

Key Themes of a Spirituality of Stewardship

Let us briefly note the themes that we find in the bishops' pastoral letter and in reflection on our call to grow as good and faithful stewards. All quotes below noted with page numbers are from *Stewardship: A Disciple's Response*, Tenth Anniversary Edition.

Accountability: Central to the understanding of stewardship is that a diocese, parishes, schools, and other church-related organizations that seek to develop urgently needed human and financial resources, must show that their programs and services truly "make a difference" in meeting the spiritual, educational, and social needs of the people they serve. They also must make every effort to give or render an account of the organization's use of the time, talent, and treasure entrusted to its care.

"Thus should one regard us as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Now it is of course required of stewards that they be found trustworthy." (1 Corinthians 4:1-2)

Call-Response: The recognition that each of us receives a personal invitation from Jesus to live and serve in his name and to share Christ in our lives at home, in our parish, at school, work, in our towns and cities, and in our world. *"Jesus not only calls people to him but also forms them and sends them out in his service (cf. Mt 10:5ff.; Mk 6:7ff.; Lk 9:1ff.). Being sent on a mission is a consequence of being a disciple. Whoever wants to follow Christ will have much work to do on his behalf — announcing the Good News and serving others as Jesus did."* (p. 14)

"As each one has received a gift, use it to serve one another as good stewards of God's varied grace." (1 Peter 4:10)

Capital Campaign: A carefully planned, well organized, needs-based program to raise a substantial amount of money within a specific time frame. They are ordinarily conducted to raise funds for major building or renovation projects and, occasionally, to develop significant financial resources for other parish purposes like debt elimination, tuition assistance or endowment development.

"Everyone who listens to these words of mine, and acts on them, will be like a wise man who built his house on a rock...Everyone who listens to these words of mine, but does not act on them, will be like a fool who built his house on sand."(Matthew 7-24-26)

Caring and Sharing: *The steward's way is the way of caring for others through the sharing of their gifts and resources. "Christian stewards are generous out of love as well as duty. They dare not fail in charity and what it entails...the fundamental pattern in every case is simple and changeless: 'Serve one another through love...bear one another's burdens, and so you will fulfill the law of Christ" (Gal 5:13, 6:2) (p.40)*

Commitment and Conversion: Disciples dedicate their lives to the Lord and express their faith by embracing a life of on-going conversion in Christ. *"Following Jesus is the work of a lifetime. At every step forward, on his challenged to go further in accepting and loving God's will. Being a disciple isn't just something else to do, alongside many other things suitable for Christians; it is a total way of life and requires continuing conversion."* (p. 15)

"We have seen the Lord!" (John 20:25) "Honor the Lord with your substance and with the first fruits of all your produce, then your barns will be filled with plenty and your vats will be bursting with wine." (Proverbs 3: 9-10)

Development- A program of planned or systematic growth in which a religious, educational, or charitable organization reaches out to its various publics and invites them to invest in its current and long range goals.

"Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully...God loves a cheerful giver." (2 Corinthians 9:6-7)

Discipleship: The surrendering of ourselves through grace and choice to follow Jesus Christ that entails a personal response and conversion of heart. *"The Christian vocation is essentially a call to be a disciple of Jesus. Stewardship is part of that. Even more to the point, however, Christians are called to be good stewards of the personal vocations they receive. Each of us must discern, accept, and live out joyfully and generously the commitments, responsibilities, and roles to which God calls him or her."* (p. 13)

"To each individual the manifestation of the Spirit is given for some benefit." (1 Corinthians 12:7)

Eucharist: The Eucharist is the great celebration of thanksgiving, through which we are drawn to Christ's sacrifice, nourished through word and sacrament, and sent forth to share in Christ's

mission. *"And what do Christians bring to the Eucharistic celebration and join there with Jesus' offering? Their lives as Christian disciples; their personal vocations and the stewardship they have exercised regarding them; their individual contributions to the great work of restoring all things in Christ."* (p. 34)

Evangelization: Faith is a gift from God, enlivened by the Holy Spirit, which good stewards share, recognizing that the Church exists to evangelize. *"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 gifts and graces they have received from God, especially knowledge of Christ Jesus."* (p. 33)

"Whether it be I or they, so we preach and so you believed." (1 Corinthians 15:11)

