



Sharing our Blessings

THE INCREASED OFFERTORY INITIATIVE FOR
THE PARISHES OF THE DIOCESE OF WORCESTER

Parish Program Manual
Section III

Suggested Announcements and Bulletin Texts

Revised 6/1/10

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Sample Pulpit Announcements

Weekly pulpit announcements should be made during your parish program to inform parishioners on details of the program case needs, announce upcoming program meetings, and build momentum for Commitment Weekend. It is suggested that these announcements be made after the homily.

The following scripts are intended as a guide and should be edited and revised by the presenter in advance of the weekend announcements.

Week One

Introduction Announcement

Delivered by Pastor

As some of you may know, Bishop McManus has initiated a very special program to help the parishes throughout the Diocese. This program, entitled *Sharing Our Blessings*, is an increased giving program that will address the local needs of our parish. With the insight of parish leaders, we have identified several needs that we must address:

- X
- X
- X

Let me assure you that addressing these needs today is essential. We have an opportunity to strengthen our parish through this program and I am confident that we will respond with great generosity. Our hope is to increase our weekly collection by at least 25%. Currently our weekly collection is \$_____. To address the above stated needs, we need to increase our income to \$_____.

In the coming weeks you will hear much more about *Sharing Our Blessings*. It is an effort to educate us all about the principles of stewardship tithing, which, stated simply, is giving back a just portion of our gifts to God. Of course, giving back to the mission of the Church comes in many forms, not just financial contributions. While all Catholics will be encouraged to increase your regular giving to the parish through this effort, we invite you to examine other aspects of your life and how stewardship can enhance your day-to-day existence.

The Finance Council and I are excited to get started on this project, and I am confident we will be successful.

In the coming days, you will receive a letter from me describing the Program in greater detail. For now, I ask that you pray for our success.

* It is also recommended that the parish include a prayer for parishioners considering their commitments to the *Sharing Our Blessings* program in the Prayers of the Faithful

Week Two

Announcement # 2

Delivered by Pastoral Leader

As most of you are aware, our parish is now engaged in *Sharing Our Blessings*, the increased offertory initiative being conducted by every parish in the Diocese.

This week I will send you a letter describing the program and how it will positively impact our parish.

Every day we are provided opportunities to live the principles of stewardship. Do we take advantage of these opportunities or are we satisfied with what we return to God?

Sharing Our Blessings is a program that will provide a direct benefit to (Parish) through increased weekly collections but it will also serve to educate us on practicing stewardship in our daily lives.

Over the coming weeks you will hear updates on the program. You will also be asked to assist as a volunteer. With your help, *Sharing Our Blessings* can be a great success here at (Parish).

* It is also recommended that the parish include a prayer for parishioners considering their commitments to the *Sharing Our Blessings* program in the Prayers of the Faithful

Week Three

Announcement # 3

Delivered During Announcements

By now most of you should have received a letter describing *Sharing Our Blessings*. There are some additional brochures in the (Vestibule / Narthex) if you have not received yours yet.

All parishes in the Diocese are involved in this program, which seeks to increase a parish's offertory by at least 25%.

On (Commitment Weekend Date), each parishioner will be asked to make a commitment to the parish's offertory. Please pray about your participation in this important initiative for our parish.

* It is also recommended that the parish include a prayer for parishioners considering their commitments to the *Sharing Our Blessings* program in the Prayers of the Faithful

Week Four

Announcement # 4

Delivered by Pastoral Leader

Next Week, I will ask (Lay Witness) to speak on behalf of the *Sharing Our Blessings* program and give you a lay perspective on the needs of the parish. You will also be receiving another letter from me, asking you to prayerfully consider an increase in your regular support of the offertory.

The next several weeks will be a period of evaluation for each of us. We will examine how truly fortunate we are to be a member of God's family. In response to this blessing, we will all be asked to take some time to reflect and plan our gifts that we return to Him.

Let us begin today our internal examination of our blessings in preparation for our future challenge.

* It is also recommended that the parish include a prayer for parishioners considering their commitments to the *Sharing Our Blessings* program in the Prayers of the Faithful

Week Five

Lay Witness Announcement

Example 1: Immaculate Heart of Mary, Winchendon

Good Morning/Afternoon,

Usually when I speak to you as a Parish it is to ask your help for The Parish Festival. No we are not getting an early start for the June Fair that will come later, but I do wish to speak to you today about another important matter.

