



# What I Have Learned About Stewardship

REV. KENNETH S. VAN HAVERBEKE



# Stewardship

GROWING OUR FAITH

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## Introduction

The practice of stewardship, as a way of life, predated its formal implementation of stewardship in the Diocese of Wichita in 1985. In living the stewardship way of life, once one decides to follow Jesus Christ, one must be a steward of the gifts given.

Stewardship is not a new concept; it is biblical and part of our Catholic tradition. However, what the Diocese of Wichita and other dioceses throughout the world have experienced by becoming a "stewardship diocese" is to provide

the support for parishioners and priests to make stewardship a "way of life" in following Jesus in their baptismal call to discipleship.

What follows are topics frequently asked about how the stewardship way of life can be most effectively lived, and some lessons I have learned. Hopefully, they will be a benefit to you in the Diocese of Jefferson City as you adopt the stewardship way of life.

- Father Ken



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## Discipleship or stewardship: which comes first?

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Stewardship is the grateful response of a Christian disciple. So, which comes first? The “grateful response” or being a “disciple of Christ?”

Trudy came into the Catholic Church last year. Although she was baptized a Christian, while growing up, she never attended a church regularly. Because her father was in the military, Trudy began to volunteer at the local Veterans Hospital, and she found she had a gift of making people laugh. She began to visit patients and present small shows and skits for the patients.

Looking back on this period of her life, she would say she was being a good steward of the gifts God had given her. She recognized and received the gift of compassion and laughter, and through her volunteering, she shared this gift. But she found it was not enough.

Through her stewardship of time and talent with the VA patients, she began to wonder more and more about God. Why does God permit suffering? Why are some patients seemingly at peace in their situation and others not? What does their Christian faith have to do with that peace?

Trudy began to ask questions while she was volunteering and discovered Jesus. She discovered

how the Father sent His Son to live a life we live, and to even suffer and die like we do. Trudy discovered a God, not at a distance, but up close and personal. Once she learned that Catholics not only believed in Jesus, but that Jesus was truly present in the world through the Eucharist, she had to find out more. Eventually this led her to entering the Catholic Church and becoming a devoted disciple of Christ.

For Trudy, which came first? Stewarding her gifts or following Christ? Discipleship or stewardship? For Trudy, stewardship led her to discipleship.

In living the stewardship way of life, we have learned God is persistent, and through our gifts and the sharing of those gifts, we can discover even a greater gift: the face of Jesus in the people we are sharing our gifts. We understand that once one chooses to become a disciple of Jesus Christ, stewardship -- the sharing of our gifts -- is not an option. We have also learned that through the sharing of our gifts (stewardship) we can become a disciple of Christ.

## Am I a volunteer or a steward? What's the difference?

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Frank likes to garden. He loves the smell of the earth and the feel of the soil in his hands. There are times when his children wish he would find another hobby, especially in late summer. There are only so many ways one can cook, bake, fry, or prepare zucchini! And they have tried it all!

Frank has a good job working for an aircraft company. He and his wife regularly shop at the local grocery store, always passing by the zucchini rack, knowing they have plenty at home! Frank doesn't need to cultivate the soil to produce the food his family will eat. It's a hobby. It's optional. Enjoyable, but optional.

Susan is a teacher. From the day she could walk and talk, she was teaching. Her job is working at the same aircraft company where Frank works, but even though Susan's job is not teaching, she is a teacher. In her conversations with others, she teaches. In the manner she conducts her work, she teaches without words. According to a dictionary, a teacher is a person who helps others to acquire knowledge, competences or values. Susan is a teacher, always helping others to acquire knowledge, competences or values. It's not what she does. It is who she is.

Frank is a volunteer. Susan is a steward. When Frank gardens, it's optional. He can either garden, or not garden, depending upon his health, time, and desire. Susan teaches. It's not optional. Whether she is at work or at home; whether with strangers or family, Susan teaches. She can't help it. It's who she is, not what she does.

In living the stewardship way of life, we have learned it is important to volunteer, but volunteering is optional. Stewardship is not an option. It's not something we do, it's who we are: We are stewards. A steward is a person who gratefully recognizes and receives their life as a gift from God and is willing to share their life with others. We understand stewardship is an expression of discipleship which changes how we understand ourselves. It's not just an activity; it's our identity in Christ. Stewarding our life and gifts are not an option.

