

Archdiocese of Milwaukee

**An
Invitation
to Share Our Gifts**

**Parish Stewardship Education for
the Hispanic Parish Community**

2003

W E L C O M E

In 1998 the Parish Stewardship Staff provided a Stewardship Manual for parishes. With that manual, people were introduced to a new way of viewing their gifts that encouraged a spirit of love and sharing with their family, friends, co-workers, teachers, parish ministries, and the diocese as well.

Since then, many of our parishes have experienced an increase of Hispanics attending Mass. This presents a new challenge - the challenge of stewardship for this growing segment of our membership. It became evident that the stewardship plan introduced to all parishes would not fit the Hispanic community. In May 2000, several task force meetings were held to discuss the approach of stewardship in the Hispanic parish community. As people came together to share their stories and ideas, the need to develop a plan primarily for Hispanic parishes became apparent.

In developing the plan for Hispanic parishes, we wanted to incorporate the rich blessings of hospitality and love already present in the parish and articulate the needs of the larger faith community - that being the parish, district and archdiocese.

This resource provides a detailed plan to foster stewardship in the Hispanic parish community. First, it offers an overview of the rich tradition of Stewardship which invites us to prayerfully consider the sharing of our gifts and to live our lives as stewards. Secondly, it describes who must be involved, the roles of existing church leadership in the stewardship process and the encouragement of new leaders who will need to come forward to successfully communicate the message. The message of personal witness and storytelling is used to invite people to share their own stories of personal faith and blessings and encourage the sharing of those blessings.

Thirdly, it provides a recommended timetable for when and where to implement the program. Finally, resources are provided to assist you in the preparation of letters, bulletin announcements, prayers, lay-witness outlines stewardship forms and other important samples. These resources we hope address many of your communication and educational needs and can be adjusted to meet your particular purpose.

If you ever need help or advice on any of your stewardship efforts, know that you can contact us at any time (800-769-9373 X485 or X331). We look forward to working with all of you in the coming year.

Stewardship is.....

...an expression of discipleship, with the power to change how we understand and live out our lives.

Stewardship identifies a Christian Steward as one who receives God's gifts gratefully, cultivates them responsibly, shares them lovingly in justice with others and returns them with increase to the Lord.

In our Hispanic parishes, we see an abundance of gifts with a sense of quiet dignity and sometimes anonymity when it comes to sharing those gifts.

Where you treasure is - there is your heart.

Maria Ortega is a woman of little means. She is a 68 year old widow, living in her family home, supporting her mentally disabled son Fino. You can count on her to be busy in her kitchen every Sunday afternoon preparing a feast for her family and friends, as they come home to visit every Sunday afternoon.

She has another tradition - for many years, she weekly puts money aside for another feast. The feast day of Our Lady of Guadalupe. A few weeks before December 12th, she walks to her local florist and orders twelve dozen roses. When people enter the church on the morning of December 12th for Las Mañanitas, everyone is overwhelmed by the beautiful roses that surround Guadalupe.

Over the years, parishioners continue to ask, "who is this wealthy person that gifts our parish with this beautiful gesture?"

To meet this generous steward....turn the page.

A Steward's Reflection

I have been blessed with family and friends all my life. God always answers my prayers. I'm not saying that I have not had problems or pain. In fact, recently my 32 year old daughter died of cancer and left my three grandchildren without a mother. Maybe that's why God put me here - to help out and take care of them I am grateful for my neighbors and friends. Whenever there is a birth, death or crisis, they are here to help. We belong to the same parish and watched our children grow up in this school. Now, in my old age, I can give back to the parish. I don't have much of an education or skills, but I love people and help out in my parish whenever I can. I belong to the Guadalupanas and we help raise money at our parish festival. That is how I can give back to God.

Stewardship in Action

Maria's treasure is her love for family and friends and the wisdom she shares with her grandchildren and young neighbors. She is a holy woman who is not afraid to share her faith - explaining how God has worked in her life. As she endured the struggles of a difficult life, her strong faith and love of God became operative in the way she related to her neighbors and parish community.