I am pleased to serve as the Program Chair for the Program “Sharing Our Blessings”, the increased offertory program we have been talking about for several weeks now. I accepted Father’s request to serve because I feel this campaign can provide us all with an awareness of our responsibility to give back to God.

Our family has always been strong believers in supporting our parish by giving of our time, our talent and our treasure. Oftentimes though we do this only when Father asks and not as something we do on our own. We always assumed that we would give of ourselves but never really made it part of our family discussion.

Starting this year, we will make it a topic of our conversation! We will commit ourselves to talking about God’s gifts to us and how we should give back. Budgeting is such a part of life today but why do we not budget our time and donations to the Church? We should and we will.

By now you should have received some literature describing the Increased Offertory Initiative and our needs here at the Parish. We are not alone in this as every parish in the Diocese will eventually take part. Every parishes needs are different and we have identified our needs.

They are to

- Replace the outdated electrical box and switches in the Church
- Freshen up and repaint the Parish Center and Restrooms
- Keeping pace with the cost of Living

This week you will receive another letter from Father Fran. He will ask you to evaluate your current level of support and to commit to a sustained increase for the stability of the parish. Please pray on this request. In two weeks we will hold our Commitment Weekend. All of us will be asked to return the commitment forms with our stated increase on that day. We will do that as part of the collection for that Saturday/Sunday.

On behalf of Bishop McManus and Father Fran and the rest of the Sharing Our Blessings Team we thank you for all you do and for who you are. Our Parish is a better place because of your commitment!

Thank You.

Week Five

Lay Witness Announcement

Example 2: St. Denis, Douglas

LAST OCTOBER Fr. Bill and I attended a financial meeting for the Diocese of Worcester. At that time Bishop McManus announced that he would be implementing a diocesan-wide program to increase offertory. The program was to be implemented in all parishes of the Diocese, not just Douglas. St. Denis has been chosen as a pilot parish for this program.

FIRST REACTION – Probably your first reaction to our first letter was much the same as our reaction to the Bishop’s announcement – UGGH!! How are we ever going to present this to a parish that has just been through a Capital Campaign, a struggling economy, etc.? But after careful thought / prayer we came to realize that it is a necessary step toward strengthening the future of our parish.

LAY WITNESS – Part of the process of this program is for a lay “witness” to speak at all Masses. According to Webster’s Dictionary, the word “witness” is “one who has personally SEEN, HEARD, OR EXPERIENCED something.” Working in this parish we have certainly seen, heard and experienced struggles as well as the good works of the many people of this church. BUT WE ARE ALL WITNESSES!! Everyone who is in this church comes with their own experiences, their cares and concerns. But when we come into the church and gather around this table, we are connected together, not only with each other, but with the disciples, the saints etc. who were the first witnesses to Christ. We come together to share our experiences and gain strength to deal with them, not only from God, but from each other. *“Love one another, as I have loved you.”*

SHARE STORY – One of my daughters just got back from a service trip to Belize. One of the jobs they were working on was building a foundation for a church. At one point in their day, the pastor who travels out to these remote areas, showed up to say Mass. They dropped what they were doing and celebrated Mass. At one point, she looked down at her watch and coincidentally (with the time difference) she noticed that she was celebrating Mass at the same time as I was, here in Douglas!! The foundation they were building for the people of Belize to come together to worship, was also a foundation for us to all be connected as one, whether we are in Belize or here in Douglas.

One Mass each weekend is offered for The People of St. Denis. We pray, not only for all of us gathered here, but for all those who came before us. They are the ones who built the foundation of this church and it is up to us to take care of that foundation and strengthen it for our future.

One of the hardest subjects for many of us to talk about is finances. Fr. Bill, our leadership team and those from the Diocese helping with this program, truly understand all the many different circumstances that so many families are experiencing and we are putting a lot of time and effort into this program to reach out to all members of the parish. We will be mailing out another letter asking for your help with this program. Please do not throw it away, but carefully and prayerfully think about how you can help, and respond in some way.

St. Denis is blessed with so many people who are willing to share their TIME AND TALENTS. Those who are able, we ask you to share your TREASURE by responding to the increased offertory request.

On behalf of Bishop McManus, Fr Cormier and the volunteer leadership team here at St. Denis, we THANK YOU for your dedication to this program and to our church. Our parish will be a better place because of your commitment.

Week Five

Lay Witness Announcement

Example 3: St. Richard's, Sterling

There seems to be quite a bit of interest in “lists” these days, so I thought I would begin this talk with a list...a list of things you will never hear in church.

Number 1 “Hey, it’s my turn to sit in the front pew!”

