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## Bishop's Weekly Mailing 2-8-13

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Diocese of Yakima <info@yakimadiocese.org>

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Reply-To: info@yakimadiocese.org

To: david.valdivia@yakimadiocese.org

You are subscribed as [david.valdivia@yakimadiocese.org](mailto:david.valdivia@yakimadiocese.org)



February 8, 2013

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### Bishop Tyson's Column



Dear Fathers:

Over the last four weeks I've been articulating the standards of excellence for our schools and our parishes based on our time together this last October. Again, those school standards are: (1) Academic Excellence (2) Stewardship (3) Accessibility (4) Good Governance and (5) Catholic Identity. Last week I had the privilege of visiting our schools in Ephrata and Kennewick meeting with students, teachers, parents

and school supporters explaining the school standards and our entry in the WCEA (The Western Catholic Education Association) and its accreditation process.

On the parish side in October we discussed a parallel set of five standards: (1) Liturgical Excellence (2) Stewardship (3) Missionary Accessibility (4) Good Governance (5) Catechesis. Last week's column to you opened up the first standard of liturgical excellence. This week, I'd like to open up the second standard for both schools and parishes: stewardship. In a nutshell stewardship is nothing less than placing all we have -- our time, our treasure and our talents -- at the service of Christ in order to advance the mission of this His Church.

To open this column, I'd like to relate to you a conversation I

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had with one of our parish – Holy Redeemer – about a year ago. When I met with the longer time parishioners the comment arose that they sure wished the Spanish speaking folks would put more into the collection plate.

It conveyed to them the homily I'd just given in Spanish. "Gracias a Dios que ustedes estan enviando remesas a su queridos en Mexico," it told them "pero su parroco necesita una remesa tambien -- en la canasta dominical." Thanks God you send money to your loved ones in Mexico, but your pastor also needs you to share money here too -- in the Sunday collection basket. The point I was making was that -- "...although the government may have the opinion that our Spanish speaking have arrived without any structured plan -- God does have plan for you: You are missionaries -- not only to each other -- but to your North American neighbors and friends. You are called to be missionaries for the faith!"

I then switched into German and reminded them that when the Germans from Russia immigrated -- they came with an invitation from the railroad companies. These folks from Mexico are encouraged to come to help with the crops -- but are often uninvited. When our German families came to America we received -- heimstaette -- a German word used exclusively here in America -- homesteads -- and we got the land for free often thanks to government agents who'd previously seized the land from Native Americans. These folks come with nothing. "Die lage ist ganz anders!" I ended in German -- It's a whole different situation today.

After a brief silence one of the elders responded, "So Bishop, I guess that means you want us to donate the money for this parish project."

I can't begin to tell you how much I appreciated the directness and the honesty of those long time parishioners; many of whom had been involved in the establishment and the building of the Church. They'd seen the entire parish switch from nearly all Germans from Russia to nearly all Hispanic in the course of twenty years.

And I know the challenge I issued in Spanish -- though very steep -- was a new moment and a new realization for so many from Mexico. While they may think they've arrived by accident out of economic need, God is using them in His plan for the re-evangelization of our North American culture through sharing their faith by having children, building up family life, worshiping as a community and enhancing the small business and agricultural enterprises of our Yakima Valley.

Basically, stewardship is a standard of excellence that when it comes to the Sunday collection, it does not matter how much or how little a parishioner puts into the collection basket. What matters is that the giver changes his or her spending habits and way of life. Why? Because when we change our spending habits and our way of life we become better disciples of Jesus. We actively put God first in our lives making his mission our first priority. Money follows mission.

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### Contact Us.

Diocese of Yakima  
5301 Tieton Drive Suite A  
Yakima, WA 98908  
(509) 965-7117

Email:  
[info@yakimadiocese.org](mailto:info@yakimadiocese.org)

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The budget for any building projects, programs or parish initiatives should be a footnote on a clear plan be that pastoral, catechetical or academic. Stewardship is our willingness to change our lifestyle to make this happen. We change our lifestyle when we look at our spending habits, our way of life, the time in our calendar and the talent that we have. How are we putting our time, our treasure and our talents first? Based on our discussions this last October, what would some of our best practices look like tied to this stewardship standard?

