



PARISH VITALITY
& STEWARDSHIP

Time & Talent Campaign Kit: Commitment Sunday Guide



Archdiocese
of Toronto

Office of Formation for Discipleship
www.archtoronto.org/stewardship

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Let us begin with a stewardship prayer:

*Loving God, I come to you in thanksgiving,
knowing that all I am and all that I have is a gift from you.
In faith and love, help me to do your will.
I am listening, Lord God.
Speak your words into the depth of my soul,
that I may hear you clearly.
I offer to you this day all the facets of my life,
Whether it be at home, at work, or at school—
to be patient, to be merciful, to be generous, to be holy.
Give me the wisdom and insight
to understand your will for me
and the fervour to fulfill my good intentions.
I offer my gifts of time, talent and possessions to you
as a true act of faith,
to reflect my love for you and my neighbour.
Help me to reach out to others as you, my God,
have reached out to me.
Amen.*

“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



What is Commitment Sunday?



A “Commitment Sunday” refers to a specific date you choose to invite the entire congregation to make a commitment to share their God-given gifts with the parish community. Normally, the pastor preaches at all Masses about the importance of stewardship and warmly invites people to get more deeply involved in parish life.

Sign-up forms are then shared after Mass with a brief summary of each ministry in the parish (including their expected time commitment). This exercise will give parishioners an idea of the opportunities available and can help them to choose a ministry best suited to their God-given gifts and the time commitment they can make. Ministry descriptions should be short and concise, normally only a paragraph long.

Depending on the number of ministries you have, you can print the ministry descriptions on a single sheet of paper with the sign-up form on the reverse. Or you can choose to create a special pamphlet using the templates available on our website. This information is then handed out to people as they depart after Mass, either on its own or inserted into the parish bulletin. You may even decide to dedicate the bulletin that week to Commitment Sunday with ministry write-ups and the sign-up form printed inside.

People should understand how to return the completed forms, which is normally done the following Sunday at all Masses. (You can offer a few more return dates, if you think it beneficial.) If you have email addresses for people, you can also email them during the week with an attached sign-up form to serve as a gentle reminder for everyone to return their completed forms that upcoming Sunday. If your parish does robocalls, this an option you can consider as well.

The benefits of holding a Commitment Sunday are that it is easy to organize, requiring only a few people at tables set up near the entrances and exits of the church to hand out the forms, answer questions, and accept completed forms. Although it is highly recommended you have a person at the collection points, if you are not able to have someone there, collection boxes can be set up with ministry descriptions, sign-up sheets and pens.

Sign-up forms can be organized to be age-specific – with child, youth, and adult sign-up forms with specific ministries and functions tailored to different age groups being reflected on the different sheets. For example, a prayer ministry for children where they pray for the parish and loved ones is a way to engage and catechize children on the value of intercessory prayer.



On our website are downloadable sign-up form templates for children, youth and adults that you can customize. They can be found at: www.archtoronto.org/stewardship in the Parish Vitality tab, under the Templates and Forms section.

Commitment Sunday as Part of a Wider Parishioner Engagement Campaign

Choosing the time of year when to host a Commitment Sunday is critical for its success. We suggest a date close to (or on) Stewardship Sunday. The rationale for this is that Stewardship Sunday is close to Thanksgiving, which is a time of the year when people feel generous. Considering Stewardship Sunday occurs on the 25th Sunday of Ordinary Time, which is about three weeks before Thanksgiving, an interesting opportunity arises to leverage the generosity of the season by inviting parishioners to become more involved in parish life. Other reasons for hosting it at this time are that people have returned from summer vacations, parish churches are back to running at full capacity, and it is not an overly demanding time of the year liturgically speaking.

You can choose to hold your Commitment Sunday either as a standalone event in conjunction with Stewardship Sunday or position it as part of a wider strategy surrounding parishioner engagement.

If you are interested in building a larger strategy to increase parishioner engagement, we have created the Time and Talent Campaign kit to assist you. The entire kit, including campaign card, guides, posters, etc., can found in the Parish Vitality section of our website at www.archtoronto.org/stewardship.

To build a campaign, think of Stewardship Sunday as the “kick off” of your “people raising” period.

The process begins with formation, such as with a homily to help people understand the spirituality of deep stewardship and how the sharing of their God-given gifts praises God, serves their neighbour and enriches their own spiritual life. You can also hand out the stewardship prayer card and the “Your Parish Needs You” brochure (you can order a free supply for your parish from our office), use other resources from our website, such as reprinting the Stewardship Bulletin Reflections in your parish bulletin (Years A, B & C are on our website, in the Spirituality of Stewardship tab), sharing links to our parish vitality and formation videos, sharing Cardinal Thomas Collins’ Pastoral Letter on Stewardship, etc.

The stewardship events you subsequently hold - be it Lay Witness Talks, a Parish Ministry Fair, etc. - connects people to your mission in a deeper way by sharing with them information on all the myriad of different ways they can share their God-given gifts with the parish (these events become your “case for support”). Following the events you choose; Commitment Sunday is your opportunity to make the invitation to join a parish ministry (it is your “ask”).

The last step of the campaign is to show gratitude by saying thank you. This can be done in the announcements, parish bulletin, letters, notes and thank you cards, installment rituals, blessings, holding gratitude events such as parish bbq’s, etc. Gratitude is your way of thanking parishioners for following though on their commitment.

In essence, all of these elements combine to form a parishioner engagement campaign. You can do all of your selected events on Stewardship Sunday itself, or space them out over the course of a few weeks.