Stewardship Thought

"When he looked up he saw some wealthy people putting their offerings into the treasury and he noticed a poor widow putting in two small coins. He said, "I tell you truly, this poor widow put in more than all the rest, for those others have all made offerings from their surplus wealth, but she, from her poverty, has offered her whole livelihood." Luke 21:1-4

The widow's detachment from material possessions and dependence on God leads to blessedness.

Stewards Are.....

As we brought people together for our focus groups regarding stewardship in the Latino community: clergy and laity, Mexican American, Puerto Rican and South American, it became obvious that we have different experiences of Church. There are many people that go to Mass faithfully every Sunday - but are not registered members or hold leadership positions, due to custom, misunderstanding and fear of government involvement. We have identified three profiles of Hispanics and how they each view church and stewardship.

They are:

1) The Catholic that has lived in the States for many years, raised a family and now has grandchildren and great-grandchildren. This person is a registered member, very loyal to the parish and is a wonderful volunteer. Their means of stewardship is mostly time and talent (example - serving home cooked meals for the festival). Donations vary, usually moderate, which can easily increase with understanding of “where the money goes.”

The importance of letting the parishioners know the financial condition of the parish and how the Sunday collection is used, will give them a sense of ownership and responsibility. Many people are very generous when they hear “this is your parish, your family, we need you!”

2) The second generation has had the example of loyal and committed parents attending Mass (the mother is often “the teacher” of devotion and prayer). They have witnessed and experienced the deep faith that is woven in and through their culture. This is also the generation that experiences the clash of culture - one of their parents and one of the United States. They remember fondly the parish they grew up in and often return for weddings, baptisms and first communions. They are busy establishing their own life and are not committed to a parish. Since they have more education and better employment, they have the means to contribute.

Since this generation has had the example of their parents, they often “come back” when they marry and have children. The parish family and adult ministry can play an important role, since they will be looking for what they experienced as young children. They understand that Sunday is the time when God’s family gathers. This is the time to define the importance of parish membership, which will build the community they are looking for.

3) The newly arrived person from another country will look for relatives or a community of other Hispanics. As they gain employment, they often relocate. They will attend Mass when it doesn't conflict with their job. Finances will be stretched to meet immediate needs of housing and food while they continue to support family back home. Many people come from small towns and villages and settling in a large city may be difficult. There is also a mistrust of the government and some agencies since many people are not documented. Their silent, strong faith is exemplary as they persevere to make their new home.

Saludos y Abrazos - stretch out your arms and say "Bienvenidos!" Their faith and love will be shared as they begin to trust and feel welcomed. Many come from small towns or villages - they will be looking for another community, another family. Since some people are undocumented, the parish can be a place of refuge. They want to belong and feel safe. Liturgy is important, with symbols of flowers, candles, color, incense, movement, texture and lights. All this conveys warmth, good will and blessings to each other.

The Signs of Stewardship in the Hispanic Parish

- Community** For the Hispanic, community is the immediate and extended family, neighbors and parish relationships. There is no separation from family life during the week to Sunday worship. One cannot separate out one's faith and one's beliefs from everyday life and action.
- Prayer** In the Hispanic culture, prayer, faith, and community are inseparable. A specific time and place for everything does not apply when it comes to witnessing their faith. Their deep prayer life is rooted in the belief and experience of God's constant presence in their lives.
- Talent** A personal invitation extended to parishioners is essential and meaningful. Since many people have had the experience of exclusion, the acknowledgment and appreciation of "we need you" are most welcomed. This invitation encourages empowerment and leadership development.
- Hospitality** One of the roles of outreach is to help parishioners recognize themselves as disciples of Jesus. In the spirit of love and generosity, the parish welcomes and invites parishioners to feel safe and secure and encourages them to actively participate in the life of the church.
- Compadres** For Hispanics, being acknowledged, being accepted, and being invited into one's family is a distinct and great honor. The Hispanic parishioner can do the same by inviting others to be at home in their parish and share their gifts with one another. The outcome is loyalty and commitment.
- Lay Witness** Encouragement of sharing their stories will go a long way, since many people (and previous generations) have interesting stories of immigration and their struggles of settling in this country. Their stories will be filled with faith and love for God, along with thanksgiving, praise, and gratitude for many blessings.

