



J.S. Paluch Company Inc.

Your Partner in Stewardship



Stewardship Stew
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Tom Gull
National Sales Consultant
J. S. Paluch Company

TIME

Invitations to Prayer

A young girl is pregnant. She is not married. Sound familiar? But this particular girl's soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord. One of the suggested readings for Thanksgiving Day is the story of Mary's visitation to her cousin Elizabeth. What would the conversation be like at your Thanksgiving gathering with similar news in your family? As we prepare for the parish celebration of Thanksgiving, even though it is not a holy day of obligation, let us consider the ways in which our prayer is a thanksgiving for all that God has given us—be it the challenge of serving God in unexpected ways, the fact that we have food on our tables, or simply the beauty of the earth.

I was privileged to present two workshops in the Phoenix area in September. Afterwards I headed to the Grand Canyon. I thought I knew what to expect, having seen so many pictures of the canyon. I wasn't disappointed. What I didn't expect to experience was what I saw in the darkness. Night never fully comes in major metropolitan areas. Dim light from street lamps, office buildings, and parking lots hides the twinkle of the stars. But at the Grand Canyon—wow! I could see the Milky Way without using binoculars or a telescope. I suddenly felt very small in the grand scheme of things. I also felt grateful to see the wonder of God's creation and how I fit in it.

In preparation for Thanksgiving, ask your parishioners, including the children in your school and religious education program, to tell you what they are grateful for. Offer them easy ways to submit their thoughts: e-mail, a note dropped in the collection basket, or perhaps a journal placed near the vigil lights, shrines, or other private prayer areas within your church.

The responses can be printed in the weekly bulletin and incorporated into the prayers during Mass. For a little fun, you might also ask students in primary grades how much a turkey weighs and how long it takes to cook it.

TREASURE

Invitations to Give Thanks

Father Jim from Pittsburgh sent in the following note:

I'd like to share two ideas with you: 1.) We pastors should regularly place a "thank you for your contributions and support" note in our bulletins—especially in this difficult economic time. 2.) Contribution envelopes should give an idea of what regular contributions should be—many envelopes have no amount check boxes, and many are too low . . . Over three years, we raised our suggested amounts to begin with \$10 a week as a minimum.

I second Father Jim's suggestions with a couple of additions. Definitely, we should always thank parish contributors. It is up to your parish to decide where that occurs. Some pastors include a thank you for all of the expressions of stewardship in their weekly bulletin letter. A thank you can also be printed following the "Stewardship of Treasure" weekly report in the bulletin. I came across a bulletin that includes the weekly financial figures on the same page as the schedule of meetings and events for the week. A simple line is included with this financial report: "The collection that is taken up each Sunday is the life support for our church community. The

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ministries and events listed on the calendar to the right are supported by your donations.”

The contribution envelope suggestion can be a bit trickier. We hear about tithing 10 percent or another suggested amount. Imagine the shock to some parish members if they took the time to take Line 37 of IRS Form 1040 (gross income) and multiply it by 10 percent and compare it to the figure they entered on Line 16 of Schedule A (gifts by check or cash to a charity). It’s a good self-check, but to take a leap to 10 percent would be a daunting task for many parish members. We might suggest that they try to increase their giving by 1 percent each year. Likewise, if we suggest a weekly donation amount, say \$10, are we “leaving money on the table” from those who can give much more or are we sending a message to those who cannot give \$10 that we don’t want their gift? Another idea would be to produce a benchmark report to give members a look at how much other members contribute. The benchmarks could list how many people have given “up to \$10,” “\$11–\$20,” “\$21–\$30,” etc. This can be customized to giving patterns in your parish. Keep in mind that some donors give weekly and others give monthly. You might have others who make a sizeable annual gift. For a true snapshot of giving, summarize a month’s giving by reporting “average weekly donations” using categories that illustrate that most members give in the middle.

For example, if the average weekly gift is \$25, your chart might look like this:

Average Weekly Donation for October	
Donation Amount	Number of Donors
Up to \$9	23
\$10–\$19	119
\$20–\$29	212
\$30–\$49	105
\$50+	16

It’s subtle, but I like the “Up to \$9” notation better than “Less than \$10” because it’s a positive statement. After finalizing all donations for 2008, consider including a chart in your January bulletin or newsletter that reports the average weekly donation for all of 2008. Do not include the non-donors in your calculations. You can use this report to help teach parish members about the importance of creating a family budget, challenge them to consider how they spend money, and evaluate how they support their faith and local church. This might also be a time to encourage your donors to simplify their giving by using J. S. Paluch’s e-Contribution program for electronic contributions.

