

Lay Witness Talks

Throughout history Christians have been elevated by stories of spiritual growth told by people just like them. Parishioner testimonies, also known as “lay” or non-clergy witnesses, have been proven key to helping other parishioners grow in their living a life of stewardship. These stories are crucial to the success of parish efforts.

Lay witnesses send a strong message to parishioners that they too can give of their possessions and time in grateful response to God. Parishioners who hear about how stewardship can become a way of life for other parishioners are motivated to bring stewardship into their own lives.

Selecting Lay Witnesses

Lay witnesses should be parishioners who represent “typical” people in your parish. They should believe and practice stewardship and give of their time, talent and treasure in an intentional, planned, sacrificial, and generous manner. They should also be individuals who can relate well to other parishioners, be comfortable speaking in public about their personal experiences, and convey enthusiasm about Stewardship.

Someone might say, “Yes, I believe in giving back to God in gratitude, but I don’t want to stand up and tell everyone what I am doing, because it sounds like I’m bragging.” You can let them know that it is not bragging, they will be testifying about the Lord and inspiring others to support the Church.”

Guide for Lay Witnesses

A lay witness should visit with the pastor or other stewardship leader to discuss how to the best present their stewardship story and to learn the pastor’s goals for stewardship in the parish. Their preparation can include reviewing the scripture passages about stewardship and reflecting on the stewardship theme. They should also practice their remarks until they are comfortable with their style, what they will say, and how they will say it.

Invite presenters to be sincere, enthusiastic and friendly. Be sure and tell them to look at the congregation while they are talking, and turn to the sides occasionally to include everyone. Encourage presenters to write out their talk word-for-word if it is helpful, or use simple notes, an outline, or keywords, so that eye contact can be made throughout the talk. The pastor, or another stewardship leader, should review all lay witness talks well in advance and rehearse in the worship space with the sound system.

Sample Outline for Composing Lay Witness Talk

1. Introduce Yourself - While many of your fellow parishioners will know you, some may not. Give a description of your family, the number of years in the parish, etc.

2. Properly Define Christian Stewardship - It is a response we make in gratitude to God for what He has given to us. It is an intentional, planned, proportionate giving of our time, talent and treasure. It is not about raising money, but disciples. It is about living fully in the communion with each other and with Christ. We are celebrating and encouraging the stewardship offered at the Parish- the praying, serving, and giving that this witness is describing.

3. Discuss How You Began Practicing Stewardship

When did you first become aware of the concept?

Did you have reservations? Be honest about your first reactions. People will relate to any feelings of "discomfort".

How did your family react to the idea?

Was the initial "plunge" difficult? How did you go about it?

4. When did you begin to experience the benefits? Speak of the effect that Stewardship has had on your faith life. Use anecdotes from your own family life if possible. How do you and your family give of our time and talent? Where you able to give a full tithe (10%) right away? If not, how are you working toward that goal? Are you able to contribute your time to ministries, if so how and what do those ministries do for the Mission of the church? Do you find extra time with God, or regularly find benefits for your faith life in weekly Mass?

5. Urge your fellow parishioners to get involved. - Invite the congregation to join you and your family in making your parish a stewardship parish. Ask them to look at all that God has given to them and make a generous response to his many gifts.