## Why is the parish paying for education? Why not charge tuition to the parents?

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Molly grew up in the Diocese of Wichita in a small town outside of the city of Wichita. She attended the parish grade school and went to the Catholic high school. She could hardly wait to leave! Between the stifling Midwest culture of great balls of twine and the Wizard of Oz, and of course the Catholic school plaid uniforms, Molly was ready to bolt from the diocese.

Moving to another part of the country, Molly married and had children. She continued to attend Mass and participate in her parish. In spite of what she felt when she was a teenager with the fashion “faux pas” of the plaid Catholic school uniforms, Molly saw the value of a Catholic school education and wanted her children to attend the parish school.

Driving home from school registration at her parish, Molly longed for home. She was indeed tired of all of the jokes about “Dorothy” and “Toto,” yet she really missed how her home diocese valued Catholic schools and the effort the Diocese of Wichita made to provide it for everyone.

Average national tuitions for Catholic schools are around \$5,000 for grade school and \$11,000 for high

schools! Molly had no idea! She assumed all dioceses saw the Catholic grade schools and high schools as the mission of the entire parish and diocese. Molly was suddenly homesick.

In living the stewardship way of life, we have learned Catholic education is the best gift a parent can give a child because the pupil not only receives an outstanding academic education, but more importantly, is prepared for eternal life.

In providing Catholic education as one of the missions of the parish, it was recognized many families could not financially afford such an education. Parents are the primary educators of their children in the Catholic faith, but not exclusively. Only through the stewardship of all of the parishioners can all active families who desire a Catholic school education participate in this mission, as well as all the others.

All parishioners are partners with parents in forming children in the ways of the Catholic faith. Truly an act of stewardship: gratefully recognizing, receiving, and sharing the gift of Catholic education.

## Tuition free? Really?

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Weekly, sometimes daily, Father Ken Van Haverbeke cringes. Father Ken is the director of the Office of Stewardship in the Diocese of Wichita, and he cringes when someone from outside the diocese calls him and asks, “Tell me about your tuition-free Catholic schools.”

Drawing a deep breath, Father Ken responds, “We don’t have tuition-free Catholic schools. Working together, all parishioners of the diocese assist parents who desire a Catholic education for their children, but nothing is free. In fact, our Catholic schools are provided at a very great cost to our parishes, but it is worth it!”

