

THE STEWARDSHIP PROCESS



by Rod Wade, St. Luke's, Calgary

During Lent, St. Luke's Parish officially kicked off their Stewardship initiative by offering four one-hour stewardship seminars.

The Calgary Diocesan Stewardship office has provided parishes with a three-stage stewardship implementation framework: (1) Spirituality of Stewardship; (2) Implementation; and (3) Renewal.

In the initial stage, Spirituality of Stewardship, the St. Luke's Stewardship Steering Committee decided to develop 3 one-hour seminars for parishioners under the guidance and direction of the Diocesan Stewardship Office: (1) Spirituality of Stewardship; (2) The Four Principles of Stewardship, and (3) Tending the Spiritual Garden.

The Spirituality of Stewardship Seminar was given three times during Lent, and the Four Principles of Stewardship once. The Tending the Spiritual Garden seminar is to soon be developed in concert with St. Luke's. These seminars will continue monthly for a number of months or perhaps even years in support of parishioners' Stewardship spiritual journey. The Implementation stage will probably commence later in 2007, with Renewal thereafter.

Stewardship is an element of discipleship that is fundamentally a spiritual journey, the basis of which is our relationship with God. More specifically, for Stewardship to take deep root a radical change of self-image is required. In that change I realize I am fully and totally a creation and child of God who is the source of everything we have and everything we are.

The adoption and internalization of this self image typically takes a long time. As one transforms from one's current self image to this self image, stewardship mutates from something we do, to something that defines who we are. Practically speaking, rather than being pulled to respond to the needs of others we have the powerful need to give of ourselves to help others. This need to give occurs not just in the parish, but beyond the borders of the parish, in the community, the country, and the world.

Therefore, it would probably be ineffective, indeed perhaps even counterproductive, to prematurely advance to the Implementation Stage at the expense of the Spiritual Stage.

We believe there is a need to focus on the spirituality of stewardship as a priority and this is succinctly expressed by the following advice from the Calgary Diocesan Stewardship Office: 'We all want to see results and it may be tempting to jump to action. However, Stewardship in the diocese of Calgary is not a program but a process of formation and evangelization. This process can transform your community only over time as each individual undergoes a conversion of heart. Invest in the process in the long haul.'