

The Vineyard



A quarterly publication from the Development Office of the Archdiocese of Milwaukee funded by the *Catholic Stewardship Appeal*

How Good is Your Relationship?

Inside this issue:

Stewardship & Evangelization;
The Chicken or the Egg?

Pg. 2

Practical Ideas for Practicing
Evangelization & Stewardship

Pg. 3

Give Thanks to the Supreme
Gardner

Pg. 3

Points to Ponder

Pg. 3

Standing on Holy Ground

Pg. 4

Join the International Catholic
Stewardship Council

Pg. 4

In our current climate of reality shows and advice gurus, there is no shortage of conventional wisdom on how to have a good relationship.

Suggestions abound on what to do, what to say, where to go and how to relate. All the “buzz” does prove one very important thing; a good relationship just doesn’t happen. It must be tended.

The piece of advice given most often about relationships is that the partners communicate. People are told to talk to each other. They are encouraged to share their thoughts, fears and wishes – after all, we can’t relate if we don’t communicate.

The most important relationship in our lives, our connection with God, is often left to happen on its own. We’ve been baptized, we go to Mass when we can and we live

good lives. We know that God is there and we’ll call Him when we need Him. Imagine seeing your spouse or best friend only once or twice a year and thinking about them only occasionally in between. How healthy would that relationship be? We certainly need to talk often and sincerely to those who are important to us. So too must we interact with God through prayer.

It is in prayer that we can share with our Father our deepest fears and our greatest joys. When we pray God, too, has an active role – sending us wisdom, calming our spirits, granting a deeper understanding of our faith and our world.

Talk to the Father often. Say a quick prayer on the way to work in the morning or before bed at night. Pray with your loved ones and alone during a quiet moment. Think about how you can build His kingdom on earth – that’s praying too!

If you listen, you may just here Him say, “Let’s talk!” Be sure to answer.

Sincerely,

Barb Vite

Director of Parish Stewardship

Pray WITHOUT
CEASING

The Need of the Giver to Give

“One of the strangest-sounding truths of stewardship is that the need of the giver to give is greater than the need of others to receive. At first, it sounds strange. Strange but true. Great artistic works come forth because of the need of artists to give the gifts within them. Even the Dead Sea is a dead sea because it is a dead-end and has no outlet. It continually receives water but never gives water. It isn’t God who needs prayer. It’s the person praying who needs prayer. A person may be poor, rich or middle-class, but all people, to be fully human, need to give their time and skills and possessions to others. We’re made that way...like a rose is made to give to others its beauty and fragrance.”

from *The Little Burgundy Book*, published by the Archdiocese of Saginaw

GIVING
Changes Everything

Parishes and individual Catholics everywhere are being called to focus on new ways to share the good news, to be inviting and to cultivate disciples. This is very important work for the future of our church – something we have always been called to do as baptized Catholics. Parishes that are cultivating an atmosphere of stewardship as a way of life realize that evangelization is a critical piece of a sound stewardship initiative.

Parish leaders can find themselves asking the question, which should be addressed first; stewardship or evangelization? The answer to this question is a “both/and” - not an “either/or”. No matter how you look at it, good stewardship and active evangelization are inextricably linked in the life of an intentional disciple. The article below, was originally written for a 2011 issue of *The Vineyard*. The perspective offered is even more relevant as we heed the call to the New Evangelization and the Stewardship initiatives emerging from the Synod.

Stewardship & Evangelization; The Chicken or the Egg?

One school of thought tells us that stewardship leads to evangelization. In their pastoral letter on stewardship, the U.S. bishops tell us, “Every member of the Church is called to evangelize, and the practice of authentic Christian stewardship inevitably leads to evangelization. As stewards of the mysteries of God (cf. 1 Cor. 4:1), people desire to tell others about them and about the light they shed on human life, to share the graces and gifts they have received from God, especially knowledge of Christ Jesus...”.

