

The Pastoral Role of Church Wardens

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Via Zoom



Office for English
Pastoral Services

Opening Prayer - Good Stewards

Loving Father, you alone are the source of every good gift. We praise you for all your gifts to us, and we thank you for your generosity.

Everything we have, and all that we are, comes from you. Help us to be grateful and responsible.

You have called us to follow your son, Jesus, without counting the cost.

Send us your Holy Spirit to give us courage and wisdom to be faithful disciples.

We commit ourselves to being good stewards.

Help us to be grateful, accountable, generous, and willing to give back with increase.

Help us to make stewardship a way of life.

We make this prayer through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, now and forever.

AMEN



Definition of Christian Stewardship

- U.S. Catholic bishops, *Stewardship: A Disciple's Response*:

“A Christian steward is 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.”

The Role of the Warden: Both Financial AND Pastoral



Overall concept: collaborative ministry. Be aware of your gifts and limitations, and try to make sure that a variety of gifts are present among your team.

- “To identify, release, and unify the gifts of the people of God for the service of the Kingdom.”
- What does this mean?
- If you were elected as wardens, or have been appointed as a chair or vice-chair of the Fabrique by the Archbishop, it is because your pastor and your fellow parishioners saw in you certain gifts:
- Commitment, trustworthiness, administration, responsibility, partnership.



Point 1: Wardens and pastors should be working with each other, not against each other!

- Part of doing this well is understanding difference in roles.
- The parish priest (or pastor) is entrusted not only with the spiritual leadership of the parish, but also administration of its temporal goods.
- As elected churchwardens, you assist and support him in this primary task. Although good pastors can and should delegate many tasks to individual wardens, it should never be in the sense that he can now “wash his hands” from it, or go about his ministry blissfully unaware of whether the roof is leaking or the parish is sinking deeper into debt.
- It’s a partnership where the parish priest takes his share of the responsibility, except in those situations where the diocese appoints an administrator (priest) or chairperson of the Fabrique (laity) because the pastor cannot fulfill this function.



Point 2: The role of the wardens is to support the pastor in his administrative responsibilities, not to replace him. Be supportive and encouraging, and take on tasks that free him to fulfil his main role of pastoral leadership.

Nobody wants to have seven bosses! Even when a chair or vice-chair of Fabrique is named, the pastor is usually be the primary supervisor of staff and key volunteers, who report to him and not to the wardens, individually or as a group.

- However, pastors - especially new pastors, and priests arriving from other countries where the ways leadership is exercised are different, may need some help and guidance.
- Please be supportive and encouraging, but don't be afraid to speak up if something seems amiss in the relation between members of the staff and the pastor.



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**Point 3: the fact that the church is subject to canon law, as well as Fabrique law, does NOT mean that we are exempt from the requirements of civil law, municipal by-laws, and labour law!
Be just with your parish staff and ministry team.**

- In your dealings with your employees, please respect basic standards around such matters as hours, vacation pay, safe and secure working environment, and basic courtesy and Christian charity.
- For example, we typically offer cost-of-living increases each year of roughly 2% for priests and mandated pastoral workers, who are generally underpaid in light of their education, skill, and responsibility level. It's a question of basic justice and equity, and the church is often criticized for preaching justice to the world, but not practicing it within its internal structures.
- It would be appropriate to offer the same for your lay staff. If that's not possible for whatever reason, maybe it's time to increase their holiday time from 3 to 4 weeks.
- If your employees are getting older, they may have more medical appointments or sick days. Or they may have parents needing support. That doesn't give you permission to fire them, or pressure them to leave. Find a creative way of working with the new situation, if possible.



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Point 3: (continued).

- It always saddens me to hear when a staff member, volunteer, or parishioner shares with me stories about being verbally or emotionally abused by a priest, or a warden, or a secretary, or anyone who acts in the name of the church or the parish.
- Not only are we to be held to the same standards as civil society; because we are followers of Christ, who invites us to see each person as possessing human dignity as a child of God, we should all the more be respectful and courteous in our dealings.
- Anyone can have a bad day, and none of us are perfect, but if you lose it at someone, have the grace and good sense to apologize and take responsibility.
- Because we are human, conflict is going to happen. It can sometimes be creative, but it is often experienced as destructive. We need to find honest and realistic ways of managing conflict.



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Point 4: We are all accountable to the new diocesan protocols around responsible pastoral ministry, which stipulate that no one should be subject to any form of verbal, emotional, spiritual, or financial abuse. All mandated pastoral personnel are required, by June 2022, to have completed four training modules, on how to prevent, recognize, report, and respond to various forms of abuse when they occur. This formation will be made available to parishes as a whole next fall.



Point 5: A word on financial abuse:

- It is not sufficient, to BE honest. When one is in the public eye, one must also APPEAR to be honest.
- In other words, financial transparency is important. The people of God entrust their financial support to your care and stewardship for the work of the parish. They have the right to expect that the money will be wisely spent, carefully invested, and that financial reporting and accounting is equitable and aboveboard. (Not that any parishes have secret bank accounts or slush funds, mind you ...)
- A word of advice: as much as possible, priests should avoid handling money. Let the secretary or bookkeeper be in charge of the petty cash. Find a secure and transparent way of handling the Sunday and special collections.
 - Example: procedure with sealed envelopes to safe in sacristy, then to safe in rectory, counting room, bank - always at least two people present for each step.
- It is also strongly recommended that ALL cheques, no matter what the amount, require two signatures. Avoid signing cheques in advance, even if it is because of the pastor's or a warden's absence on vacation. If there is a parish credit card, it should be kept under lock and key and its use should be carefully monitored. Too many disaster stories exist here, some involving priests, secretaries, bookkeepers, or those with access to finances in parishes. Be prudent.



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Point 6: Thank you for your generosity and for your willingness to serve. We are immensely grateful for the work you do, and the loving concern which inspires you to offer yourself for service!



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Suscipe: Take, Lord, Receive

Take, Lord, and receive all my liberty,

My memory, my understanding, and my entire will.

All I have and call my own.

You have given all to me.

To you, Lord, I return it.

Everything is yours; do with it what you will.

Give me only your love and your grace.

That is enough for me.

AMEN



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Prayer for Generosity

Lord Jesus, teach me to be generous;
teach me to serve you as you deserve,
to give and not to count the cost,
to fight and not to heed the wounds,
to toil and not to seek for rest,
to labor and not to seek reward,
except that of knowing that I do your will.

Amen.

St. Ignatius Loyola

End of Session

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION !