

March 2017



A Christian Steward is:
One who receives
God's gifts gratefully,
cherishes and tends them
in a responsible and
accountable manner,
shares them in justice
and love with others,
and returns them with
increase to the Lord.

WISDOM

from ICSC strategic partners

This month's contributions come from
the following ICSC Strategic Partners:



The year 2017 marks the 25th anniversary of the U.S. bishops' pastoral letter, *Stewardship: A Disciple's Response*. The pastoral letter offers wisdom and guidance to all those who are responsible for the health and well-being of the Church. ICSC is celebrating the pastoral letter this year as we approach our annual conference September 17-20 in Atlanta, Georgia.

Each month ICSC sends you practical information, whitepapers, and tips, as well as other insightful information from our Strategic Partners to assist you with your responsibility as stewards of the Church.

In this edition ICSC provides for you:

- * three pastors' perspectives on developing a culture of philanthropy courtesy of CCS
- * ideas to communicate hope shared by myParish App
- * ways to determine how healthy your parish is from **Our Sunday Visitor**

You can find videos from our Strategic Partners as well as additional information and resources on the home page of the ICSC website on the right-hand side under Wisdom From ICSC Strategic Partners. www.catholicstewardship.com

ICSC promotes and supports Catholic teaching on stewardship by providing education and resources for dioceses, parishes, and institutions of the Roman Catholic Church. We are very grateful to our Strategic Partners for their partnership and commitment to ICSC, and their professional wisdom is a wonderful gift to ICSC members.

Developing a Culture of Philanthropy: Three Pastors' Perspectives

Griffin O'Shea, Senior Director, CCS

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Pastors play a pivotal role in engaging parishioners to embrace the Church's work and mission. These discussions may be unfamiliar for some pastors, yet it is valuable to emphasize this can also be a unique opportunity to bring parishioners closer to God. In this piece, Reverend Anthony Cutcher, Reverend Monsignor William J. Belford, and Reverend Cosme Fernandes share how they have successfully engaged parishioners to give their time and treasures to the Church. Their insights reveal three interconnected elements of successful Catholic philanthropy: stewardship, personal requests, and ownership.

Fostering Stewardship

All three pastors recognize that fundraising is part of their pastoral mission. Father Cutcher, President of the National Federation of Priests' Councils and pastor of four parishes around Dayton, OH, sees fundraising as a means to an end, saying, "As a pastor, my job is to preach the gospel, sacraments, and educate the next generation of Catholics. In order to provide the means and atmosphere to spread the gospel in the 21st century, you need adequate funds."

It may be helpful for pastors to compartmentalize their fundraising work so that they are in the proper mindset to perform sacramental duties. Monsignor Belford, former Chancellor of the Archdiocese of New York and current pastor of St. Teresa Parish in Staten Island, NY suggests working stewardship into a yearly routine and focusing on it from after Christmas to Easter or the start of Pentecost so that priests don't burn out. Father Fernandes, pastor of St. Martin of Tours in the Bronx, NY, prefers to look at every interaction as part of each family's spiritual journey. According to him, "Parishioners are managing their families, day in and day out, but to make this parish part of their family, that is stewardship." He calls this ongoing process "living the ask" and it requires thoughtful promotion of parish needs. Monsignor Belford's experience has taught him that fundraising must be integrated into the pastoral mission. Otherwise, it is challenging to attend to parishioners' needs and easy to miss opportunities to genuinely engage.

Making Personal Requests

Personalized engagement is another important part of the equation. Father Fernandes says he is confident when making a request because he constantly makes his parishioners aware of the good work being done to build up the Church, as well as the needs that must be addressed. This puts into practice Father Cutcher's belief: "If you've done a good job at your parish so people see beyond the basket to what you're raising funds for, you will be successful."

All three pastors emphasize the importance of making personal, one-on-one requests because—as Monsignor Belford recognizes—"People give to people." Too often, Monsignor believes, priests and stewardship and development professionals rely on large events which, Father Fernandes affirms, is an idea that is very prevalent in Spanish speaking parishes. Still, people like to be approached individually. Father Fernandes has found a great deal of success building relationships with parishioners who then respond generously to a direct ask for financial support, not because of their allegiance to him but because they are now informed stakeholders who take ownership of their Church. Stewarding parishioners through personal engagement reduces the stress of the essential task of making a direct request.

Encouraging Ownership

Empowering parishioners to accept ownership of their Church is a crucial last step. Whether it was Monsignor Belford building a church, Father Cutcher entering a capital campaign shortly after taking over four parishes, or Father Fernandes rallying a community without a pre-established base of wealthy donors, philanthropy without community engagement is unsustainable. Monsignor Belford cautions against relying on cornerstone parishioners without building up the next generation of leaders.

Father Fernandes leads a parish with many capital needs. After taking time to familiarize himself with these priorities, as well as the people involved, he launched several small campaigns in which 90 percent of a project would be funded from parish reserves or a manageable loan and 10 percent would come from parish donors. He used these campaigns to identify and develop lay leadership and demonstrate progress to the parish. By the time he began a campaign to build a community center, he was confident in his parish's ability and willingness to respond. Father Cutcher, beginning an archdiocesan campaign early in his tenure, did not have time to build up infrastructure the same way. Instead, he approached the campaign as a, "Vehicle to bring the people together around a common cause." His leadership inspired carefully selected parish leaders to become powerful surrogates who took pride in the effort and rallied the community. The campaign itself became the catalyst for active stewardship.

