

# Stewardship

## Networking Group Greater Houston Area

“Lay Witness Program: Appeal to the Heart” was the topic of our first 2019 Stewardship Networking Group gathering. Sharon Ehrenkranz was our presenter and did a great job relaying how this lay witness program works in her parish. Sharon and Tony Oltremari were our hosts at St Laurence Parish. Below are notes from Sharon’s presentation



*“Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses” Pope Paul VI.*

Personal Witnessing started with our martyrs, who many gave ultimate witness with their life in death or in service to the church.

*“An arrow aimed at the head will not pierce the heart” J Stanz.* Faith is personal, but, it was never meant to be private. Share your story with your heart on your sleeve.

**Lay Witness Speakers: Ask people to share:** who can connect with fellow parishioners by witnessing to their own experiences. People who can share a powerful and personal story from the heart. Ask people to share in their own style and own voice. This is a witness testimony and invitational.

**Lay Witness Speakers at Mass:** Testimonies should be offered after the Prayers after Communion. Presider invites congregation to be seated to hear a brief message. *Strict limit is 3 minutes.* Notes are OK but no reading. Introduce self, give testimony and offer invitation. Be available in the back after Mass.

### Get it right from the very start!

#### **WHAT IT IS NOT!**

|                          |                       |
|--------------------------|-----------------------|
| A second homily          | Advertisement         |
| Recruitment effort       | Ministry Presentation |
| Story without invitation |                       |

#### **WHAT IT IS!**

Personal Witness and Invitation  
 Desire to share what you experienced as a disciple  
 From the heart, real connection  
 Powerful call to discipleship through experience.

#### **Getting Started in your parish:**

Form a Lay Witness Speaker Team  
 Work with Pastor/Liturgy Team to develop guidelines for your parish.  
 Work up a schedule for the year—consider liturgical and parish calendars  
 Recruit the first speakers of the year very carefully, they will be setting the standard.  
 Schedule a run-through in the church prior to the week-end of the talk  
 The purpose of the run-through in the church is so they can practice with the microphone, adjust to view from the ambo, confirm the talk is testimonial and invitational. Check that the talk is 3 minutes! An opportunity for speaker to practice and get feedback from the Team.  
 Also, an opportunity to hear others’ talk.

Sharon emphasized quite a few times, about “telling your story”, “must come from the heart” and she did a great job with her presentation. Please feel free to contact Sharon with questions/comments at [sehrenkranz@stlaurence.org](mailto:sehrenkranz@stlaurence.org)

#### **Stewardship Networking Group “CALENDAR FOR 2019”**

Mar 14: Stewardship of Strengths—presenter: Marianita Snodgrass. Certified Strengths coach.  
 Location: Mary Queen—Friendswood Tx  
 May 9th: Spirituality of Stewardship - presenter Tony Oltremari, location: St Ignatius - Spring Tx  
 July: Saturday Seminar—Speaker and location TBD  
 Sept 12th: Young Adults—Invitation to Parish Leadership TBD  
 Nov. 14th Roundtable: Best Practices & Best of ICSC & plan calendar for 2020.

#### **Mark your calendar NOW:**

**Webinar series starts 1/24/19:** Building a Vibrant Parish—12 part series, building blocks and best practices to create a vibrant parish. [4lpi.com/webinar-series](http://4lpi.com/webinar-series)

**Coming to Houston: “Fruitful Discipleship”—Sherry Weddell,** March 28, 2019, St Dominic Chancery—Auditorium; [www.archgh.cvent.com](http://www.archgh.cvent.com)

#### **Annual Conference of the International Catholic Stewardship Council**

October 6 – 9, 2019 Sheraton Grand Chicago Hotel Chicago, Illinois

The Diocese of Wichita, Ks is recognized as one of the founders of teaching Stewardship as a Way of Life. The message Father Thomas McGread brought to St. Francis of Assisi Parish in 1968, when he was appointed Pastor, was simple—**strive to share our gifts of time, talent and treasure for the service of God and all of His people. Do this out of thanksgiving to God for all that He has given us.** He brought with him a vision from the words of St. Peter: *“As each one has received a gift, use it to serve one another as good stewards of God’s varied grace.”* 1 Peter 4:10

St Francis started with 600 families and continued to grow, always teaching that it is the sense of ownership in the parish that helps develop spirituality and the on-going activities of the parish. It is this ongoing conversion of parishioners and priests that made St. Francis a vibrant, growing, spirit-filled community of believers.

St. Francis Parish became nationally known as the parish to model after in regards to Stewardship. Monsignor McGread was instrumental in the writing of the U. S. Bishop’s 1992 Pastoral Letter, *“Stewardship, A Disciples’ Response”*.

Due to the success at St. Francis, the Wichita Diocese became the first fully Stewardship Diocese in the country in 1985. The entire Diocese is committed to Stewardship, parishes make every effort to make a Catholic education, from kindergarten thru high school, available to active parish stewards without charging tuition.

The Diocese of Wichita has written a manual which identifies important building blocks within, under and around “pillars” of stewardship to assure there is a sound structure in place. The four pillars of hospitality, prayer, formation and service invite parishioners to experience, witness and live the stewardship way of life in response to their baptismal call to discipleship. In the upcoming newsletters, I will touch on each pillar and how it can work in parishes.

**Join the Stewardship Networking Group!** meetings are held the 2nd Thursday of the month; every other month from 10:00—12:00. You are invited to participate in a forum for idea sharing on all issues related to stewardship. For more information about this grassroots group in the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston and to get on our email list, please contact Coni Perez at [coniperez@sbcglobal.net](mailto:coniperez@sbcglobal.net) or Suzanne Staron at [starons@stbchurch.org](mailto:starons@stbchurch.org). Spread the word, bring a friend!