



As You Plan for the Future, Please Consider a Gift to Your Church



Twenty-five years ago, the Catholic Bishops of the United States published the landmark pastoral letter, *Stewardship: A Way of Life*. They did not focus entirely on “treasure” but on a complete vision of Christian Stewardship as a lifestyle for intentional disciples.

Who is a Christian disciple? One who responds to Christ’s call, follows Jesus, and shapes his or her life in imitation of Christ’s. Who is a Christian steward? One who receives God’s gifts gratefully, cherishes and tends them in a responsible and accountable manner, shares them in justice and love with others, and returns them with increase to the Lord.

We are called to be stewards of creation, of our vocations, and of the Church. Yet modern culture encourages us to focus on ourselves, drawing us away from the One who longs to be at the center of our lives, Jesus Christ. Practicing our faith does not come easy, but when we look at life through the lens of Christian Stewardship, we will come to find the meaning and purpose of our lives.

As responsible and accountable stewards, we accumulate possessions that God places in our care hoping that will use them for His glory throughout our lifetime.

After our earthly journeys have been fulfilled, we return a portion of our possessions to God with planned gifts to our most cherished Catholic causes.

The vast majority of planned gifts are made through a charitable gift (or, *bequest*) in a last will. Other forms of planned gifts include retirement IRAs, insurance policies, CDs, stocks, bonds, real estate, and charitable trust agreements. Any time of year is suitable for making bequest provisions. Most do so when a last will needs revised.

Although many Catholics set aside an amount for masses to be offered for their souls, the amount is quite modest and not intended as a source of significant revenue.

Most Catholics are not aware that their parish, Catholic school or favorite diocesan ministry are worthy charities that could benefit greatly from a bequest. With planned gifts such as bequests, you do not need to worry about outliving your possessions and financial resources. Significant bequests honor God for what He entrusted to you during your lifetime, and can be transformational for a parish, school or ministry - any of which was instrumental in igniting and nourishing your faith.

A **direct bequest** to a Catholic entity will make an immediate impact at the time your estate transfers the gift. An **indirect bequest** - when placed into one or more permanent endowments administered by the Independent Catholic Foundation in Altoona (www.icfdaj.org) - will be invested forever while a percentage of its earnings will be distributed every year for a specific purpose defined by each endowment agreement. With a planned gift of \$10,000 or more, you may establish a permanent endowment in your memory with annual distribution restrictions that you determine. It is recommended that you enter into an endowment agreement with the Foundation during your lifetime to ensure that your wishes can be upheld even though the endowment will not be funded until an unexpected time in the future.

Remembering to include your most cherished Catholic causes in your estate plan is the ultimate act of Christian stewardship and Kingdom-building. There is no reason to give more to “Caesar” than he is owed, for everything else belongs to God. Thank you for being more thoughtful about your estate planning for His glory!

***For where your treasure is,
there also will your heart be.***
Luke 12:34

The information in this article is not intended as legal advice. Please consult your tax consultant or estate planning attorney to determine an approach suitable for your circumstances.