

Feeding Thanking Sheltering Deciding Evangelizing
 Clothing Praying Comforting Building Renewing Creating Nurturing
 Celebrating Caring Loving Sharing Inviting Visiting Growing Serving

Stewardship CONNECTIONS

Office of Parish Stewardship, Diocese of Rockville Centre, NY

January, 2016

Believe!

A special treat in this issue was submitted by Lori Zito, Stewardship Director for St. Sylvester Parish, Medford. We hope you enjoy her reflection on Christmas, Stewardship and Joy as much as we did!



BELIEVE. As the Christmas season comes to a close, I think back on all of the Christmas movies and specials that we see each year. In my favorite Christmas movie, *The Polar Express*, the children who ride aboard this special train to the North Pole are encouraged to believe in Santa and the magic of Christmas, despite their personalities, backgrounds and life circumstances. The children are each given train tickets personally punched with prophetic words from the conductor: BELIEVE, LEAD, LEARN. Such simple words, yet so challenging too.

Believing is a recurring theme throughout the history of Christianity: Joseph's doubt; Mary's belief. The apostle Thomas' doubt; Mary Magdalene's belief. Our doubts, our belief...

This year's Stewardship theme for our parish is "Believing with Joy." During the most holy time of Advent as we await Jesus' birth, "believing with joy" seems easy. Advent is a happy time of great anticipation – people are kinder, homes are decorated, presents are given. The key is continuing to believe when we get closer to the Good Fridays in our lives - the challenging times, the doubting times - when God, like the wise conductor in *The Polar Express*, calls us to BELIEVE, to LEAD and to LEARN.

In the movie finale, the main character who the conductor calls "the young man with all the questions" (sound familiar?) is given one of the bells from Santa's sleigh by St. Nick himself - only to lose it through a hole in his bathrobe pocket - and find it again in a box under his tree on Christmas morning. Like all of us at times, the young man, until he once again had proof, began to doubt his magical journey. How many times do we struggle on our faith journeys, doubting God, wondering if He really cares? Christmas doesn't give us all the answers, but it does give us a beginning; a starting point in hope. In the movie, only the children who believe in Santa can hear the sleigh bell ring; to the adults in the movie it is simply a broken bell. Let this be the Christmas that the adults hear the sleigh bell and respond to His call from a simple manger to **BELIEVE.**

"Let this be the Christmas that the adults hear the sleigh bell and respond to His call from a simple manger to **BELIEVE.**"

To quote *The Polar Express* conductor, "*Seeing is believing, but sometimes the most real things in the world are the things we can't see.*" May

God bless you and your loved ones richly with the invisible gifts of faith, hope and love at Christmas and throughout the year.



BELIEVE!

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A Way of Life

A Jubilee Year of Mercy!

This month's Jubilee Connection comes from Monsignor Chris Heller, Pastor of St. Joseph Parish in Babylon and a long-time friend of Stewardship! Many thanks, Fr. Chris, for all you do for us and our Church! A special thanks, too, to those parishes who reprinted last month's article! Great job!!



Stewardship Connections

January, 2016



Stewardship
A Way of Life

Stewardship, Mercy & Everyday Life

Msgr. Chris Heller, Pastor - St. Joseph Church, Babylon

When Pope Francis came to the East Coast last fall, he made a powerful impression on both believers and non-believers. To illustrate: in speaking at St. Patrick's Cathedral, our Holy Father wasted no time in setting the tone for Evening Prayer, a reflection very much in solidarity with our whole-hearted embrace of Stewardship.

He first encouraged us to receive and release to others the Spirit of Joy and Gratitude with which God has endowed us. This Spirit of Joy proclaims God's wondrous love for us, and invites us to participate in renewing the faces and hearts of all those God sends into our lives. Giving thanks and remembering, then, become hallmarks of the Christian life, action and reflection for each of us takes a personal and communal responsibility. (Remember: one of the Spanish language translations for Stewardship = *Corresponsabilidad*).

The Pope's second theme, the Spirit of Hard Work, is a beautiful outgrowth of the first theme: as we recognize how blessed we are, we become "spontaneously impelled to serve the Lord, and finding expression in a life of commitment to our work." Christians gradually comprehend that it is a *holy privilege*, an ongoing opportune moment of grace, to practice total stewardship, one that is imbedded in every dimension of our beings.