Bringing it All Together: Advice for Stewardship and Development Professionals

Working with pastors to help them master these three elements will help them engage parishioners in a deeper and more meaningful relationship with the Church. Father Cutcher also recommends a straightforward approach when working with pastors. "Avoid the salesman patter," he says. "Level with pastors and they will be more likely to take recommendations."

Father Fernandes also points out how important it is to involve the entire Church, in all of its diversity, in each campaign. "Campaigns need to be customized, but remember that direct engagement is important for all people regardless of background or financial capacity."

And finally, Monsignor Belford encourages stewardship professionals to develop relationships with pastors themselves. "Go to Mass or otherwise engage with your pastor outside of fundraising. This builds trust, gives you an idea of the pastor's strengths, and reinforces the spirituality that should be at the heart of every Catholic campaign."

Griffin O'Shea is a Senior Director at CCS. Recently, Griffin helped launch and guide parish campaigns throughout the Archdiocese of Cincinnati and Archdiocese of New York. He received his Bachelor of Arts in International Relations and Geography from Colgate University.

IT'S TIME TO COMMUNICATE HOPE



“I propose that all of us work at overcoming that feeling of growing discontent and resignation that can at times generate apathy, fear or the idea that evil has no limits.”

*Pope Francis
2017 World Communication Day*

Let us focus on the “Good News,” the Gospel.

FOR PARISHES

- On social media, link to articles like the pope's message. Pull out a line or two as a quote.
- In bulletins, print pieces such as your priest's homilies, a message from a pastoral staff member or a Catholic blog. Make sure these pieces are ones that express confidence in God's goodness and mercy.

FOR FAMILIES AND INDIVIDUALS

- Choose a Scripture verse as your Lenten theme: “Fear not, for I am with you” (Is 43:5) or “A clean heart create for me, O God” (Ps. 51:12)
- Resolve to post only positive social media posts throughout Lent.
- Set aside one evening a week for family time: reading a book together, playing games, going for a walk. At the end of the evening, have a parent offer a blessing to each child. “May God bless you + (Name), And keep you in love.” The child answers: “Amen.”

FOR TEENS AND YOUNG ADULTS

- Share positive videos that promote conversation, rather than ridiculing someone.
- Invite friends over and put away your cell phones! Instead, play a board game, cook or watch a movie together. First person who checks their phone has to do dishes!
- Choose a Scripture verse you really like and put it on a sticky note in your school locker. It doesn't have to be big - it's just a good reminder to you throughout your day.

A Parish Check Up

How Healthy is Your Parish?

1. Are you using finances in a transparent and responsible manner?

Be honestly transparent with parishioners, good or bad. Sunday collections should cover operating expenses, so explain if the parish is using savings to meet your budget, or if things are going well for a specified reason. Communicate regularly how electronic giving and offertory continue to support the parish. What kind of tools have you used to increase and sustain offertory? An Increased Offertory Program, or Stewardship of Treasure program can increase offertory typically 10-20% or more.

2. Is the parish continuously communicating across all age groups?

It is important to examine how we are communicating. There are many popular tools such as offertory envelopes, bulletins, and websites. Technology has continued to evolve, there are many ways to use technology to communicate, from social media to email. How effective do you communicate your mission and message regularly or do these methods need to be updated? Digital and print communications should be adjusted according to your parish demographics and guide and connect parishioners in the realm where they live, on their phone, tablet or in print. Consider an analysis of your bulletin, website and content, parish app, notifications, phone calls, newsletters, state of the parish reports, and other letters and mailings as part of an annual plan.

3. Does the parish share the faith through service and outreach ministries?

Each of us are called to be witnesses beyond the walls of our churches. Determine a short and long term plan for the parish. Do your parishioners share this vision for the parish? Assess the necessary tools, staff, volunteers, and funds needed to implement the plan. Make the invitation and continue to communicate activities. Invite people to attend a sacrament, activity, or event, share the story and thank those that participated and those who helped to support it.

4. Are you creating a warm, welcoming parish community?

Hospitality provides an environment to foster and build relationships, but it also takes leadership willing to meet and connect others. Are you encouraging parishioners to build and foster relationships with each other and with God? Leadership should take initiatives to invite others and encourage them to invite more parishioners. Create routine events and activities, form small groups and find ways to connect parishioners by using their talents and abilities.

5. How often are opportunities for prayer and catechesis offered?

Create opportunities for “metanoia” or a change of heart. Pray together at the beginning and end of Mass. Encourage prayer groups and praying for the joyful and sorrowful things that happen. Are there opportunities to grow spiritually through individual and communal prayer, adoration, spiritual direction, and the witness of others? Provide opportunities for continued education through all age levels of faith formation, catechetical events, book studies, vacation bible school, and bible studies, and provide books, pamphlets and other materials on a regular basis.

Developing a plan of communication, education, and support can build stewardship and strengthen a parish. Reviewing your plan at the end of the year will help determine what will assist your parish into the future. To learn more how your parish can improve communication, increase offertory, and become a healthier, more Engaging Parish in 2017 call 800.348.2886 x 2237 or visit www.osvoffertory.com.