

# Blessed Trinity Our Story

**Blessed Trinity Catholic Church has been living the Stewardship Way of Life since 1993. We are considered to be a Total Stewardship Parish. To us, the definition means:**

We go forth with the belief that:

We enter the world with nothing and will leave with nothing but the gift of ourselves to God.

We believe that all we have and all that we are has been a gift given to us by God.

In response to God's gifts our community gives our gifts in return.

We give our first gifts, not the remainders.

Our community centers itself around Jesus Christ in all ways. Faith is first.

With Christ being in the center and all flowing from Christ, the ministries of the Parish are formed around and are coming from the Eucharist.

As stewardship families, we prayerfully commit our lives to returning in a tangible way, our gifts in thanks to God. We have a need to give.

In turn each person in our family must commit their first fruits to God.

We give Him the first of everything, our time, our talent, our treasure, and even our worries, our joys, our sorrows.

With each family members love focused on God and His love focused on them, We have a complete circle.

## **HISTORY**

Blessed Trinity began the Stewardship Way of life in 1993.

Our pastor, Fr Pat Sheedy and a few members of the parish council visited Wichita, KS and St. Francis of Assisi Parish. On the plane trip home, they formulated their plan.

This plan included:

forming a stewardship committee,

nurturing our already strong focus on the Eucharist

Establishing Perpetual Adoration, and

Totally overhauling the financial system.

A nine month education about the stewardship way of life was planned and initiated.

A commitment month was held in November.

By the end of the year, the parish bookkeepers had processed the time and talent commitments as well as the parish tithe of a requested 8%, 10% total.

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At that time, the elementary school began receiving a weekly check and families that committed to the stewardship way of life received education as part of the ministry of the church at no cost. Families that did not commit to the stewardship way of life continued to pay the "full cost" for education.

The church began their own tithe of 10% of the offertory every week to the poor and to foreign missions.

The promise was made of only ONE collection.

The parish council was restructured to reflect the Stewardship Way of Life. It was formed around the 6 areas of ministry (Worship, Social, Community Outreach, Administration, Christian Education, and Communication).

A very strong commitment to the Eucharist and perpetual adoration was begun on that flight home ten years ago and still is the most important aspect of our parish. In fact as the way of life was being initially explained to the parish, a group was in the adoration chapel praying for the conversion of hearts. Our 24 hour adoration chapel has been constant for the past thirteen years.

### **Facts and Figures that have resulted from the belief in the Total Stewardship Way of Life.**

The parish has increased from 1000 families to over 3000. Of those, over 1000 are members living the stewardship way of life. 450 of those are school families. Approximately 100-120 people attend one of two daily Masses.

We have over 200 very active ministries. Our Brothers Keeper (ST. Vincent DePaul) has always been very active. We serve over 200 people a day at the soup kitchen, we have a thrift store and furniture store with a total annual budget of \$450,000. That is not counting the 10% of the parish tithe they receive each week.

We have also built a new convent in Guatemala, and assembly hall and half of a High School in Belize, a center for women and many houses in Honduras. In the past year we have built a sister parish "Blessed Trinity Church in Uganda.

People always want to know the financial increases as well. We have increase from an average offertory of \$20,000 a week to an average of \$85,000 per week. But the footnote I must add is that nearly 70,000 a week goes to the schools for our education ministry.

Our elementary/middle school had 230 students before stewardship and now have over 700 students. We have a new Diocesan high school that is in its fifth year with over 500 students of stewardship families.

During this time, we have also conducted a 17 million dollar Deanery wide capital campaign for the Catholic High School and a 1.2 million dollar church renovation which in no way affected stewardship. In fact, I believe that because of the generosity nurtured by stewardship, our parish alone was directly responsible for 13 million of the nearly 14 million raised to date for the Catholic High School and over 1.5 million raised for the parish renovation.

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### **Spiritual Results**

In addition to the statistics, an immeasurable presence is the true **conversion** of hearts that you observe. There is a particular presence of the Holy Spirit that you can feel. Now, I know that the Holy Spirit is everywhere, but living in a community where God is first on your mind and in your heart, you can feel the presence closer to the surface.

This community focuses on giving of themselves for the betterment of those in need- my definition of compassion. I believe we all experience a personal conversion of gift of ourselves to the service of God and the betterment of others.