To summarize:

- 1. Stewardship Sunday**
(your “people raising” campaign kick-off)
- 2. Formation**
(via homilies, stewardship bulletin reflections, prayer cards, etc.)
- 3. Stewardship events**
(your “case for support”. Holding events such as a Parish Ministry Fair, Lay Witness Talks, etc. Or create your own. Choose what you think would work well in your parish)
- 4. Making the invitation**
(Commitment Sunday is “your ask”)
- 5. Gratitude**
(saying thank you)

In Conjunction with a Parish Ministry Fair

If you are holding a Parish Ministry Fair following Stewardship Sunday, some people that attend the fair may not be ready on the day of the event to commit to sharing their God-given gifts with the parish. That is why holding a Commitment Sunday the following weekend of the fair gives parishioners the opportunity to take some time to discern and discuss with their families the requirements of the commitment. Following this, they may be ready to sign-up with confidence for the ministry that has touched their heart. For people who were unable to go to the fair due to a conflict in their schedule, hosting a Commitment Sunday the weekend after gives them the opportunity to accept your invitation at a later date.

In Conjunction with Lay Witness Talks

If your parish does not have the resources, time, or space to host a Parish Ministry Fair, Lay Witness Talks are another option you can consider connecting to a Commitment Sunday. These talks offer the opportunity for experienced and well-respected ministers in your parish to share their personal testimony with fellow parishioners on how being involved in parish ministry has enriched their spiritual life. Their talk culminates with an invitation for others to consider sharing their time and talent by joining a parish ministry. To assist your ministers in writing a talk, we have created a Lay Witness Speaker's Guide, which is contained in your kit. It is also available for download on our website. We also have a supply of small, customizable posters designed for bulletin boards to help raise parish awareness. You can order some by emailing our office at formation@archtoronto.org.

Stewardship Committees

A Stewardship Committee is a logical choice to help organize your stewardship events, such as a Commitment Sunday. If your parish does not have a Stewardship Committee, the responsibility can be given to a Parish Council, another committee, group, or collection of individuals the pastor invites. For more information on forming a Stewardship Committee, creating Lay Witness Talks, or hosting a Parish Ministry Fair, consult the guides included in your Time and Talent Campaign kit or visit the Parish Vitality section of our website at www.archtoronto.org/stewardship.

Following Up with Parishioners

After the sign-up forms have been collected, it is very important that people be contacted in a timely fashion. Even if only via a quick email to thank them and mention that someone from the parish office will be in contact with them again in the future to discuss next steps. It would be a serious error not to contact them at all. If they are not contacted, they may become disillusioned and be hesitant to offer to share their time and talent again in the future. Some people may even take it personally.

Gratitude

Gratitude is an important part of stewardship. It is a good idea to thank all the people who signed up on Commitment Sunday. Be sure to also thank your volunteers. This can be done through the homily, announcements, bulletin write-ups, etc. You may also wish to share with the parish how many people signed up in your bulletin. This will help to celebrate the result while encouraging those people who are still contemplating it to follow through.

Concluding Thoughts

It is important to remember that stewardship is not a program. It is a spirituality. If you approach stewardship like a program, it will never take root. A Commitment Sunday is only a mechanism to invite parishioners to get more engaged in parish life. The same can be said if you decide to develop a wider parishioner re-engagement campaign built around Stewardship Sunday. The campaign is only a tool and not an end in itself. Before (and after) you make the invitation, people need to be formed on the spirituality of stewardship and be invited to prayerfully contemplate how stewardship can deepen their relationship with God, neighbour and enrich their spiritual life. As such, formation is key! There are other resources available on our website you can share to help people come to a deeper understanding of the meaning of deep stewardship. To learn more visit our website at: www.archtoronto.org/stewardship

Final Considerations

The Commitment Sunday sign-up form is meant to be an intake device only. Ministry suitability would have to be done after by the Parish Office and those the Pastor designates, such as Volunteer Coordinators.

Certain positions may require applicants to attend an interview with the pastor or his appointed parish representatives, have personal references checked, a Police Information Check, undergo training and orientation, etc.

Parish Vitality Video Shorts

To help you in your efforts to promote your parish we have created a series of short videos that have been designed to increase parishioner engagement. Each video lasts only a few minutes in length. Some of the videos are humorous while others are emotionally moving. All are written through the lens of stewardship with the goal to help parishes invite people to get more deeply involved in parish life. With respect to promoting parish events, we suggest that you watch the two-minute video, “The Joy of Parish Events” first.

All the videos can be used year-round in parish e-communications, such as in websites, linked to parish bulletins, e-blasts, and in social media outlets such as YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, etc.

The downloadable videos, including a tip sheet for their use, can be found on our stewardship website at www.archtoronto.org/stewardship in the Parish Vitality Additional Resources tab.

COVID-19

At the time of the reprinting of this guide, COVID-19 is still an unfortunate reality in our Archdiocese. If you have any questions about COVID-19 with respect to the stewardship events you are planning, please consult your pastor.



The Archdiocese of Toronto’s Human Resources website has resources and information designed to assist parishes with volunteer screening. Some of these resources include application forms for positions of trust/high risk ministries, details of mandatory screening steps such as interviews, reference checks, criminal records and judicial matters checks, the Archdiocese Volunteer Guidelines and Code of Conduct, etc.

To learn more visit: <https://bit.ly/3DSmOcV>

If you have any questions about stewardship, please contact:

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