May I suggest that during the month of January (and beyond!) during this Extraordinary Holy Year of Mercy, we might apply Pope Francis' two fundamental themes to our renewed lives, an attitude of gratitude and the joy of hard work, to the issue of human life. What follows are several suggestions of ways to live as a Steward of Mercy:

- Support the Right to Life March in Washington DC, either by personally going or sponsoring someone's food and transportation for the day.
- Pray each day, at the same time of day if possible in order to develop a positive rhythm and habit, for the Holy Innocents of all time: those whose earthly lives were deliberately and prematurely ended.
- Shop for and donate new baby items to Birthright, the Life Center, or your Parish's baby shower.
- Transport the donated baby items to the location where they can most easily be distributed to struggling families.
- Fast one day a week (even if it's just during daylight hours) to demonstrate your solidarity with our sisters and brothers who are currently refugees and immigrants, forced against their will to abandon their homes.
- Adopt a retired priest, and send him a card on his birthday or on his ordination anniversary, as one way of saying "thank you!" to him for his service to the church.
- Take that coat you have not worn (or have not been able to fit into for several years), and donate it to a thrift shop, Penn Station, or specific police precincts.
- Find out and shop for the specific foods your local church or civic food pantry can use, and make a donation, since the demands for food continue to rise.
- See which neighborhood organizations close to your home are accepting wash-up kits and ready-to-eat foods for homeless people, and for those who cannot or will not go to a shelter.

The opportunities to be a Steward of Mercy are limitless. As you thank God for the life you love, create the legacy of love for those who hunger and thirst for ordinary and everyday comforts.



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A Way of Life

Gifts Celebrations!

Those parishes who honored their ministries with a large celebration this past year.

This month we highlight Sacred Heart Parish in Cutchogue. As part of a larger Stewardship Renewal, Sacred Heart Parish chose to celebrate the shared gifts of the community with beautiful new banners, pie, water and a Gifts Celebration!



The Making of Our Stewardship Fair

Submitted by Elaine Villano, Business Manager, Sacred Heart Parish, Cutchogue

Our Pastor Msgr. Joseph Staudt said it was time to begin Stewardship here at our church. He invited eight people to join a committee. Unfortunately, three were not able to continue for one reason or another and that left five to perform this miracle.

It began with many questions of who, what, where, when, and why. Most of us knew what Stewardship meant, "Time, Talent and Treasure", but where do we start? Laurie Whitfield was the answer! Laurie came out and gave her presentation which inspired our committee... and so it began. Looking back, I am not sure how it would have turned out without her support and encouragement.

The suggestion of a Ministry Fair made me think of the fair we had several years back. I know the people who worked on that fair worked very hard to put it together, but not many people attended the fair and it appeared there was no follow-up afterward. So the question now was, how do we get people to attend and how do we improve on what we had before?

It just did not happen overnight; it took several meetings, a lot of thought and research. We decided to put up two large tents. One tent was for the Ministries to display and explain what they were about. You had to pass through this tent first, where you received tickets to be able to participate in the next tent where Msgr. volunteered to be in a dunk tank and our Deacon volunteered to have custard cream pies thrown at him, both extremely good sports! There were balloons, face painting and several games for all ages. Refreshments were served after each Mass and people stayed for hours. We took tons of pictures capturing the moment, which were hung up in the back of our church to memorialize the fun everyone had and we also hung beautiful and colorful banners throughout the church representing each ministry.

By the way we had many new people willing to join and serve in many of our ministries, so I would say it was quite successful. Everyone, both young and old had a wonderful time. We are church and it also felt like we were one big family!



Ministry Booths!



Dunk Tank!



Custard Pies!



Banners!



A Way of Life

Flashback!

Our Flashback this month is a very timely and popular one. It first appeared in March of 2007* as the Catholic Ministries Appeal was "In Full Swing." As we launch the 2016 CMA, let's remember that part of being in leadership is giving people an opportunity to give. The CMA does that...three-fold!

**Please note, we have updated this article to reflect current numbers and themes.*

The CMA is in Full Swing! Oh, what we can do together!

As stewards, we choose to live our lives in thanksgiving to our generous God. Our actions, our words - what we choose to do or not to do - are all examples of our gratitude. Christian stewards seek ways to share what we have been given.

One very important vehicle for exercising our stewardship is the Catholic Ministries Appeal. The CMA allows us an opportunity to share our gifts in many different ways.

Gift of Money: Of course, when we think of the Catholic Ministries Appeal, we think of sharing our financial resources. It would be silly not to! More than 600,000 of our sisters and brothers received support and assistance from the funds shared through the CMA last year.

It is rare that one person or one parish could touch this many lives. The CMA brings us beyond the individual, the group and the parish and unites us as one diocesan church. Oh, what we can do together!

