
FOLLOW - UP STEP 6

The Renewal Follow-up Process and the timeliness thereof is essential in the overall success and growth of stewardship at the parish level. Parishioners need and should expect to receive prompt and timely acknowledgement and a thank you for their volunteer commitment of time and talent as well as for their gift of treasure. They will be expecting the opportunity to serve and to be served.

Although very important, the follow-up, the thank you's and the use of those volunteering to give of their time and talent are often the **most neglected aspects of the stewardship process** at the parish level. The following renewal follow-up process and related time schedule is suggested to assist in the effectiveness of the parish stewardship process.

Beginning on Commitment Weekend and continuing as time, talent and treasure commitment forms are received, the stewardship committee should have a plan in place to review, compile and record the volunteer and gift commitments of parishioners.

◆ *Time and Talent Commitment Follow-Up*

The time and talent volunteer lists should be compiled from the time and talent commitment forms and distributed to the appropriate committees, groups, ministries, etc.

The volunteer lists of those who have committed should be distributed as quickly as possible to the appropriate parish committees, groups, or ministries. These various groups, etc., are to see that the individuals' gifts of time and talents are put to use at the service of others. Accepting and receiving the stewardship commitment forms implies accepting the responsibility to help match the parishioners with the parish organizations and services that need and can use their time and talent.

Volunteers should then be provided with an appropriate thank you. This may be in the form of a letter, a card, a phone call or other communication that would be appropriate and effective. The most important part is the "thank you". Individual and personal forms of "thank you" are generally more effective than a general thank you from the pulpit or in the parish bulletin. A combination of the personal and general form of thank you would be the most desirable.

A special effort should be made to review the names of volunteers to make sure they are being utilized if at all possible. In large parishes, it may not always be possible to immediately use some of the volunteers. If this is the case, the volunteers should be advised of the number of volunteers and ask for their patience as they wait to be contacted.

◆ *Treasure Commitment Follow-up*

The confidential treasure commitment forms should be turned over to the Pastor, bookkeeper or Finance Council for statistical and tabulation purposes, and then used to record the commitment in the parishioner contribution data file for monitoring purposes.

A summary of the financial commitments should be prepared for the Stewardship and Finance Councils for the purpose of monitoring the level and trend of financial commitments being made

to the parish. The Finance Council needs this confidential information for planning and budgeting. The Stewardship ministers would only need the overall totals for statistical and trend purposes.

It is extremely important for a thank you to be sent to those who completed treasure commitment forms. Refer to Appendix A for suggested thank you formats.

◆ ***Non-Respondents and New Parishioners***

The stewardship process never ends. It should be ongoing throughout each year. It is necessary and important to follow up on those who have not responded as well as those who join the parish during the year. This is part of the overall parish stewardship educational process. Follow-up with non-respondents and educating new parishioners on the stewardship way of life can and will bring additional and new sources of energy and leadership to parish life. The welcoming of new parishioners should include an introduction to the parish and diocesan stewardship process. This part of the process can be a function of a welcoming committee if one exists.

◆ ***Parish Stewardship and Related Structure Evaluation***

The effectiveness of the stewardship process or renewal cannot be judged solely on the basis of financial results and volunteer commitments. Stewardship is spiritually based; the results will be in the hearts of those who are responding to the call. While we cannot always measure or see evidence in the quantitative results, it may be happening in qualitative terms, e.g. more enthusiasm, increased joy, deeper individual involvement, commitment and attitude which, over time, provides increased quantitative results.

Commitments of time, talent and treasure, on the other hand, can be measured. Ordinary offertory giving should be analyzed by looking at comparable periods in previous years, particularly that of the most recent year. Review of the numbers should include factoring in or out special fund raising that was or may be necessary. Reviewing the results of a renewal should also compare the number of volunteers participating from year to year. Keeping annual statistics on the time, talent and treasure commitments can be very valuable when needed for trend analysis and projection purposes.

It is important for the stewardship ministers, the finance committee and the parish pastoral council to annually meet with the pastor and associates to formally evaluate the results of each stewardship renewal process. Statistics and trends should be reviewed. Parish structure should also be reviewed to determine if it is meeting the needs of the parish as well as providing parishioners the opportunity to serve and be served.

Conducting and completion of the follow-up and evaluation process within two to three months of Commitment Sunday is imperative. The promptness in which volunteers are contacted, thanked and utilized will directly correspond to the results and success of the parish stewardship process.

Finally, it is important to publish the quantitative results of the renewal process so the entire parish family can see the product of this effort.