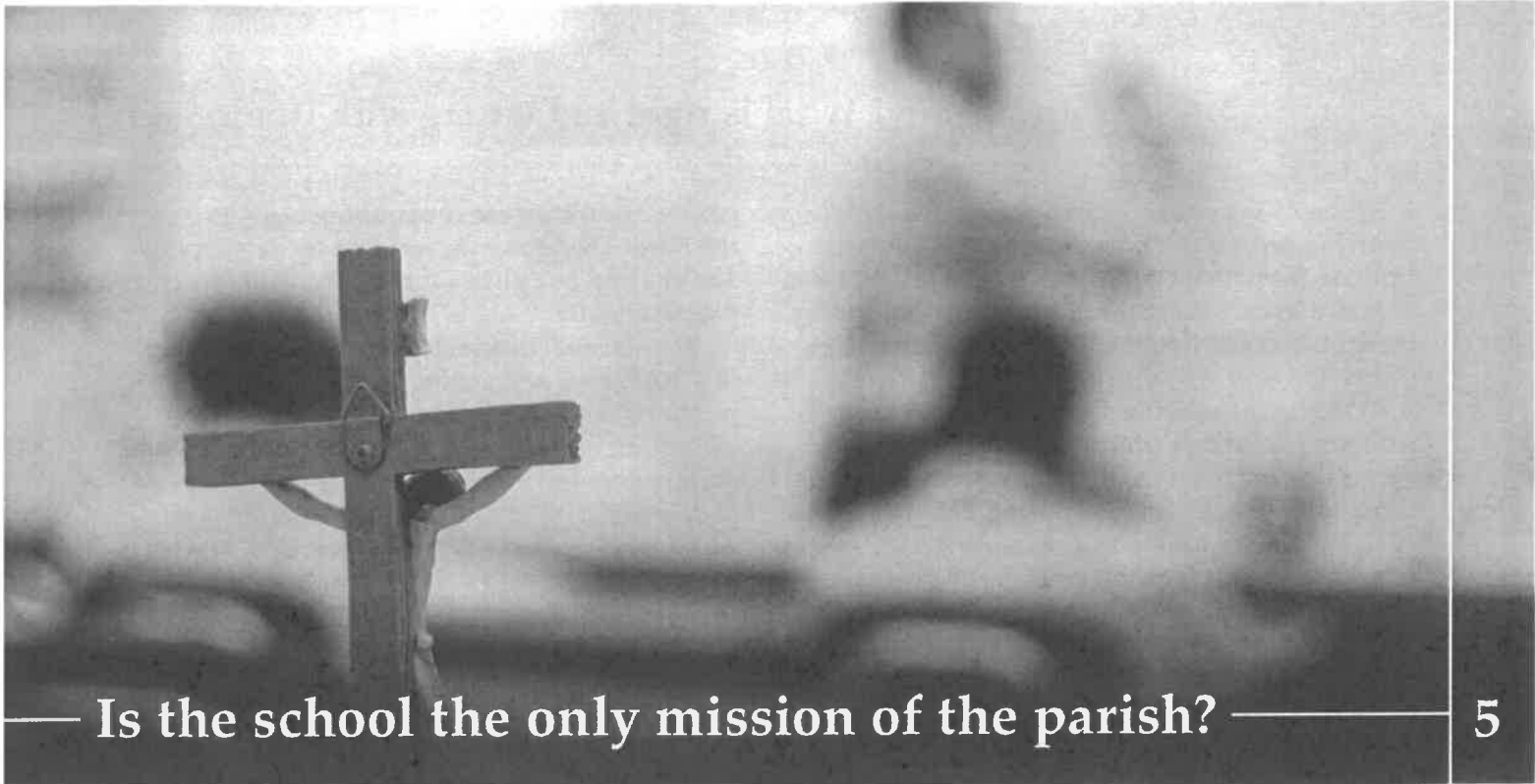
In our Catholic schools the children study the Catholic faith, pray often, practice moral values, learn to practice self-discipline and discipleship, and are expected to put other’s needs before their own; this in addition to providing an outstanding academic education.

But what makes the Diocese of Wichita unique is that we see the mission of educating our children in the Catholic faith, as the mission of all the parishioners of the diocese, whether the parishioner has children or family in the school. Why?

In living the stewardship way of life, we have learned stewardship is a choice to become a disciple of Jesus Christ by recognizing everything we have is a gift from God and by accepting an obligation to give back to God through the parish a consistent and honest offering of our time, talent, and treasure. We, as parishioners, made the decision that one of the best ways we can use our gifts of time, talent, and treasure is through the formation and education of the next generation in the ways of the Catholic faith.

The parish makes every effort to assist parents in providing a Catholic education for their children, and does so at a great cost, but realizing the generous sacrifice is well worth it!

Is it all free? Not at all! Every person in the parish generously sacrifices so that Catholic education, as well as many other ministries in the parish, can be a choice for parents. Catholic education is not “tuition free,” nor are the other various ministries in the parish “free.” Rather, we all contribute, thus making it possible for children and their families to participate in the various ministries of the parish.



## Is the school the only mission of the parish?

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“Does this parish exist to run a school? It seems to me, that we are spending too much money and energy on our parish school! What about other activities and ministries? Is the education of our children our only mission?”

These good questions came from a middle-aged man at a parish town hall meeting. Sometimes we can be so focused on doing something because “We have always done it that way!” that we must stop and reassess why.

The Diocese of Jefferson City has about 76,000 individual parishioners. In your 37 grade schools and three high schools you have an enrollment of more than 6,700 students. If you were to add the number of students plus their families, one would see this is a large group in the parish and diocese and hence it would make sense to direct much of our time, talent, and treasure toward this population in the diocese.

However, we would be gravely mistaken to exclude other missions within the parish or diocese. But how do we prioritize the many possibilities?

“I really hate mission statements,” Cody, a long time parishioner told me. “We spend forever creating them, and then they get stuck on the front of the bulletin where no one reads them.”

How true! But “missions” or mission statements help us to focus our time, talents, and treasures. They allow us to recognize gratefully and receive our needs and gifts, and show us where to share our gifts, such as in a Catholic school or a St. Vincent de Paul Society. A mission statement allows a parish to intentionally make use of its resources.