A Steward's Invitation to...

- ❖ **MEMBERSHIP: parishioners who formally register and are counted on the parish census.** Realizing that registering in a parish may be unfamiliar or misunderstood by those from Hispanic cultures, there needs to be time spent educating the community about this. It is important to note that attempts should be made to assure people that the parish never turns anyone away, whether they are on the roster or not. Explain that this has nothing to do with the government, as churches are separate from and not supported by the government. As misunderstandings and fears are confronted, we can begin to talk about the meaning of parish membership.

It is important to the parishioner, the parish, and the Archdiocese of Milwaukee of which the parishes are a part of. The person or family who fills out a form letting the parish know they are becoming members are making a statement that says, "this parish community is important enough for me and my family to put our names forth as belonging to this parish." When people are registered, they then have opportunities to share in the leadership of the parish by possibly serving on the Parish Council and its committees.

The parish can then know who their community is and what the needs are in order to be able to better respond to those in their community. The parish is then in a position to communicate in other ways than at Sunday Mass with their parishioners. Programs can be tailored to the needs of the people who are at the parish, because the parishioners are known. Ministries born out of the gifts of the community can be formed. The parish will be able to define itself and be confident of who it is, what its mission is, and where it is headed. This all makes for a strong parish moving into the future.

Parishioners should also be made aware that as members of a parish, they are also members of the Archdiocese and the universal church. It is important for the Archdiocese of Milwaukee to know the make-up of the members of all 200 parishes spread throughout 10 counties. This helps the Archdiocese respond to and serve the needs of parishes.

- ❖ **LEADERSHIP: parishioners holding positions of leadership in the parish community.** Parishioners serving on the Parish Council and its standing committees and subcommittees should reflect the membership of the parish, keeping in mind that the Council and committees are a representative body, not a body made up of parishioners who represent various constituencies. When parishioners see themselves either as a council/committee/subcommittee member or see themselves reflected in the leadership, they often realize more fully that they *are* important in their parish.

LEADERSHIP continued...

Personal invitations to be a part of the Council selection process or a committee / sub committee member is significant. It is important, though, that there is a match between the gifts needed and the gifts of the parishioner. When the talents of a parishioner match a need a committee has to do its work, it is most often a wonderful experience. Council and committee membership should never be tokenistic.

- ❖ **ENTREGA: parishioners who share their gifts of time, abilities, and finances with the parish community.**

One of the purposes of Stewardship education is to empower parishioners to be active, vital parts of their parish. When parishioners feel they are valued and have a share in the mission and vision of the parish they have made a commitment to join, they will invest. They will more readily be willing to answer the call to share their gifts of time, talents, and finances.

The parish should find ways to always invite parishioners to make a commitment of their gifts, and then thank them when they do. When parishioners invest of themselves personally and financially, their ownership in their parish deepens.

A key element in helping parishioners take ownership of their parish is for the parish to be accountable for all the gifts that do come forward; showing parishioners that the parish is taking care of their gifts and using them wisely. In other words, the parish is acting as a good steward, just as it is asking its members to do. Regular reporting and sharing of information is an invaluable way to help people invest and stay connected.

Outline of Hispanic Stewardship Educational Process

Objectives of Stewardship Efforts for Hispanic Communities in Parishes:

- ❖ Building community.
- ❖ Increase registered membership in the parishes among the Hispanic community.
- ❖ Educate Hispanic community about the gifts they already *do* share. It is important for the whole parish community to also hear this.
- ❖ Encourage sharing of gifts within their parish.

- ❖ Involve the whole parish in the education about Stewardship and the gifts everyone brings to the parish community.

This process can lead to increased Stewardship for the entire parish. People can be reflecting on the resources they have to offer, sharing their gifts, and celebrating one another's gifts.