Note too, that stewardship as a way of life is NOT THE SAME AS A FUNDRAISER. Fundraisers certainly have their place. But a fundraiser involves a product that a parish group sells in order to make money for the church. Often fundraisers involve the stewardship of a few parishioners who may donate the ingredients of the product. In this sense, fundraisers often lead to good stewardship. But fundraisers and stewardship are not the same thing. Stewardship is about a way of life and manner of turning parishioners into ever better disciples of Jesus.

First Best Practice: PREACHING AND TEACHING: Meeting this stewardship standard of parish excellence means that in the homilies on Sunday, as well as classrooms with both children and adults stewardship as a way of life is taught, preached, and practiced. Parishes striving for closer communion with Christ for its parishioners have robust programs of parish stewardship soliciting pledges for regular giving to support the parish mission. Parishes strive for deeper communion with their neighboring parishes and especially their bishop through active and full participation in the fall for the Annual Catholic Appeal. Parishes teaching and preaching stewardship would not only "take up" the second collections, but preach about the parishes missionary service around the world tied to the second collections. Parishes promote "Rice Bowl" as well as other missionary activities that encourage a stewardship that's global in its reach. Is there a time and talent fair? Is there a time when people learn about the volunteer ministries in their parish? Needless to say all this needs to happen in a robust way in both Spanish and English.

What kind of evidence would a visiting team look for tied to these standards? The pastor might provide notes or a text to a homily that he preached related to the Annual Catholic Appeal. The parish might provide evidence of a parish project tied to the "overage" they may receive from the Annual Catholic Appeal. The parish might provide notes or the text of a witness talk given by a parishioner tied to either the Annual Catholic Appeal or the local parish appeal. Parishes might provide some statistical evidence of local participation in the Sunday collection. Are there flyers and posters for a time and talent fair? Are there sign up lists? Is there evidence that after someone signs up or calls to volunteer that there is follow through? Does someone contact the person that's come forward? How is every believer -- regardless of language or

culture -- actively engaged in stewardship?

Second Best Practice: BUDGETING AND FINANCIAL REVIEW. Meeting this stewardship standard means that the parish budget is a footnote of the parish mission. Parishes striving towards excellence in stewardship have budget numbers that can tell the story of good stewardship by the parish. Special efforts may need to be taken to make sure all parishioners, in their respective languages, clearly understand what a budget is and how it relates to the ministry of the parish.

What kind of evidence would be tied to this? The most obvious evidence for a visiting team is to see what would be a budget spread sheet. Does the budget tell the story of what the parish is using for stewardship -- not words -- but numbers? Is there evidence through minutes of meetings that stewardship was discussed by parish leadership -- especially the pastoral council -- and the budget numbers are driven by a pastoral decision? Do parishioners see some kind of annual report or statement? Is this evidence that the statement has been explained in Spanish and English? Is there evidence -- in terms of notes and discussions among parish leadership -- that the financial and facility policies of the diocese have been used as tools for reaching this kind of excellence in stewardship? Is there documentation of a parish review and were the recommendations incorporated? If so, how? If not, why not?

Third Best Practice: PARISH PLAN. We are not only stewards of our time, our treasure and our talent right now, but we are stewards on behalf of the next generation. Is there a parish facility plan? Is there a twenty- year plan for key facility needs such as roof replacement, boiler replacement, HVAC upkeep, grounds, gardens, Church windows etc? Is there evidence this plan has been explained in both Spanish and English so every parishioner has clear access to the basic information regarding the parish plant?

What kind of evidence would be connected to this? Are there minutes that indicate ongoing attention to the facility? Is there a special committee in the parish? Does a written plan exist? What items are included for routine maintenance and replacement? Is there evidence in the parish budget that financial planning supports this long term plan?

I am greatly impressed by the number of parishioners who are actively engaged in the upkeep of our buildings. I recall going to Mansfield and learning from the pastor there, Father Ricardo, that he rarely sees a bill for maintenance. The parishioners in the area simply pull together, determine the work, and then pay the bills. Larger parishes are much more complicated. But parishes in the Diocese of Yakima -- both big and small -- will certainly emerge with "some best" practices that can be replicated and taught in other parishes across Central Washington. In advance, I thank you for considering how you -- as priests -- are instilling this stewardship as a way of life for everyone in your parish --

including yourselves. I also thank you for keeping Christ at the center of all your stewardship efforts.

Joseph J. Tyson  
Bishop of Yakima

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Catholic Diocese of Yakima, 5301 Tieton Drive Suite 98908 Tel. (509)965-7117  
Email: [info@yakimadiocese.org](mailto:info@yakimadiocese.org)

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