

The Practice of Stewardship

Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God,
serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received (1 Peter 4:10).

“What identifies a steward? Safeguarding material and human resources and using them responsibly are one answer; so is generous giving of time, talent, and treasure. But being a Christian steward means more. As Christian stewards, we receive God’s gifts gratefully, cultivate them responsibly, share them lovingly in justice with others, and return them with increase to the Lord” (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. *Stewardship—A Disciples Response*. Tenth Anniversary Edition. Washington, DC: USCCB, 2002, p. 42).

Being a Good Steward of Your Treasure

Think for a Moment. . .

- How do you already use your treasure, your wealth, to the benefit of others, especially those in need?
- How can you find new ways to share your treasure? What financial priorities will need to change in order to be a good steward of your treasure? How can you re-allocate monies?
- How can you work together with other parishioners to use your treasure and to raise funds for important projects?

Ideas for Being a Good Steward of Your Treasure

Here are a few ideas to get you thinking about how to share your treasure:

- Give a donation to UNICEF and their efforts to meet the essential needs of poor children all around the world through education, nutrition, and health care. Go to the UNICEF web site.
- Give a donation—large or small—to Habitat for Humanity to build a home in the U.S. or another country around the world. Build a house online with Habitat’s interactive tool. Donate the cost of items such as nails, shingles, and plumbing. Consider becoming a monthly donor. Go to the Habitat for Humanity web site.
- Donate money or books to Room to Read. Room to Read partners with local communities throughout the developing world to establish schools, libraries, and other educational infrastructure. Donate new, children's storybooks, ABC and 1,2,3 books, picture books for young children, hardcover books that are thick and durable, educational books that are fun - science, geography, math, world history, etc. Go to the Room to Read web site for more information.
- Protect the environment through the Nature Conservancy and preserve the plants, animals, and natural communities that represent the diversity of life on Earth by protecting the lands and waters they need to survive. Adopt-A-Rainforest through Rainforest Alliance. Protect Endangered Species through the World Wildlife Fund. Go to their web sites for more information.
- Support a village in a developing country by providing live animals for villagers to develop their own herds. Check out the Heifer Project website for more information.
- Support a Catholic Relief Services project and help communities build a clinic, a source of potable water, decent classrooms, farming, and so on. Go to the CRS website to make a donation and then get updates, news, and stories about the people you are helping.

- Support one of the numerous Catholic Relief Service Projects around the world through “Gift of Hope.” CRS has an online and print catalog of the projects with descriptions and the per share cost of supporting the project. Visit the Catholic Relief Services web site for more information.
- Purchase products from organizations funded by the Catholic Campaign for Human Development that produce everything from organic cheese produced by family farmers to soaps made by low-income women. Go to the CCHD web site for more information.
- Donate money to Food for the Poor to provide direct relief assistance to the poor by purchasing specifically requested materials and distributing them through the churches and charity organizations already operating in areas of need. Purchase a gift from their catalog, support a project, recycle inkjet and toner cartridges. Go to their web site for more information.
- Sponsor children and the aging through Unbound (formerly Christian Foundation for Children and Aging) and connect with a poor child or aging friend at a Catholic mission site. The poor that CFCA serves suffer from malnutrition, inadequate medical care, and/or poor housing, with little chance for the children to receive an education. Go to their web site for sponsorship information.
- Purchase ethical/fair trade products through Catholic Relief Services, Ten Thousand Villages, SERRV, and Global Exchange that support farmers and artisans in poor communities pay for food, education, health care and housing. Fair Trade encompasses a range of goods, from agricultural products like coffee, chocolate, tea, and bananas, to handcrafts like clothing, household items, and decorative arts. Go to the web sites of the organizations and discover the products you can purchase.

Being a Good Steward of Your Time

Think for a Moment. . .

- How do you currently use your time to serve the needs of others as a good steward?
- How can you find new ways to use your time as a good steward?
- What will need to change in your schedule to use your time in service to others?

Ideas for Being a Good Steward of Your Time

In just one or two hours per week or month, you could:

- Prepare and serve a meal at a soup kitchen or homeless shelter.
- Collect food for the local food bank.
- Collect clothes for those in need at homeless shelters and childcare centers in a poor community.
- Visit the elderly at a senior citizen facility.
- Visit the homebound in the parish and/or do grocery shopping for them.
- Tutor children.
- Serve in a parish ministry by being a Eucharistic minister, lector, youth leader or teacher, or serving on a leadership committee.

In just one day each year, you could

- Help the Red Cross during local emergencies.
- Participate in Crop Walk from Church World Services.
- Work with the Special Olympics.

- Weatherize, repair, and/or paint a home for those in need. Contact your local Habitat for Humanity chapter.
- Plant trees in your community through the Global Releaf Program and National Arbor Day Foundation programs. See their web sites for more information.
- Organize a “clean-up the community day” and mobilize teams of people to clean up litter and junk in specific areas of the community.

In one week each year, you could

- Build a house with Habitat for Humanity in the U.S. through a Habitat “volunteer vacation.”
- Organize a craft fair featuring ethical/fair trade crafts, or create a gift catalog for your parish community and sell fair trade items. For more information go the web sites for Catholic Relief Services, Ten Thousand Villages, SERRV, and Global Exchange. Consider organizing a fair trade gift sale at Christmas or Easter or anytime throughout the year.

Being a Good Steward of Your Talent

Think for a Moment. . .

- What are some of your gifts and talents? What gifts and talents do you have because of your education, job, activities, hobbies, and interests?
- How are you already sharing your gifts and talents to benefit others—at church, in the community, in the world?
- How can you find new ways to share your gifts and talents?

Ideas for Being a Good Steward of Your Gifts and Talents

Here are a few ideas to get you thinking about how to share your talents:

- Use your gifts and talents in service to the elderly in your community. For example: create a network of people to drive elderly persons, do fall and spring housecleaning for the homebound, write letters for nursing home residents who can no longer write, entertain the elderly in nursing homes.
- Use your gifts and talents in service to the children in your community. For example: tutor children, teach computer skills, get involved in a recreation or an arts and crafts program, help with summer programs for children, be a Big Brother or Big Sister, coach children in sports.
- Weatherize, repair, and paint homes for those in need. Check with the local Habit for Humanity affiliate in your area.
- Use your gifts and talents in service to people with disabling conditions. For example: work with Special Olympics or programs for the developmentally challenged, read for the blind, offer a shuttle service, make your church facility accessible for all.
- Use your gifts and talents in service to the parish community through parish ministries and programs.

Share your time and talent by donating goods and materials to an organization initiated and led by poor and low-income people as they empower themselves and become leaders in their communities. Visit the Catholic Campaign for Human Development web site to find local opportunities in which you might invest your energy, talent, and experience.