Plans to achieve these objectives:

- ❖ Preparation of parish community for the process of these Stewardship efforts.
- ❖ Arrangement for trained Stewardship Leadership Team for kick-off of the process in the parish. (Stewardship Leadership Team members are selected from the parish.)
- ❖ Timeline is worked out to begin in the Winter, with specific tasks listed for the cycle and who is responsible for each task.

Process:

- ❖ Stewardship Leadership Team to be present at all parish Masses on Kick-off weekend.
- ❖ In advance of that weekend, there are bulletin and pulpit announcements by parish priest, and homilies weaving in stewardship, if appropriate to the Scripture readings.
- ❖ Lay witness testimonials are also woven in at all weekend Masses.
- ❖ After the parish visit weekend, recruitment of Area Coordinators / Home Visitors takes place in the parish.

Stewardship Leadership Team Parish Visits include:

- ❖ Welcoming/Hospitality
- ❖ Greeters
- ❖ Testimonials
- ❖ Special song written for the Hispanic Stewardship effort
- ❖ Three posters designed to highlight real parishioners engaged in Stewardship to post within the parish.

Home Visits Plan includes:

- ❖ Gathering names of those who are not formally registered in the parish.
- ❖ Training of area coordinators / home visitors by Stewardship Leadership Team.
- ❖ Use of brochure to support the invitation made for a home visit.
- ❖ Strategy for families / individuals invited to a home visit to respond Yes/No.
- ❖ Informing families / individuals of what the home visit will entail.
- ❖ Commissioning of Home Visitors at parish Masses before the visits begin.

Home Visits:

- ❖ Personal one-to-one contact from 'parishioner to parishioner'.
- ❖ A welcoming presence and a personal contact with the parish.
- ❖ Encourage parish registration, and assurance information is ONLY used for the parish – so the parish has the information it needs to be able to offer the services their parishioners need.
- ❖ An opportunity for the visitor to talk about what it means to be a parishioner, and how they live out Stewardship in their daily lives and in the parish.

- ❖ A chance to talk about the parish and all it has to offer.
- ❖ An opportunity to ask for any concerns or things they may need their parish to help them with.
- ❖ An opportunity to pray together.

Conclusion of Pilot Project:

- ❖ The Home Visitors turn in all information gathered to the Area Coordinator.
- ❖ Because the foundation in Stewardship is being grateful for what we have received, home visitors and those who have been visited are sent a thank you letter by the Pastor.
- ❖ The parish holds a Parish Fiesta, to celebrate one another's gifts and keep the awareness heightened that was brought out through this process.

Timeline for Stewardship Education In Your Parish

DATE	ACTIVITY	PERSON RESPONSIBLE
January	Introductory phone call to priest providing the purpose and goals of Hispanic Stewardship outreach. Request of list of possible volunteers to serve as District Team Leader.	Office of Parish Stewardship
January	Priests Visit - Provide information on process, and discussion of time-line. Get priests commitment for follow-up calls to volunteers.	Office of Parish Stewardship
February	Invitation to serve as District Team Leaders sent to potential volunteers.	Parish Priest
February	Follow-up call from priest for added support.	Parish Priest
February	Obtain list of District Team Leader volunteer.	Office of Parish Stewardship
March	Schedule orientation and workshop training for District Team Leaders.	Office of Parish Stewardship
April, May, June	Orientation and Workshop Training for District Team Leaders: 1. History of Stewardship 2. Outline of Process 3. Public Speaking Training 4. Examples of Testimonials 5. Time- line of Process	Office of Parish Stewardship
May to August (1 time a month)	Homily and Pulpit Announcement by parish priest	Parish Priest
May to August (1 time a month)	Lay Witness Testimonials at all weekend Masses	Parishioners
May to August	Parish Visits and filling out of invitation card	District Team
August	District Team Leader returns to home parish to recruit Area Coordinators/Home Visitors. (At least one recognizable person from each county to be part of District Team.)	District Team Leader
August	Training of Area Coordinators / Home Visitors.	District Team Leader
August	Obtain parish list of parishioners and demographics of parish.	Parish Secretary