From this perspective, the most important goal of stewardship formation is not learning more about God. The most important goal is deepening our relationship with Jesus so that we can live more faithfully as his disciples in the world. In other words, the ultimate goal of stewardship formation is evangelization. When our faith lives are alive and on fire, we cannot help but share our love of Jesus with others.

Stewardship is an essential expression of Christian discipleship. Disciples who practice stewardship as a way of life recognize God as the source of all they have and are and will be. Faithful stewards recognize the most precious gift given by our gracious and generous God is the gift of faith and they recognize that this gift must be shared with others in our faith community and the larger world.

Good stewards evangelize through their actions; expressed in deeds of service, and support of parish and diocesan ministries and other worthy causes. Good stewards evangelize through their words; inviting other Catholics to fully embrace their call to discipleship. Good stewards evangelize through their prayers; asking for God’s grace to strengthen the call to conversion that all may come to know Christ and thus experience new life in His church.

A second school of thought tells us that evangelization must come before stewardship. From this perspective, evangelization begins with each individual as an on-going call to a conversion of heart and mind. Evangelization within is the call for a renewed enthusiasm for our faith. It is the invitation to know the fullness of our sacramental life. Evangelization is the means through which the Church offers individuals of all ages dynamic and meaningful opportunities to grow in their faith.

This viewpoint identifies evangelization as the method for forming disciples through education, family faith life and community liturgical and sacramental life. It is central to the mission of all we do as Church. Through evangelization we come to know, and to share, the Good News of Jesus Christ. We come to embrace God’s relationship to the human family and our individual and communal response - and responsibility - as disciples. Evangelization, simply stated, is growing in our faith, embracing the call to discipleship and sharing that call with others.

As disciples, we want to make the world a better place. We want to do our part to build God’s kingdom here on earth. We do this by living as faithful stewards; sharing all we have in service and support of our parishes, our archdiocese and other good causes that serve the poorest, the most vulnerable, the most defenseless among us.

No one can definitively answer the question of which comes first - the chicken or the egg. Perhaps we might be wise to consider stewardship and evangelism as two branches of our faith “tree”. Both flow from embracing our faith fully - the gifts *and* the responsibilities- and acting accordingly. Both call us to share all we have; our time, our talents, our resources and our faith as we do our part to live as God intended, and invite others to do the same. Stewardship and Evangelization - one does not exist without the other.



Practical Ideas for Practicing Evangelization & Stewardship

From an article by Dr. Susan W. Blum Gerding, President Evangelization - Jeremiah Press

How can we, as Catholic evangelizers, share our faith and invite people to deeper conversation? How can we attract inactive and non-believers in a normal and natural way? The following are some practical and helpful hints.

1. Talk about your faith with your family, friends and neighbors. Share what the Lord is doing in your life.
2. Discuss headlines and news stories in light of faith. Mention that you are praying for the child who was abducted, or for government leaders, or for an outreach project.
3. Treat others honestly and sincerely.
4. Invite others to adult education, prayer groups, support groups and social events at your parish.
5. Seize the moment! Take every opportunity to share the goodness of God in whatever situation you find yourself.
6. Involve others in your faith community. Let them know that the parish, and the Church, need them.

“Find new ways to spread the word of God to every corner of the world.”
~Pope Francis

Give Thanks to the Supreme Gardener

As we see the buds and new life that proclaim the glory of spring, let's remember to give thanks to the Creator who designed the world with rhythms and cycles of life that occur with incredible precision according to His divine plan. When we stop to smell the roses, we should be sure to take a minute to say thanks to the Supreme Gardener!

