

# Introduction to Religious Education Opportunities for Parish Stewardship

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In a recent article in *U.S. Catholic* magazine, Bishop Robert Morneau of the Diocese of Green Bay, WI, points out that stewardship is a way of life not just a matter of financial concerns for true followers of Christ. "If we are truly followers of Jesus (disciples), then we express that relationship by being good stewards of our time, talent, and treasure." While stewardship may not be an everyday term for most Catholic Christians, it is at the core of a Christian way of life.

As Bishop Morneau continues, "Stewardship is about four things:

- 1) receiving God's gifts gratefully,
- 2) nurturing and tending those gifts responsibly,
- 3) sharing those gifts justly and charitably, and
- 4) returning those gifts to God in abundance."

If those of us in ministry (pastors, directors of religious education, catechists, principals, teachers, etc.) want our community of believers to truly embrace a life of stewardship, we must begin by instilling within our children and youth an awareness of stewardship and a commitment to it.

While some of our children and youth are familiar with stewardship because of the guidance and example of their families, many of today's young people are not acquainted with the term "stewardship" let alone a commitment to it as a way of life. It is our responsibility and challenge to present stewardship in such a way that our children and youth can begin to make the conversion of heart that is necessary to begin a life of stewardship.

Today's society tends to be materialistic and self-centered. We must strive to enable our children and youth to recognize that God is the source of every gift, every blessing, all that we have. Children and youth need encouragement to recognize and develop the talents given them and to adopt a way of life in which they share these talents and gifts with others. We must help them to show their thanks and appreciation to God for all that he has given them. Only then can we hope that our children and youth will grow into an adulthood where stewardship truly comes from the heart.

No matter what kind of a stewardship program your parish has, to be successful in the truest sense of the meaning of stewardship, it must involve the children and youth. Stewardship efforts within a parish must introduce the lifestyle of stewardship to the children and youth. It must also encourage and guide an age-appropriate commitment to that lifestyle.

Because children and youth are a part of a family, all stewardship activities and lessons should involve some "take home" activity (e.g. family prayer, posting a banner on the refrigerator, discussing how they take care of the yard, pet, house, etc.). Through family interaction and involvement with the stewardship activities of a child or youth, the adults may come to a greater and more meaningful understanding of stewardship and the conversion of heart necessary for true stewardship to begin.