Another way of looking at a mission statement is to think about core values. A core value is something that is important to you. Most parishes would include the corporeal and spiritual works of mercy as core values.

The corporal works of mercy, based on Matthew 25:31-36, are: feed the hungry; give drink to the thirsty; clothe the naked; shelter the homeless; visit the imprisoned; care for the sick; bury the dead.

The spiritual works of mercy, commanded or encouraged in many places in Scripture, are: admonish the sinner; instruct the ignorant; advise the perplexed; comfort the sorrowful; bear wrongs patiently; forgive all injuries; pray for the living and dead.

In living the stewardship way of life, we have learned while Catholic education of the children is seen as very important, other missions are also generously and sacrificially supported.

Some examples from my own diocese are: Eucharistic Adoration (three quarters of our parishes have some sort of regular Eucharistic adoration); compassion ministries to the bereaved, homebound, hospitalized, elderly; The Lord’s Diner and the many parish food pantries; mission shops where clothing is distributed; funeral dinners; Mass intentions for the dead and living.

It must be remembered by parishes who have Catholic schools, while placing much energy and resources in one mission, we must not neglect others.

## Fundraising? What is right and wrong with fundraising?

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"Bingo!" she yelled. Excitedly she came forth to claim her prize from the associate priest who was running the parish bingo parlor. "I don't think I was ordained to run a bingo parlor," the associate priest thought, "I really would rather hear confessions or preach the Gospel."

Fundraising is defined as the process of gathering voluntary contributions of money by requesting donations or by selling products. There is nothing wrong with fundraising, but the Diocese of Wichita made a collective decision in 1985 to stop relying upon fundraising to pay for the various missions of the Church. Instead, each family and each parishioner were asked to sacrificially, generously, and proportionately tithe a portion of their income. No more bingo! No more selling of candy. No more operating a restaurant out of the parish buildings, and no more second collections at Mass to fund a worthy project.

As a diocese we promised if parishioners would simply tithe generously, sacrificially, and proportionately, the diocese and parish would not "nickel-and-dime" them with fundraisers and second collections. This does not mean the youth group will not have a car wash, or that the Knights of Columbus won't give out candy, but it does mean our parishes will not depend upon fundraising to pay for its ministries; rather they will depend upon stewardship tithing.

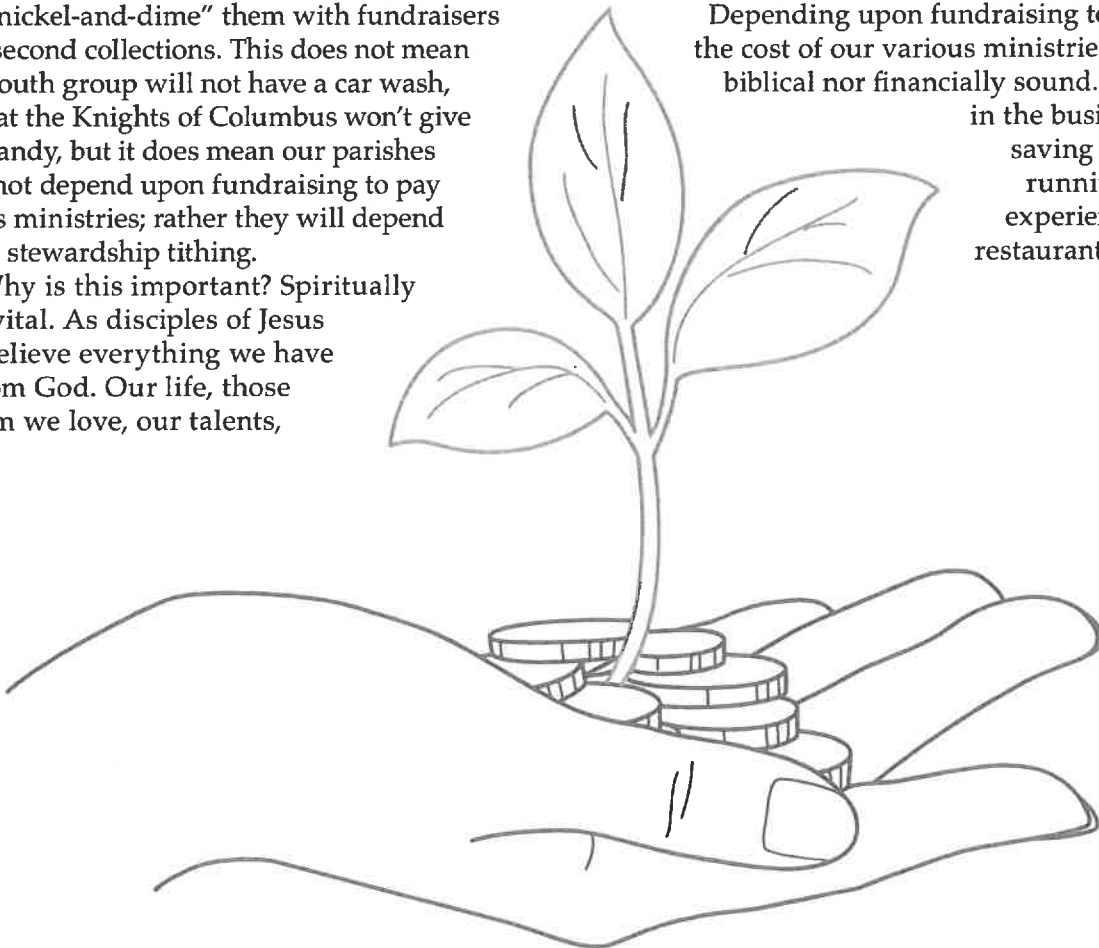
Why is this important? Spiritually it is vital. As disciples of Jesus we believe everything we have is from God. Our life, those whom we love, our talents,