“The heavens declare the glory of God;
the firmament proclaims the works of his hands.”
Psalm 19:1



Points to Ponder

- *Have you ever put a bucket under a leaky pipe and been surprised at the amount of water that accumulated, drop by drop? Each small drop contributed to the larger whole. This is how stewardship works. The good works - no matter how seemingly insignificant - of Christian stewards everywhere - add up to build the Kingdom of God.*
- *Everybody who practices authentic Christian stewardship has a moving, magical story. It's important that we tell our stories, not only to convey them to others, but also to reinforce them for ourselves. It's all too easy, once a miraculous moment has passed, to forget about it or to write it off to coincidence. Reflect upon a time in your life when you have extended yourself, risen to the occasion, gone above and beyond the call of duty - and been rewarded in ways you could not anticipate, or imagine. Tell your story, write it down, proclaim the good news!*
- *We are always pressed for time. We try to make time, save time and budget time. We waste time, kill time and pass time. We have the time of our lives. We start things in good time and finish them, sometimes, in no time. And, of course, there will always be time to attend to things later. The most important thing we need to know about time is that it is a gift from God and ought to be received and honored as such. Time is, perhaps, our greatest gift, the measure of a life.*

Standing on Holy Ground

If you were “channel surfing” at all during the Lent and Easter seasons, you most likely came across the movie *The Ten Commandments*. The story had reached the part where Moses encounters the burning bush. God directs Moses to take off his sandals because he is standing on holy ground. This very dramatic scene dramatizes the miracle of God speaking directly to Moses, setting him on a path that would change his life, and the lives of countless others.



Many of us have seen the movie, and this scene, many times. Perhaps we can consider a new thought the next time we see this familiar scene unfold. Perhaps we could ponder the notion that the ground upon which Moses stood was holy not only because of the miracle. It was holy simply because God was there. If we truly believe that God is always with us, then each of us stands on holy ground every day.

It is easy to recognize the holy ground beneath our feet at certain times in our lives – weddings, funerals, the birth of a new baby. Our first challenge is to recognize this during the stress and strain of everyday life. Prayer is a wonderful tool that can help us to really feel the holy ground that supports us each and every day.

Accepting that we stand on holy ground each day leads us to a second challenge. Just as God called Moses to fulfill his destiny, He calls each of us to realize our distinctive and unique faith potential. Standing in place, merely marking time and taking up space, is not what God intended for any of us.

Another familiar story is that of a fig tree that has stood for years without bearing fruit. The orchard's owner, measuring the tree by its lack of productivity, orders it to be cut down. The gardener measures the tree by its potential. He promises to fertilize it and cut away what is siphoning life from the healthy branches. He knows that fruit just doesn't happen. Even when the potential exists, effort and dedication are required.

Praying for guidance, being intentional in our actions, living as faithful stewards each and every day; this is how we can fulfill God's plan for each of us. We stand on our holy ground each new day full of potential. Let's make the most of it!

Join the International Catholic Stewardship Council

The International Catholic Stewardship Council (ICSC) is a professional organization recognized internationally as a source of education, networking and information to advance the ministry of stewardship as a way of life in the Roman Catholic Church in parishes and dioceses worldwide. Founded in 1962, ICSC has over 1,200 members representing over 800 dioceses and archdioceses, parish communities, Catholic organizations and professional firms.

Parish membership includes:

- Monthly parish e-bulletins offering weekly reflections, prayers, bulletin inserts and more.
- Members-only web site access to over 800 parish stewardship resources.
- Discounts for conferences, institutes and publications.
- Networking and mentoring opportunities.
- Access to past conference presentations...and more.

In order to successfully advance the stewardship initiatives of the Synod, it will be important that Pastors and parish leaders have the formation and practical knowledge necessary to lead stewardship plans in their parishes. Becoming an ICSC member parish is a powerful way for parish leaders to gain new insight into a holistic vision of stewardship, and to learn about practical ways to move a parish community toward that vision.

For more information on ICSC membership, contact Barb Vite at viteb@archmil.org or visit the ICSC website, www.catholicstewardship.com



Save the dates for the International Catholic Stewardship Council's 54th annual conference, October 2-5, 2016 in New Orleans. Attending an ICSC conference is the single most powerful way for parish leaders to gain new insight into a holistic vision of stewardship, and to learn about practical ways to move a parish community toward that vision. Watch for more information to follow.