Gift and Blessing: Stewards recognize their blessings and gifts and know that these are entrusted to them by God. *"They know themselves to be recipients and caretakers of God's many gifts. They are grateful for what they have received and eager to cultivate their gifts out of love for God and one another."* (3)

Gratitude: An attitude of thankfulness, with the understanding that all we are, have, and will be is a gift from God. *"Disciples who practice stewardship recognize God as the origin of life, the giver of freedom, the source of all they have and are and will be."* (3)

"We have not received the spirit of the world, but rather the Spirit from God so that we may understand the things freely given us by God." (1 Corinthians 2:12)

Hospitality-True hospitality is a spiritual discipline that reminds us of how we ourselves have been received by Christ. It is demonstrated when a community is a welcoming place, extending every effort to receive gladly all people.

"It was not you who chose me, but I who chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit that will remain, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name he may give you. This I command you: love one another." (John 15:16-17)

Ministry- Ministry is being who you are or doing something using gifts that are present in each person to help with the reign of God in a local community.

"Just so your light must shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your heavenly Father." (Matthew 5:16)

Mission: As Christian disciples, we are called to share Christ's love, forgiveness, and mercy with others, particularly those who are most in need. We do this by being good stewards of our many gifts. *"Refracted through the prisms of countless individual vocations, this way of life embodies and expresses the mission of Christ: to do God's will, to proclaim the Good News of salvation, to heal the afflicted, to care for one's sisters and brothers, to give life — life to the full — as Jesus did."* (p. 14)

Planned Giving- A commitment made by donors, commonly in the form of a bequest, to transfer capital assets of cash, stock, real estate and other forms of personal property to a religious or otherwise charitable organization.

"If one part suffers, all the parts suffer with it; if one part is honored, all the parts share in its joy." (1 Corinthians 12:26)

Philanthropy- Philanthropy begins with the admirable awareness of the needs of others to which we respond out of a spirit of largess. In other words, philanthropy operates in a "give to the need" philosophy, while the spirituality of stewardship is all about the "need to give" as a way of life.

"If someone who has worldly means sees a brother in need and refuses him compassion, how can the love of God remain in him?" (1 James 3:14)

Prayer- Stewardship involves spending time with God. Recognizing that every day is a gift from God, we spend some time each day in prayer, at Mass, in Eucharistic Adoration, reading Scripture, quiet meditation, or some other way to continually ask God how he wants us to use the gifts he has given to us.

"We have given up everything and followed you." (Mark 10:28)

Proportionate Giving- Stewardship calls us to realize that each of us is called to give as God has given us. Giving is not based on what others are giving, nor are we excused

from giving because we do not see others giving. It is rooted in giving in proportion to all that God has given us.

“When the young man heard this statement, he went away sad, for he had many possessions.” (Matthew 19-20)

Sacrifice: To sacrifice is to give in a meaningful way. Christian stewardship follows the direction of Jesus, who gives his very life, for the life of the world. *“Jesus is the supreme teacher of Christian stewardship, as he is of every other aspect of Christian life; and in Jesus’ teaching and life self-emptying is fundamental. Now, it might seem that self-emptying has little to do with stewardship, but in Jesus’ case that is not so. His self-emptying is not sterile self-denial for its own sake; rather, in setting aside self, he is filled with the Father’s will, and he is fulfilled in just this way: ‘My food is to do the will of the one who sent me and to finish his work’ (Jn 4:34)*

Steward- A steward, is one whom the owner of a household turns over responsibility for caring for the property, managing affairs, making resources yield as much as possible, and sharing resources with others.

“But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given you besides.” (Matthew 6:33)

Stewardship: A spirituality of giving in a biblical context with a primary focus on the need of the giver to give. It is everything we do after we say we believe. *“An oikonomos or steward is one to whom the owner of a household turns over responsibility for caring for the property, managing affairs, making resources yield as much as possible, and sharing the resources with others. The position involves trust and accountability.”*

Talents: In inviting people to grow as good stewards, dioceses and parishes often ask people to give of their “time, talent and treasure.” Of the three, “talent” seems the most elusive for people to grasp. *“If stewardship means taking care of, and sharing, all God’s gifts, then stewardship of the gift of talent means nurturing, developing, and using the God-given abilities and characteristics that help to define ‘who we are’ as individual human persons.” (p. 66)*