family, vocations, etc., everything is a gift from the Lord. Therefore, we respond by developing and sharing our gifts: sacrificially, generously, and proportionally.

The spiritual difference between contributing to a fundraiser or donating and tithing of one's income is dramatic. When asked to donate or contribute, we give something and receive a product or an experience in return. I give, I get. In the case of donations, we give and then leave. Often our "donations" are what we no longer need, or what is left-over. Not so with a tithe of our income.

In living the stewardship way of life, we have learned when we tithe as part of the Stewardship Way of Life, we are saying, "Lord everything I have is yours. Everything! Therefore I will give back to you, through my parish, the first fruits of your gifts. It is very hard Lord to give you the first portion of my paycheck, but by giving it to you first, I place my trust in you. I'm not giving you leftovers, nor am I getting a food product or gambling experience in return of my money."

Depending upon fundraising to pay for the cost of our various ministries is neither biblical nor financially sound. We are in the business of saving souls, not running gambling experiences or restaurants.





## If Stewardship is working, why do we have an Office of Development?

Her question was right on mark! “Okay,” she said, “I get it about the nickel-and-diming of parishioners through various fundraising activities. Yes, some of the fundraising is simply to have fun and to raise a little money for a good cause. No harm, but what about this development thing? If everyone would just tithe like they promised, we would have no need for development or campaigns for money, right?”

Understanding the relationship between stewardship and development is essential to every diocese but especially in our diocese, which strives to be a “stewardship diocese.” This understanding is vital to build up God’s Kingdom on earth. Development is not in opposition to the Stewardship Way of Life. In fact, the two must collaborate so that the fruits of stewardship can benefit development efforts while the fruits of development can support true Christian stewardship.

In living the stewardship way of life, we have learned both stewardship and development are important. Development can be an act of stewardship.

Gratefully recognizing and receive God’s gifts and sharing these gifts in love of God and neighbor defines the Stewardship Way of Life. This is accomplished by parishioners generously, sacrificially, and proportionately sharing their resources with the parish. Most often, this is accomplished in a more general way, especially with stewardship of treasure.

Development can be an act of Christian stewardship when parishioners are informed, inspired and invited to directly support a particular need or cause in the Church or society that they feel particularly

impassioned with. Such development will not replace a tithe but is seen as above and beyond.

For example, Annie tithes to her parish. She understands the parish has particular missions, such as Catholic education, feeding the poor, Eucharistic Adoration, and the general upkeep of the beautiful church building. But Annie has a particular compassion for children who are ill. She, as a child, experienced the trauma of having a younger brother almost die and so she knows what families go through.

When Annie was given the opportunity to give monies to a Catholic hospital which serves children without cost, she jumped at the chance. The opportunity from that Catholic hospital was development. Her participation was an act of stewardship.

