write gifts to be shared on the heart, and, on the reverse, transcribe the above poem.

## Toy Stories

Toys are very special to children. By taking children through a series of reflections on toys we can help them realize how truly blessed they are. This exercise can be done as a family discussion.

First ask children to identify their favorite toy. Is it easy for them to name just one favorite toy? How many toys do they think they have? How long have they had this favorite toy? How often do they play with it? Where did they get it? How do they play with it? What makes it special? Does it require batteries, electricity, imagination, thought, skill or creativity to make it work? How do they take care of this toy? Where do they store it when they are not using it?

Next have children ask the same questions of at least two different adults of different ages – one of a parent's generation and one of a grandparent's age. Ask the children to share about what they learned of favorite toys from generations past. Have the children consider: Who has more toys – children today or children from previous generations? Was it easier for older people to know what their favorite toy was than it is for kids today? Do we need all the toys we have today? Why or why not? Do we have more fun with our expensive toys today than our parents or grandparents had with their simple toys? When we compare the toys we have today, can we realize how very many blessings we have? What lessons can we learn from all the toys we have? Do all the children of the world today have the same number of toys as we do? Are there ways that we can ask for less so that someone who does not have what we have might get a little more? A great way to raise awareness is to adopt-a-family this holiday. (*Adapted from the Archdiocese of St. Louis*)

**See Page 4 for additional Family Stewardship information.**

## Grounded in Faith

Prayer is the central component of stewardship. As one fosters his or her relationship with God, the natural response is the recognition that everything in life is a gift. The greatest model we have for generosity is God, granting us the gift of life, giving us Jesus—the model steward, and blessing us with the Holy Spirit to continue God’s work. The reflections below are offered to strengthen our relationship with God and support our stewardship way of living.

### NOVEMBER 7, 2004:

#### 32ND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

*“It was from Heaven that I received these; for the sake of his laws I disdain them; from him I hope to receive them again.” 2 Maccabees 7:11*

We are reminded in Maccabees that everything we have is a gift from God. We are to return those gifts to God so that ultimately we may have the greatest of gifts in our eternal reward.

### NOVEMBER 14, 2004:

#### 33RD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

*“All that you see here – the days will come when there will not be left a stone upon another stone that will not be thrown down.” Luke 21:6*

Thanks to the effort of a billion dollar advertising industry, our material expectations continue to rise year after year. Yet, today, speaking about the end of time, Jesus reminds us that all the material possessions we spend our time and energy to accumulate will become nothing but rubble in the end. What will really matter will be the time we spend on improving our relationship with our God.

### NOVEMBER 21, 2004: FEAST OF CHRIST THE KING

*“Brothers and sisters: Let us give thanks to the Father, who has made you fit to share in the inheritance of the holy ones in light.”*

*Colossians 1:12*

How do you thank God for making you an heir to the kingdom of Heaven? How do you care for and support that kingdom that you will inherit some day? These are the questions that every good steward must answer.

### NOVEMBER 28, 2004: 1ST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

*“Let us then throw off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light.”*

For anyone striving to live a life of stewardship, jealousy may well be the most difficult vice for us to overcome. We see the good things that our neighbors have and it becomes quite inconvenient to remember that Christ calls us to give the first share of all we have to God. Yet giving into our jealousy can begin an addictive yearning for more that will never be satisfied. Only God can satisfy us.

### DECEMBER 5, 2004: 2ND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

*“Therefore, every tree that does not bear good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.” Matthew 3:10*

Do you bear good fruit for Christ? Or do you spend your time, talent and treasure constantly acquiring more toys, clutter and junk? As we are immersed in the Holiday shopping season now might be a good time to evaluate what gifts do we give to God?

### DECEMBER 12, 2004: 3RD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

*“Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind regain their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, and the dead are raised...” Matthew 11:4-5*

When Jesus cured the sick we called it a miracle. Yet God has blessed us with many good things – our eyesight, our hearing, our talents, our health and so much more – and we often take it all for granted. The good steward recognizes every blessing in life as a miracle from God and strives to use those gifts for God’s honor and glory.

