

FOUNDATIONAL PRINCIPLES and TIPS FOR FRUITFUL AND SUCCESSFUL STEWARDSHIP MINISTRY IN OUR PARISHES

I offer these principles to you as leaders and ministers. These are based on Church teachings and/or my experience of trying to put Church teachings into practice. Take what is good and may it be as helpful to you as it has been for me in my work with Pastoral Councils and Stewardship Teams.

Fr. Michael Wollbaum

1. We are called and chosen by God to be His People:

We are a people of the Covenant, invited into relationship with God who promises to be faithful to us.

2. We are the Baptized:

Through our Baptism, we have a special dignity as sons and daughters of God. God wants to share intimately in our lives, His Spirit dwells in us.

3. Through Baptism, united with Christ as our Head, we are the Body of Christ:

We are a community. Not only do we seek our own good and salvation, but the good and salvation of all people. I am reminded by the Cross of Jesus; the vertical bar represents our personal relationship with God; the horizontal bar represents our relationship with our brothers and sisters in Christ. If we believe in God and love God, we reach out and love our community. In fact, we go beyond to invite all to share in God's life and be a part of His family. Salvation and life in Christ is for all.

4. We are gifted in the Holy Spirit:

In receiving the Holy Spirit in Baptism and Confirmation, we receive personal gifts to help us in our personal call to holiness. We also receive gifts, as God allots, to build up the Church and the world in its call to holiness.

5. We are called to share in the mission of Christ as Priest, Prophet and King:

We are invited to share in the work of sanctifying the world around us and imitate Christ by being priestly, prophetic and kingly. **Priestly** – to bring the presence and love of God to all we encounter. To be in a spirit of prayer, to offer our lives as a spiritual sacrifice to God with Christ and in Christ. To be instruments of healing and mercy to those in need. **Prophetic** – to be witnesses for Christ, testifying to His deeds, love, truth. To speak His Word to those in need and brought into our path. Words of encouragement, truth, faith, praise, thanks. **Kingly** – to be Christian leaders, leading by example, leading as Jesus did, through humble loving service to all without distinction.

6. The Pastor and lay faithful work together:

All the leaders must collaborate and work together to carry out the particular mission that Christ calls them to share in as a community.

7. The Pastor and Pastoral Council are to discern the needs, vision and mission of the parish:

They call forth and invite the members to share their gifts, taking part in the mission.

8. We all need to be attentive to the Holy Spirit at work in all members of our community:

We invite all members to discern their gifts for the blessing of our community and that God will even be more glorified and visible to those inside and beyond our community. Don't wait for needs to ask for help—invite people to find their gifts.

9. God's call and vision may come at any time from outside the Pastor, Pastoral Council and Stewardship Team:

The Spirit does work in all the members, not just through the parish leaders.

10. We are equally called to holiness:

All gifts of the community are essential, valuable and to be appreciated equally. Give thanks often for the gifts that others share; thank them personally and communally; celebrate how God has gifted our community.

11. Be committed to prayer and formation:

Praying together keeps us united, humble and open. Formation ensures a solid foundation. Doing stewardship without prayer and formation can lead us to possibly not doing what God wants us to do. Stewardship Teams and Pastoral Councils grounded in prayer and formation flourish and lead the parish to the same.

12. Pray and discern constantly; not everything is from God:

Do not look for quick fixes to problems! Act on principle and with faith, not on emotions, fear or other pressures.

13. Get people to commit to intercessory prayer for your team's or council's ministry:

We need the prayer support in order to stay faithful, open, humble and in tune to the Spirit.

14. The Stewardship Team is under the direction and guidance of the Pastor and Pastoral Council and accountable to them:

However, Pastors and Pastoral Councils need to give encouragement, creative freedom, and discernment to the team, trusting that the Holy Spirit will work through them.

15. Pastors and Pastoral Councils will encourage and support their Stewardship Teams in their ministry.

16. Stewardship Teams can help bring the vision and mission of the parish to life.

17. Successful stewardship ministry is based on faith, a faith willing to risk:

Do not look for immediate results. It takes years to see the fruits. Time invested in creating a deeper awareness of the stewardship that already exists will lead to an even greater commitment to stewardship among the parishioners. Be patient, persistent, and pray... the fruits will come in time, but only with a long term commitment and faithfulness to relying on God's grace.