Even if a parish or diocese had a super abundance of money to fund all of their missionary activity, development would be essential. We understand parish and diocesan ministries should be supported primarily by the generous, sacrificial and proportionate sharing of time, talent and treasure of parishioners to their parish. Development extends this relationship by inviting additional support for particular needs in the Church and in society.

The Diocese of Jefferson City understands that development does not replace stewardship but builds on the foundation of stewardship. Development provides opportunities for parishioners to share their gifts, by informing, inspiring, and inviting stewards to give to specific needs that might not be otherwise recognized. Development, then can be an act of stewardship.

"We don't do that stewardship thing here. That's a Wichita thing." Charlotte, a parishioner said to me. Charlotte (not her real name) attended a parish many miles from the shadow of the Cathedral. In asking her what she meant, she went on to explain, "Well, we are a small rural parish. We don't fill out all those forms every fall or have a stewardship council. That's something parishes in the city of Wichita does."

In one way, she was correct. Her parish does not participate fully in stewardship renewal, nor does it always recognize the need for lay leadership in councils such as a stewardship council. But if parishioners in her parish are followers of Jesus Christ, stewardship is not an option. Whether a parish puts up the diocesan stewardship posters or not, they are stewards of the gifts given to them by God.

The practice of stewardship begins at birth when all of us receive God's greatest gift, life. We are to be stewards of that life and all the other God-given gifts we receive during our life until death. It is a life-long process.

In the sacrament of Baptism we receive the "call to discipleship." In the sacrament of Confirmation we are sent forth committed in action, as disciples, to share of our God-given giftedness in love and service to God and neighbor.

I believe Charlotte would agree with all of this. Charlotte was referring to a process in which the Diocese of Wichita uses to respond to the baptismal

call to discipleship. The yearly renewal process of sharing one's gifts generously, sacrificially, and proportionately, in a committed manner.

In living the stewardship way of life, we have learned we need to be invited, encouraged and challenged to recognize, receive and accept our God-given giftedness and then, within a well-organized process, to commit annually to the sharing of time, talent and treasure, in service to the broad mission of the parish and that of the wider universal Church.

Do all our parishes have a well-organized process to annually commit the sharing of time, talent, and treasure? Yes, each of the 90 parishes in the diocese does so in some fashion.

However, whenever a parishioner or pastor states, "Stewardship is not working in our parish," I ask about their annual process, their stewardship council, their lay leadership involvement in a pastoral and finance council. Often these are overlooked or non-existent, and stewardship suffers. Finally, I ask about their fundraising activities. Repetitively having fundraisers, nickel-and-diming people for money is a certain way to hurt stewardship as being a way of life.

Stewardship is about discipleship and our call to a committed action. Whether a person fills out the stewardship forms, every baptized follower of Jesus is called to be a grateful steward.

## What makes a stewardship diocese different?

As the Diocese of Jefferson City embraces a more complete stewardship way of life, certain questions will arise. What people are often really asking is: *What makes a stewardship diocese different?*