Gifts of Time and Talent: In addition to money, the CMA offers opportunities to share our time and talent. Parishes often form CMA committees to support a smooth and organized Appeal effort. Or you may wish to share your gifts with the many volunteer ministries that the CMA supports. One of the great benefits of the Appeal is communication. People are informed of the many good works, programs and opportunities in this diocese. For example, you may wish to share your gifts as a Meals on Wheels volunteer, as a Catechist in the parish, as a participant in the Immersion Experience to our mission in

the Dominican Republic or even take a step on the journey of our faith by attending adult faith formation offerings. The CMA tells of the good works of this diocese and communicates the opportunities to share our gifts beyond our money.

Gift of Prayer: The Catholic Ministries Appeal brings us closer to those we help and support. We can become more "connected" with our sisters and brothers through prayer. We may wish to pray for those who support the Appeal, those who volunteer, those who receive support and even those who cannot participate for whatever reason.

The Catholic Ministries Appeal is stewardship in action! Not just in sharing our financial resources, but our time, talent and prayer as well. **Oh, what we can do together!**

2016 CMA Resources Available

- ◆ Instructional Leadership Manual.
- ◆ Brochures, posters, and envelopes.
- ◆ Website featuring the current and past videos, resources, prayer and more!
www.drvc.org/cma
- ◆ Quarterly newsletter.
- ◆ Active FaceBook page!
- ◆ DVD presentation to view online, at meetings or host a parish DVD weekend!
- ◆ Special CMA Envelope for parishioner packets.
- ◆ Speakers are available for weekend Masses.
- ◆ Personalized mailing options.
- ◆ Various original bulletin inserts.
- ◆ Automated Robo-Calls.

If you have any questions or would like to speak to someone about the CMA, please call us at 516-379-5210 x2.

ONE
FAITH + FAMILY + COMMUNITY



2016 Catholic Ministries Appeal

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A Way of Life

Liturgical Resources

We hope you enjoy and utilize these Liturgical Resources for your Bulletin, Announcements and General Intercessions. Please know that they are also available on our website at www.stewardshipli.org → Special Leadership Section → This Week's Fax. (Note: Bulletin Reflections are taken from **Stewardship By the Book**, author Sharon Hueckel!)

February 7 - 5th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Bulletin Reflection: In today's readings, both Isaiah and Peter hear the call of God and feel themselves unworthy. But, reassured by the Lord, both answer and follow. Do *I* hear the Lord asking, "Whom shall I send?" Am *I* prepared to answer "Here I am. Send *me!*"?



Living Stewardship: We are grateful this week for all stewards in our parish who respond to God's generosity in their own lives by being generous to the poor, feeding the hungry and consoling the sorrowful, both within our parish and outward to the wider community.

General Intercession for Mass: That as good stewards, we seek to work against self-interest and freely share our God-given gifts, we pray to the Lord...✠

February 14 - 1st Sunday of Lent

Bulletin Reflection: Today's first reading describes the offering of first fruits the people of Israel were to present to the Lord in thanksgiving for their deliverance from Egypt and the gift of the promised land. Is my offering at today's Mass an appropriate response to the many blessings the Lord has given me?

Living Stewardship: We are grateful this week for all stewards in our parish who share their first fruits by practicing a corporal work of mercy - welcoming the stranger - by extending invitation, hospitality and inclusion to the newest members of our parish community.



General Intercession for Mass: That as responsible stewards, firmly grounded in hope, may we bear fruit by assisting the poor, feeding the hungry and consoling the sorrowful whenever we have the chance, we pray to the Lord...✠

February 21 - 2nd Sunday of Lent

Bulletin Reflection: Peter, James and John wanted to build a "booth" for Jesus and just stay on the mountain where His transfiguration took place. But the Son of God, the Chosen One, knew that He must instead keep moving toward His Crucifixion. We, too, must rise from worship and do what we can to hasten the coming of the Kingdom.



Living Stewardship: We are grateful this week for all stewards in our parish who practice a spiritual work of mercy - instructing the ignorant - through service to our parish's religious education program as a catechist or other educational minister.

General Intercession for Mass: That as steward disciples, we use this season of Lent as an opportunity to grow spiritually ourselves, we pray to the Lord...✠

February 28 - 3rd Sunday of Lent

Bulletin Reflection: The parable in today's Gospel clearly warns that we, like the fig tree, will be judged by our fruit. While God mercifully provides us with time and opportunity, let us give witness to our faith with deeds of kindness and generosity!



Living Stewardship: We are grateful this week for all stewards in our parish who love actively. How? By serving in a soup kitchen, food pantry, homeless shelter, hospital or assisted living facility.

General Intercession for Mass: That as merciful stewards, we answer the call to be a "doer," performing works of mercy for our neighbor in need, we pray to the Lord...✠

