

Stewardship: A Way of Life

Is your parish ready for stewardship?

The following questions will help you determine how prepared your parish is for a successful stewardship effort. Most parishes will not be able to answer “yes” to every question, however, the more “yes” answers you have the more successful your stewardship effort will be. As the parish moves into the stewardship process, the long-range goal should be to answer every one of these evaluation questions with a firm “YES!”

Is your parish spiritually strong?

- Are you pleased with Mass attendance?
- Do a fair number of parishioners participate in spiritual enrichment activities—small faith communities, adult faith programs, etc.?
- Do parishioners show a willingness to spend time with God through Eucharistic Adoration, weekday Mass, parish missions, personal prayer, etc.?
- Do parishioners feel a sense of belonging to the parish?
- Is your database up-to-date so that parishioner mail is properly addressed?
- Do you have the correct first name salutations as part of your database?
- Are there parish activities available for everyone including the elderly, the handicapped, the single, those without children and the young adults?
- Are the leaders of your organizations encouraged to make all newcomers feel welcomed and do they encourage new input and ideas?
- Are welcoming activities and processes in place, including a warm and convenient registration process, welcoming packets and invitations to events?
- Are parish leaders willing to ask, invite and challenge different people to get involved rather than always relying on the same people all the time?
- Are attempts made to reach out to those who are not actively involved?

Do parishioners have a sense of ownership in the parish?

- Is there a Parish Vision that has been formulated through broad-based input?
- Is there a Parish Strategic Plan making your parish proactive rather than reactive?
Are all parishioners aware of the goals that are a part of this plan?
- Are all parishioners included in or advised of parish needs assessment?
- Is there open accounting of parish activities and plans including a comprehensive annual report and regular comments in the bulletin about parish business and management?
- Do parishioners feel invited to share their thoughts, comments and suggestions?
- Are the accomplishments of the parish adequately promoted thus encouraging a sense of pride in the parish?
- Do parishioners really feel that the parish belongs to all of them?

Do parishioners believe that the parish is doing God’s work?

- Is there an active social service ministry with adequate opportunities for all interested parishioners to participate?
- Is the “mission” work of the parish adequately publicized so parishioners do see that they are investing in God’s work and not just in the maintenance of a private club for the parishioners?
- Do parishioners understand that a parish exists to help them serve God or do they think the parish exists to serve them? Do the parish leaders also understand this?

Do parishioners feel appreciated?

- Are the gifts people give adequately acknowledged, recognized and appreciated? Is there—at the very least—an annual note of appreciation sent to every donor and volunteer?
- Does your parish bulletin include regular notes of appreciation and recognition?
- Is there an annual appreciation event?
- Are parish leaders sensitive to the fact that sometimes the smaller gift may actually be the more generous gift?
- Do parishioners see that their gifts are really needed and used?

Are parishioners familiar with the scriptural concept of stewardship?

- Does your parish use weekly bulletin stewardship reflections?
- Does the pastor and other celebrants talk about stewardship whenever this concept is included in the Gospel readings?
- Understanding that stewardship is how we live as Christ's disciples, are your parishioners prepared to pray for successful stewardship- through Prayers of the Faithful, parish prayer groups or prayer chains, and/or a parish stewardship prayer?
- Are stewardship-related scripture quotes used on parish bulletin boards, web sites, annual reports, etc.?
- Are the gifts that parishioners give symbolically give tied to the Eucharist through good offertory practices?

Is a strong committee or commission in place to lead the stewardship effort?

- Is the committee representative of all the various types of parishioners in the parish?
- Are committee members Eucharistic people with a strong spiritual relationship with God?
- Are committee members good stewards themselves?
- Are the committee chairs well-received by the parish community?
- Do committee members recognize that stewardship is about so much more than money? Stewardship is about every choice we make as Christians, including how we choose to spend our time and our treasure.
- Does your committee include both new and seasoned parishioners?
- Does your committee include individuals who understand good marketing, communications and motivation processes since educating about stewardship in our commercial and consumer society is a marketing challenge?

*For more information or assistance, please contact Lea Dacanay,
Archdiocese of Chicago Stewardship and Development Office, 312-534-7713.*