# Nine Elements of Stewardship

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1. Stewardship is well defined, as opposed to being vague. We have defined stewardship as “The grateful response of a Christian disciple who recognizes and receives God’s gifts and shares these gifts in love of God and neighbor.”
2. Stewardship is a “climate,” not a program. A climate is often defined as a “prevailing condition or environment.” The prevailing environment is that, as disciples of Jesus Christ, we share our gifts generously, sacrificially, and proportionately, in a committed manner, in love of God and neighbor. Outside of this environment, we wither and die spiritually.
3. Stewardship is a spirituality, meaning stewardship is not about funding ministries. Stewardship is not a gimmick to get money for worthy causes. It’s about eternal salvation. It’s about heaven or hell. It’s about accepting God’s gifts and using them, not burying them or hoarding them. It’s about our baptismal call.
4. Stewardship is preached year round especially by the bishop. Since the Diocese of Wichita collectively decided to be a stewardship diocese in 1985, we have received three different bishops. Each bishop has embraced the Stewardship Way of Life, and has preached it in his own words, using his own experiences to explain it. Even though each bishop is unique, the message remains constant because the message is from the Gospel. It is a simple message: Everything we have is a gift from God, and we will be held accountable for how we have used these gifts. (Matthew 25:14–30)
5. Stewardship is not just in certain parishes. We live the Stewardship Way of Life in rural and urban parishes, English/Vietnamese/Spanish-speaking parishes; all parishes, because once one decides to follow Jesus, stewardship is not an option; and all of our parishes follow Jesus.
6. Stewardship is not seen as money, but contributing our money is seen as act of stewardship. Money represents security. When we sacrificially, generously give a proportion of our income, this is an act of trust in the Lord. Parishioners tithe to their parish; parishes tithe to the diocese; and the diocese tithes to the Universal Church. All of us are placing our security not in our bank savings but in the Lord!
7. Stewardship is proclaimed and preached by the laity, not just the priests. It is the leadership of the parishioners in the pew which brings the message of stewardship to other parishioners. They speak a common language of worries about children, employment, and bills. It is through the laity of the diocese that stewardship is preached primarily. This is accomplished through our Catholic schools, PSR classes, lay witness talks, sacramental preparation, and simply one on one.
8. In a stewardship diocese, development is seen as an act of stewardship. Our parish and diocesan ministry budgets do not depend solely upon development. We have no annual bishop’s appeal, but the bishop appeals to the parishioners to be a grateful steward for one’s ongoing holiness. Our development opportunities build on the foundation of stewardship. Development provides opportunities for parishioners to share their gifts, by informing, inspiring, and inviting stewards to give to specific needs that might not be otherwise recognized. For us, development is an act of stewardship.
9. Finally, in a stewardship diocese, nickel-and-dime fundraising is strongly discouraged. The Diocese of Wichita made a collective decision in 1985 to stop relying upon fundraising to pay for the various missions of the Church. Instead, each family and each parishioner was asked to sacrificially, generously, and proportionately tithe a portion of their income. No more bingo! No more selling of candy. No more operating a restaurant out of the parish buildings, and no more second collections at Mass to fund a worthy project.



## In Conclusion

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As a diocese, we promised if parishioners would simply tithe generously, sacrificially, and proportionately, the diocese and parish would not “nickel-and-dime” them with fundraisers and second collections. This does not mean the youth group will not have a car wash, or that the Knights of Columbus won’t give out candy, but it does mean our parishes will not depend upon fundraising to pay for its ministries; they will depend upon stewardship tithing. Repetitively having fundraisers or nickel-and-diming people for funds is a sure way to hurt stewardship as a way of life because of the sole focus upon money.

In recognizing the blessings we have received, and realizing the challenges of continued growth in the Lord through the stewardship way of life, our diocese must not become arrogant or proud because

of the fruits we have received. In fact, “Much will be required of the person entrusted with much, and still more will be demanded of the person entrusted with more.” (Luke 12:48)

Continued growth in the stewardship as a way of life will be challenging, but if we continue to choose to become a disciple of Jesus Christ, stewardship will not be an option.

Always a challenge, always a blessing, for it means that we are being led by the Holy Spirit. This means we must love and trust enough, to have as our only security, His guidance.

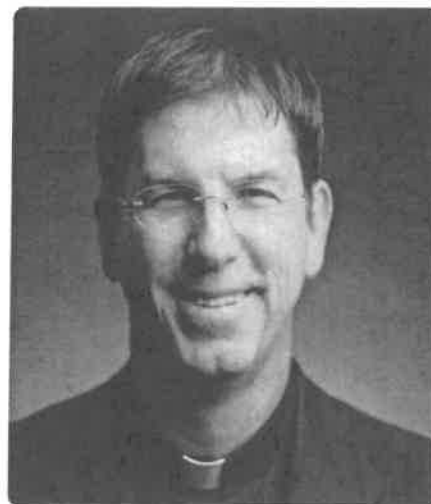
## About the Author, Rev. Ken Van Haverbeke

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Father Ken Van Haverbeke is a priest of the Diocese of Wichita, ordained in 1991.

During his ministry he has served numerous parishes in the diocese and in several chancery assignments, including director of the Office of Stewardship and director of the Spiritual Life Center, Wichita.

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# Stewardship

GROWING OUR FAITH

The Mission of the Stewardship Office  
in the Diocese of Jefferson City is to form active stewards  
who gratefully respond as Christian disciples by  
recognizing and receiving God's gifts and sharing those  
gifts in love of God and neighbor.

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