### **Leaders to Conversion**

A Total Stewardship Parish **MUST** have a pastor and stewardship committee leading the way to the conversion of hearts. In some ways, the only difference between a "partial" and a total stewardship parish is the degree of conversion, faith, and trust that the pastor and the stewardship committee place in stewardship and how that is related to the parishioners. Along the same lines, we are raising our children to be true "Native stewards", they will not know a different way of living.

### **Challenges**

Our conversion and focus are challenged frequently, especially being in such an active parish. We as a committee assist other committees in evaluating activities and monitoring if they are for the betterment of the community and fit in with our "God First " and Attitude of Gratitude philosophy.

### **Key points**

What are the key points that makes stewardship work in our parish? I feel these are aspects you can't live without:

- The Eucharist and prayer life of the community, including Perpetual Adoration.

- A strong devoted stewardship committee and parish council (key believers) dedicated and focused on serving ALL Ages.

- Teenage and Children's stewardship subcommittees. We must nurture them on a separate tract from preschool through high school including those attending the school as well as the children in Sunday religious education.

- Yearly Renewal of Commitment of time, talent and treasure

- Witness Speakers, year round of all ages.

- Ministry Fair

- Hospitality (newcomers, volunteer dinner)

- Communication-Stewardship Video/Parish Newsletter/Sunday Bulletin/ quarterly commitment updates.

- ALL ministries available under stewardship

- Attendance at the ICSC every year!

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In all "how to" literature you receive on stewardship they usually mention the above topics in some form. They should be way above the "mentioning" stage. These are crucial to our parish and we spend the most part of the year talking about and/or planning these events.

After many years of Living as a Total Stewardship Parish, we have found that our way of life takes continual education and reassessment. Currently our committee is really giving effort to meeting with new parishioners and introducing them to the stewardship way of life with more emphasis on getting them connected in our parish community and passing on what stewardship means to us and how it is lived out every day in our church. We are helping them determine their talents and getting them involved with ministries and

forming new ministries around the talents they bring. We are also offering a Stewardship 101-Sailing the Stewardship, which is a great introduction or refresher on what living the stewardship way of life is all about.

This reeducation is necessary for our older families as well. We have changed our offertory envelopes to include a space to write their time and talent gifts to God, as well as their treasure. It helps with all ages to be reminded they are giving of themselves to God in all areas of their lives.

You educate, reeducate, and then pray that people will accept the invitation to a Christ-centered way of living.

### **Spiritual Success**

The tangible points I mentioned above are facets of a parish you must have to make stewardship a success. When you consider the word success, many people have varying ideas of success. Is it your offertory? Your volunteers? We look first to the spiritual and emotional success. How successful is our Adoration Chapel? How many are receiving the sacraments When you look at our life in this light it brings many ideas to ponder. I personally believe the spiritual realm is where Jesus wants us to be. and we will find the true meaning of stewardship and the deeper spiritual closeness right here.

### **Now for a few recommendations**

**Liturgy and perpetual adoration** is the most important part of our parish. You are announcing to the world that God is first. If you do not have adoration, make plans to begin it. If you have it, make plans to strengthen it. Try to Include hours of prayer for the success of stewardship in your parish. and the personal conversion of your parishioners to the stewardship way of life.

Another strong recommendation is for **mentoring visits**. I know in 20 minutes you cannot fully get the picture of what living the total stewardship way of life entails I think the best way is to visit a total stewardship parish for a few days. Visit and speak to families. Bring parishioners from all aspects of the community and bring all your fears, concerns, and doubts. Small mentor relationships will help you the most in deciding if you are ready for the intensity and responsibility of putting God first in your lives. I also feel that all stewardship parishes need closer phone or e-mail connections. Questions arise often and really need one-on-one answers.

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My last recommendation is to set as a goal to work on the **conversion of hearts** at the family level. Give parents guidance on how to introduce stewardship to little children at home. Stewardship education must help families realize that God is in every minute of every day. Reading to your child is stewardship, preparing a healthy meal is stewardship, Nothing works better than example after example.

### Internet Contacts

International Catholic Stewardship Council

[www.catholicstewardship.org](http://www.catholicstewardship.org)

Membership

Conference Information

Materials

Question & Answer Forum

E-mail Exchange

United States Council of Catholic Bishops

[www.usccb.org](http://www.usccb.org)

Stewardship: A Disciples Response: The Bishops Pastoral Letter on Stewardship

Our Sunday Visitor

[www.osv.com](http://www.osv.com)

Materials for Getting Started in Stewardship

Blessed Trinity Catholic Church

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