



J.S. Paluch Company Inc.
Your Partner in Stewardship



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Stewardship Stew

December 2008

TIME

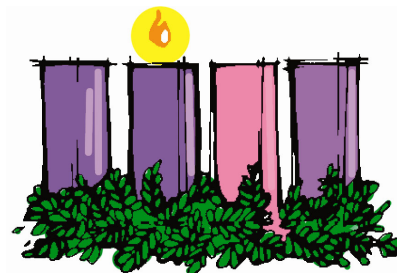
Invitations to Prayer

Last year I presented some ideas to encourage our parish members to make New Year's Resolutions that incorporate ideals of stewardship. This year, we will look at resolutions that our parish staff, councils, and committees can make and follow. Let's assume we all pray as individuals. Does the parish staff ever pray together? Is there prayer before each meeting in the parish? We know that not everyone is comfortable leading prayer. The prayer could be as simple as reading the Gospel for the coming Sunday or using a resource such as *Gathered to Serve: Prayers for Parish Leaders* (WLP 017350). Consider reading a prayer or scripture passage, allowing for a few minutes of silence, and then a few more minutes for shared reflection. We must keep our committee's time commitment in mind and make the prayer brief enough so there is still ample time for the work of the committee. Beginning with prayer, though, will surely lead to a better meeting. Let the parish know that all of the parish meetings start with prayer and ask the parish members to pray for the parish leaders when they say their dinnertime grace.

Another practice for parish leaders and parish members in general is to begin a daily journal of moments of grace, or moments when they experience Christ. Each of us in parish ministry encounter people who make Christ visible to us each day. As the business

manager, I never expected parish members to open up their lives to me. I know the parish secretaries encountered this each day; as they accepted a Mass intention the encounter often included a story about the person's life. Or consider the music director who sat back at the All Souls service and realized that he personally knew so many of the people who had died in the past year. What were the Christ moments we experienced in the last few days? At our Thanksgiving dinner? These Christ moments are food for our journey of faith.

It is worth noting that the Gospel reading for Christmas Day and December 31 are the same: John 1:1-18. This passage speaks incarnation of the Word made flesh and the power we as believers have to become children of God. May the New Year be a new beginning for each of us to see Christ in others. May the Word revealed to us enable us to go forth and proclaim the glory of God.



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TALENT

Invitations to Participate

Religion, politics, and money are three subjects to avoid if you want to maintain a polite conversation. How many holiday memories are marred between previously pleasant relatives? Perhaps the eggnog was the cause. The current economic situation, however, calls for a candid conversation between staff members and with parish members.

Does the parish budget need to be adjusted? So much of the parish budget, at least 70%, is likely related to personnel costs. Difficult decisions might have to be made. Several years ago I had to evaluate the parish office hours, specifically in the evening and weekend days. We logged how many phone calls were handled and how many visitors came to the office. After a month of observation, we shaved 15 hours a week off the schedule and employee costs. We also need to evaluate non-staffing expenses. Several dioceses have centralized their purchasing contracts to make sure the local parishes are receiving the lowest costs for their supplies. Call your diocesan Finance Department to inquire what purchasing plans might already be in place to benefit you.

Talking to our parish members about the economy is a bigger order. We don't want to talk

to them about parish finances and the need for them to be even more generous; that's tough to do in hard times. Some don't like to do it even when times are good. We can, however, offer a service to our parish members. Is there a financial planner in the parish who could offer their talent to lead an evening or Saturday morning workshop on personal finances? Perhaps the session could include evaluating spending habits and budgeting. Moving forward, another volunteer might offer classes on cooking on a budget or other ways to reduce household expenses.

A good friend recently spoke with her wireless carrier about their family service plan and found out that she was were paying \$100 a month too much. Search your census program for members who work in the personal finance field and ask them to work with you to develop a seminar for your parish members. If you don't collect that information in your parish registration, put a notice in the bulletin. You can also ask your local chamber of commerce for a referral of a local source. They will jump at the chance for the opportunity to meet with potential clients, although that should not be the focus of the seminar.