### DECEMBER 19, 2004: 4TH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

*“The Lord’s are the earth and its fullness; the world and those who dwell in it. For he founded it upon the sea and established it upon the rivers.” Psalm 24:1-2*

Psalm 24 reminds us that God created absolutely everything and everyone on the earth. Surely we all have an obligation to return a portion of our good fortune to God, for without God, nothing would be possible.

### DECEMBER 26, 2004: FEAST OF THE HOLY FAMILY

*“And be thankful.” Colossians 3:15*

This short phrase can be the key to a life of great peace and joy. When you take time to be thankful you realize that you have been abundantly blessed. When you take time to be thankful you are more open to enjoying and sharing the many blessings in your life. As the old year ends and a new year begins resolve to be thankful. This is the first step to living as a good and faithful steward of all God’s blessings.

*(Adapted from the Archdiocese of St. Louis)*




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Colossians 3:15

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Archdiocese of Chicago— Department of Stewardship  
and Development*

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*The parish stewardship office of the  
Archdiocese of Chicago's Stewardship and  
Development Department exists to support  
and educate our priests and people to en-  
able them to realize the joy that is theirs by  
boldly reclaiming their role as baptized dis-  
ciples of Jesus Christ,  
recognizing and embracing God as the  
Source of all,  
and gratefully responding to God's abun-  
dance by sharing our gifts.*

*We're On The Web at  
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## God's Grandeur

Gerard Manley Hopkins (1844–1889)  
Poet and Jesuit

**THE WORLD IS CHARGED WITH THE GRANDEUR OF GOD.**



**It will flame out, like                    shining from shook foil;  
It gathers to a greatness,  
like the ooze of oil Crushed.  
Why do men then now not  
reck his rod?  
Generations have trod, have trod, have trod;  
And all is seared with trade; bleared, smeared with toil;  
And wears man's smudge and shares man's smell: the soil is  
bare now, nor can foot feel, being shod.  
And for all this, nature is never spent;  
There lives the dearest freshness deep down things;  
And though the last lights off the black West went  
Oh, morning, at the brown brink eastward, springs—  
Because the Holy Ghost over the bent World broods with warm  
breast and with ah! bright wings.**

## Christmas Season Stress Relief

### 10 Tips for A Simpler and More Meaningful Christmas

1. Plan ahead. Instead of going on auto-pilot the day after Thanksgiving, hold a family meeting to decide what the group really wants to do and who's going to do what.
2. If you need a symbol for giving (in addition to Jesus and the Three Kings), learn about St. Nicholas whose feast day is December 6. Santa Claus has been completely taken over by commerce.
3. Avoid debt. Refuse to be pressured by advertising to overspend.
4. Avoid stress. Give to yourself. Don't assume that things have to be the same way they have always been.
5. Draw names rather than have everyone give something to everyone else in your giving circle. Set an amount. Give children one thing they really want, rather than so many gifts. If need be, pool funds.
6. Give appropriate gifts. Get to know the recipient. Give what they want to receive, not what you want to buy.
7. Give alternative gifts. Give 25% of what you spent last year to the needy...individuals or groups locally, nationally or internationally. Buy crafts and clothing from developing countries at alternative gift markets, not from commercial importers, so that the artisans receive a fair price for their work. Give of yourself, not just "stuff"—a coupon book of future services (such as babysitting, a special evening); something baked, sewn, handmade, composed, etc.
8. Celebrate Advent for four weeks before Christmas.
9. Put the gifts under the tree shortly before opening them. Then take turns opening them around the tree, not all at once, so that each gift can be admired and each giver thanked.
10. Make changes slowly but persistently. Do not try to change everything and everybody at once.

(from *Alternatives for Simpler Living*)