DATE	ACTIVITY	PERSON RESPONSIBLE
August	Begin development of visitation list by neighborhood.	District Team Leader, Area Coordinators
September	Commitment Weekend - the commissioning of Home Visitors.	Priest, District Team Leader, Area Coordinators
September/October	Home visits with parishioners.	Home Visitors
October/November	Home Visitors turn all information gathered to Area Coordinator.	Home Visitors
October/November	Thank you letter is sent to all volunteers.	District Team Leader
October/November	Area Coordinator reports results of activity to District Team Leader.	Area Coordinator
November	District Team Leaders meet and write report.	District Team
December	Parish gathering - Fiesta	Parish
December	Final report submitted to the Archdiocesan Parish Stewardship Office.	District Team
December	Evaluate Effectiveness.	Office of Parish Stewardship
January	Dinner/Congress & Sharing Our Gifts.	Office of Parish Stewardship

Timeline for Stewardship Education In Your Parish

In February

- ❖ Send an invitation to potential District Team Leaders from parish priest.
- ❖ Call possible Team Leaders a few days after invitation was sent.
- ❖ Send list of confirmed district team leaders to Office of Parish Stewardship.

In March

- ❖ District Team Leaders receive information on Stewardship Orientation and Workshop Training Dates from the Office of Parish Stewardship.

In April, May, June

- ❖ District Team Leaders attend Stewardship Orientation and Training Workshops.

From May through August

- ❖ Incorporate Stewardship themes into homilies once a month.
- ❖ Display Stewardship Posters.
- ❖ Stewardship District Team Leaders will provide lay witness testimony at various parishes.
- ❖ Incorporate Stewardship themes into pulpit announcements once a month.
- ❖ Parishioners will fill out home visit invitation card.

In August

- ❖ District Team Leaders recruit Home Visitors/Area Coordinators from their home parish.
- ❖ Train Visitors and Coordinators.
- ❖ Develop a list of parishioners wishing a home visit from the invitation card.
- ❖ Categorize visitation list by neighborhood.

In September

- ❖ Hold a commitment weekend and commission Home Visitors at Mass.

Through September and October

- ❖ Conduct home visits.
- ❖ Turn in all information to parish.

In October and November

- ❖ Send a thank you letter to all visitors, coordinators and participants.
- ❖ District Team Leaders assemble participation report for parish.

In December

- ❖ Hold parish fiesta in celebration of Stewardship efforts.
- ❖ Complete report for Office of Parish Stewardship to evaluate effectiveness of pilot program.

Poster Information and Timeline

1. Purpose of Posters

- ❖ To show **real** parishioners sharing their gifts within their parish community.
- ❖ To highlight visual images of “Hispanic leaders” serving within the parish.
- ❖ To educate the parish community that **all** members have gifts to share.

2. Message of Posters

- ❖ Stewardship is an invitation to share our gifts. These posters highlight three important messages...
 - **Membership**-We become members of our parish/faith community through baptism, but also when we as good stewards choose for ourselves to **register** as a member of a particular parish community. Membership is present every time we say, “Yes, count me in!”
 - **Leadership**-We can be successful leaders and also faithful stewards when we choose to hold positions of leadership and responsibility in a parish. From Parish Council Chair to Eucharistic minister, we model our faith through our leadership.
 - **Entrega**-We live as Christ’s stewards through the giving of ourselves to our parish and the greater Church. When we invest our personal and financial gifts in our parish and the larger church community, we see the power our gifts have in building God’s kingdom.

3. Timeline for Poster Placement

- ❖ Posters should be displayed from May to December. (*See Stewardship Education Timeline*)
- ❖ Posters can be hung on the wall, on a bulletin board, in the corridor, or in the entryway of your parish, but should be visible to the community as they gather each week to celebrate the Eucharist.
- ❖ Posters can be introduced one at a time or as a set. What is most important is that the posters highlight and/or support a Stewardship theme used in the homily, in lay witnessing, or as an after communion reflection.