TALENT

Invitations to Participate

The following came from Virginia at St. Monica Parish in Oklahoma:

Each fall and each spring, we have our parish work days. We sign up to do whatever chores might need to be done, from cleaning out the attic to cleaning flower beds, pruning shrubs, trimming trees, washing windows, doing the big cleaning jobs in the restrooms and kitchen, painting meeting rooms, and whatever else might need to be done. No one, except team leaders, knows what they will do and no one really cares. Team leaders gather tools and supplies for the areas they oversee. All ages (5–75) show up to work and everyone stays busy. It’s amazing how much can be accomplished, how many laughs are heard, and how close the workers become. Coffee, juice, and muffins are served by the women’s society and everyone finishes up by noon. Last spring we had about 75 workers, including our parish priest.

One of the tasks of our recently formed parish stewardship committee was to ask parish members what they thought about stewardship. We wanted the committee to get a sense of the people’s understanding of stewardship. Did they think it is all about money? Did they remember the scripture

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story about the good steward? The responses they received would help guide the direction of the committee's work. They were cautioned to speak with people whom they might not know and not just to their friends. Here are a few of their experiences and the responses they received. Dan spoke to the man sitting next to him at Mass. After a little hesitancy, the man told Dan that he was a Jesuit priest studying at the local university so he didn't think his response would be unbiased. Marla opened the parish directory and called whatever name jumped off the page at her. Terry sought out a school family and a religious education family. Terry also spoke to Margaret, who told her that she was never really involved at church aside from attending Mass, but after retiring from work a friend invited her to the seniors' club. Within a few months, Margaret was head of hospitality. Then she became an extraordinary minister of Communion, joined the Peace and Justice Committee, and offered to help count the Sunday collection, joining the ranks of the "Countesses." It all started with a personal invitation. I am sure that St. Monica Parish in Oklahoma knows the importance of personal invitations, too. The next time your parish has a work day, ask your "regular" volunteers to invite a friend. On the work day, make sure you note every participant's name and contact information. Ask the team leaders to encourage the workers to consider signing up for a more permanent ministry. Lastly, take a few pictures to include in the following week's bulletin with a thank you. In the meantime, take a look at your Sunday bulletin and count how many thank yous are included. Let us remember to be grateful to God and to those who get involved and further our communities' mission.

Thank You
Merci
Danke
唔該
Gracias
Dziękuję

REGISTER NOW

On our customer secure Web site you will find materials to help you prepare weekly bulletins, prayer services, scripture studies, and more. With your paid subscription, you may also access *AIM Liturgy Resources magazine*, *Pastoral Patterns*, and *Palabras Pastorales*. Scripture based bulletin art for every Sunday of the year is included for our bulletin customers.

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.

ARCHIVED EDITIONS

Previous issues of *Stewardship Stew* are available in English and Spanish on the J S Paluch web site at www.jspaluch.com

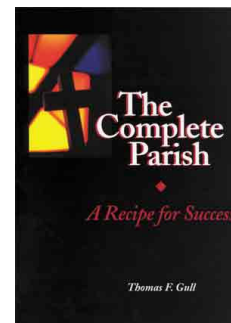
OUR MONTHLY CONTEST

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

Can't wait to win a copy?

Log on to www.wlpmusic.com and enter item #017257.



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TABLE PRAYER FOR THANKSGIVING

These beautifully designed prayer sheets are a meaningful addition to holiday gatherings. Each presents a special blessing prayer for the holiday meal, surrounded by original artwork by Brother Mickey McGrath. Priced inexpensively enough to buy in quantity!

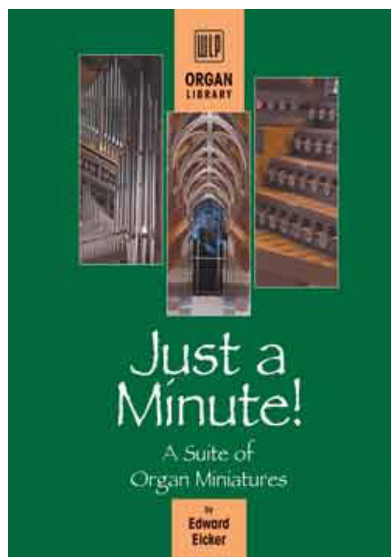
Give to:

- Entire parish as a bulletin stuffer
- Everyone who comes to Thanksgiving Day liturgies
- Students in schools and religious education classes to take home
- Community members at an ecumenical Thanksgiving service
- The whole parish as part of a fall stewardship effort
- Area restaurants to put on tables for those who come on Thanksgiving Day

Use:

- In the school lunchroom during November
- In the rectory or parish office dining room
- In school lunchrooms
- As outreach to non-parishioners by mail or by dropping off at homes (put a message on the back!)

WLP 000975



JUST A MINUTE! A SUITE OF ORGAN MINIATURES

A collection of six brief, tuneful, and accessible contemporary pieces for organ. Composer Edward Eicker has written them to provide organists with minimum pedal technique to broaden their repertoire of preludes and postludes. Both organist and congregation will find these little gems to be thoroughly satisfying.

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