TREASURE

Invitations to Give Thanks

"In a few moments, the ushers will come down the aisle to pass the basket to receive your generous offerings. They have asked me to remind you not to place loose change in the basket as it might spill out and that twenty dollar bills weigh less than ten dollar bills. You may also use the ATM machine in the church vestibule." That is an unlikely announcement for Mass. But how many times do we witness the last minute digging through the pocket or purse for a checkbook? Are we surprised when the extra visitors at Christmas Mass are not as generous as those who worship each week? Do we run the risk of becoming the cranky old man complaining about everything other people should be doing at church? It is at times like this that we need to

remind ourselves and our parishioners to be grateful that so many people are visiting with us at the holidays. We should offer our best welcome to our visitors to encourage them to worship with us again and often!

A priest once told me a story about going on vacation with a classmate. Dressed in non-clerical attire, they attended Mass at the local church. As the preparation of the altar began and the ushers approached with baskets, one of the priests opened his wallet and took out some bills. The other turned to him and in a voice loud enough for those within three pews to hear him say "You spent way more than that on dinner last night. Is that the best you can do?" Likewise, a parishioner

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hosted an evening gathering for one of our capital campaigns. As the leader directed the guest how to complete their commitment form, Ed turned to Joe, and said, "Come on, I know how much you make, you can easily quadruple that amount." Joe did. That told the campaign co-chairs that they did not adequately make the case for the capital campaign. This contrasts with a story our pastor told at Mass last weekend. He was visiting with our newly confirmed students and asked them to recall some of the key points of the bishop's homily. When asked if there were other highlights, one boy responded that he got a \$100 gift certificate to his favorite store. Fr. Larry asked what he planned to buy with it. The boy reached into his pocket and pulled out the gift list he had taken from our Christmas sharing tree – a program to provide gifts for children in our "sharing" parish. That will go in my journal as a "Christ moment." It was a great act of generosity, courage (to say this in front of his friends), and witness statement of living out justice and love.

As business managers, stewardship directors or committee members, pastors, and generosity motivators, are we prepared for the New Year? What will we do differently this year to make it easier for our parish members to be good stewards of treasure? A few things to consider: 1. Review our schedule and list of lay witness talks. 2. If we don't have people willing to talk in front of a crowd, ask them to submit something in writing that can be reproduced in the weekly bulletin, quarterly newsletter, or posted on the parish Web-site. 3. Make sure our census data is current and that everyone is receiving contribution envelopes. 4. Schedule periodic reports on parish finances. Don't wait until the year is over and you only have bad news to report. 5. Offer alternate ways to contribute such as electronic giving through J. S. Paluch's e-Contributions. 6. Review the ways in which you thank your donors. Be careful not to ask for additional contributions when thanking a donor for their recent donation. Asking for additional contributions might work for the big national non-profits but I think our donors expect us to be a little less aggressive in our efforts. Okay, so maybe you don't have time to address all six suggestions but try at least one or two. The others can wait a few months.

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To register, go to www.jspaluch.com and select Customer Secure Web site. Enter your e-mail address, create a password, and you'll be all set.



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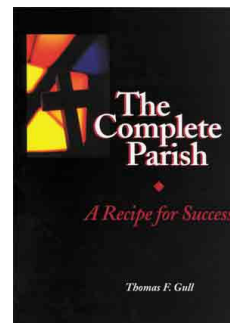
OUR MONTHLY CONTEST

Send us a description of a stewardship activity in your parish. Each month, we will select one as the stewardship Idea of the Month and send a copy of *The Complete Parish: A Recipe for Success* to the winner. Submit your entry to

Tom_Gull@jspaluch.com

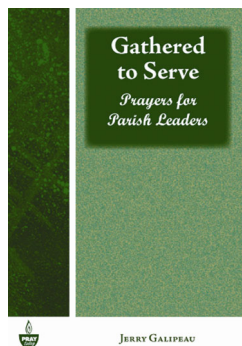
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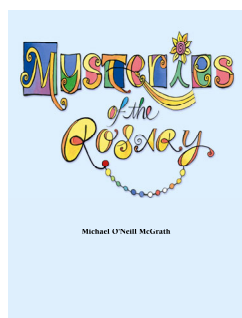
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GATHERED TO SERVE

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MYSTERIES OF THE ROSARY

This new book for children is about holy mysteries and stories from the lives of Jesus and Mary that help us to pray. Brother Mickey's artwork brings to life the Joyful, Luminous, Sorrowful, and Glorious Mysteries of the rosary through his signature use of vibrant, multicultural colors, symbols, and imagery. Scripture references are provided with each piece of art and an appendix of discussion questions is included for faith-sharing across generations. A true treasure for moms and dads, grandparents and godparents, teachers, catechists, and children of all ages! \$16.99 WLP 017344

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