

# 5 Things to Do to Foster Stewardship in a Time of Social Distancing

- April 6, 2020

- Stewardship

“Jesus’ call is urgent. He does not tell people to follow him at some time in the future but here and now—at *this* moment, in *these* circumstances.” (SDR, 14)

Stewardship isn’t only about money, but certainly includes financial giving. Many pastors and parish leaders are concerned about diminished offertory that will result from the suspension of public liturgies, especially Sunday Mass. What follows are ideas for engaging people in the life and mission of your parish during this time of maintaining social distance, including the call to contribute as good stewards of their lives, faith, and resources now and in the future.

Stewards recognize that every person is created in God’s image, that each person is a precious child of God. Each of us are given gifts, including life, faith, talents, and resources. We are called to steward these many blessings, to share them and make them fruitful. Doing so is a way to express gratitude to God who is the giver of all good gifts. Consider these four things to do to foster stewardship at this time:

## 1. Be Attentive to God’s Presence and Invite Your People to Do the Same

- Even in these troubling times God is with us. Look for God in the celebration of Mass which is being offered throughout the world and in the words of Sacred Scripture, the saints, and other spiritual authors. Find God in the presence of people who show compassion for you and for others. See God in the face of those who come to you for care. Draw your attention to the beauty of creation, music, literature, and film. Share the glimpses of God’s presence you see with your people through social media, email, and in phone conversations, and invite them to be attentive to God’s presence in their midst.
- Grow in gratitude for God’s tender, providential care and invite your people to do so as well.

## 2. Invite People to Share their Time and Attention

- Ask staff and/or parishioner leaders to reach out to parishioners, especially the most vulnerable – elderly, homebound, those who live alone. Phone calls will be best, so that any needs can be identified and follow-up determined.
- Encourage those who minister to the homebound to make phone calls or email the people they usually visit. Many elderly parishioners may have smart phones or computers and may appreciate a video chat.
- Invite those who are already involved in ministry to connect via web.
- Build up the family of faith. Express your care and concern for them at this time. Reach out through social media, emails, or postal mail. The more connected people feel to their parish community, the more deeply they grow in faith, the more ready they will be to respond to the call to give of themselves and their resources.

## 3. Affirm Stewardship in Action

- As parishioners share the ways they are caring for family, neighbors, and other parishioners, thank them for their stewardship. Use the word *stewardship* to affirm the spiritual aspect of

what they are doing. Their care for others is stewardship of their time and attention, and is a reflection of God's love.

#### 4. Ask People to Give

- During Lent, we are reminded of Christ's ultimate sacrifice for us on the cross. As followers of Jesus, we are called to sacrifice, to give of ourselves and our resources as a sign and sharing of Christ's love.
- Remind people that when they contribute their financial resources to the parish they are contributing to Christ's mission of love and mercy. Stewardship leaders often remind their people that we all have a need to give. This is a moment in which our giving can make a real difference in the life of the world. This includes financial giving.
- Make e-giving available; remind parishioners they can enroll in e-giving if they have not already done so.
- Remind people that they can mail their contribution.
- Appeal to those who are not already giving to do so now, as a response to the current situation. It is an expression of their faith in God's providence.

#### 5. Show Hospitality

- Stewardship leaders often focus on hospitality as a way to build up the family of faith, creating strong relationships in which people are more willing to hear the stewardship message and embrace it in their lives. The way you care for people now is a sign of this Christian hospitality which will have lasting impact on the parish in the future.
- Start thinking about how you will invite people "home" to the family of faith when public liturgy resumes.

## Putting Faith into Action

in a time of social distancing