Number 2 “Father, I was so enthralled, I never even noticed your sermon ran 25 minutes over!”

Number 3 “Personally, I find being a lay witness much more enjoyable than playing golf”

Number 4 “I’ve decided to give the Church the \$500 per month I’ve been sending to the TV Evangelists.”

Number 5 “Mrs. Casey, I’ll volunteer to be the permanent teacher for the seventh and eighth grade CCD program.”

Number 6 “Sister Anne Marie, no—I simply can’t serve at today’s Mass.”

Number 7 “Kathy, I love it when I get to sing hymns I’ve never heard before!”

Number 8 “Since we’re all here, let’s start early!”

Number 9 “Father Jim, the committee would like to send you next month to a Bible study seminar in the Bahamas.”

Number 10 “My favorite sermon topic is the annual stewardship campaign.”

Well, it’s that last one I would like to discuss and expand upon a bit. I hold no illusions or false hope that anything I say here today will radically affect your commitment to our Church—financial or otherwise—or your faith. Still, I want to offer some observations and thoughts for your consideration as you evaluate the invitation that is being presented here and at other parishes throughout the Diocese. If in some small way you begin to re-evaluate the process by which you decide to contribute your time, talent or treasure to the Church, I will be gratified.

My first observation is this — All of us have prayed and worshipped in Churches we did not build. It’s amazing to me how little thought I gave as a younger person to the evidence of great faith and wonderful commitment all around me as I would attend Masses, funerals, weddings, First Communions, Confirmations and other religious events in Catholic churches all over the country. Whether I was in a historic cathedral or in a humble country church, I completely took for granted the existence of these structures and the communities of faith they housed. I was largely unmindful of their history...who built them...who paid for them...who maintained them...and the hospitality that was extended to me without my asking. It never really occurred to me that all I had seen and experienced was a gift...intended in part for me...a gift I should be thankful for and an example I should emulate. I guess all that realization came later with spiritual maturity. But, my spiritual adolescence clearly lasted a long time. Now, when I visit other churches, it reminds me of my church in Sterling and my responsibility for it. Since I can’t adequately repay what has been given me, I am left to “pay-it-forward” by trying to simply do my best for my own church. It’s joyful work.

This leads me to my second observation which is also a question—If everything we receive is a gift from God, what should we do about it

I don't know about you, but I don't remember bringing anything with me when I entered this world—I must have been in a terrible hurry leaving wherever I had been before. I showed up with absolutely nothing!

So owning nothing—and not being especially deserving of anything on my own merit—I now realize all things that came to me then and since, have been a gift to me— my parents, my siblings, my spouse, my children, my home life, my work, my health— everything has been a gift--and how gifted and blessed I have been. I came with nothing and they tell me, despite all my efforts to accumulate things—that's how I'll leave this world—with nothing—nothing but my Catholic faith, which informs me who I am and where I am going. But that faith, it is clear to me now, is my greatest gift of all.

Is it such a foreign idea that confronting such an immense benefaction to want to give back to the Giver?

How to do it is the question. A mature stewardship is the answer.

So the invitation during the *Sharing Our Blessings* program is just that—an invitation.

- An invitation for those who have not yet participated in the life of the parish to come home and be part of it.
- An invitation to those who attend, but haven't contributed, to contribute—to help build our parish in some small way. Your gift of offertory will change your relationship with your church forever.
- An invitation to reflect on the blessings of your lives.
- An invitation to realize these blessings as gifts and see them in a vision of thanksgiving.
- An invitation to discuss with our families this opportunity to make a gift to God of the “first fruits of our labor.”
- An invitation to reflect upon the commitment, expression and example of those who have gone before us in faith.
- An invitation to consider in prayerful trust, the needs of those in our faith community who travel with us now and of those who will follow us.
- An invitation to accept joyfully our spiritual responsibility to preserve, protect and advance our church—the vessel that seeks to carry us all home to God.

By now, everyone should have received at home some literature describing the Increased Offertory initiative and our needs here at St. Richard's. Please review it carefully.

When Dunkin Donuts and other enterprises need to increase their revenues, they simply raise their prices and we pay them. In church, our costs have increased dramatically—like the rest of the world's—but to meet them, we must write respectful letters. Within the next two weeks, you will receive another letter, from Fr. Steuterman, asking us to evaluate our current level of support. This is the first in many years asking for an updated financial review. Let us each pray about his request to increase the financial stability of St. Richard's, as our individual ability to give allows. And let us be mindful too of our identity—children of God, brothers and sisters to each other, and parents of the generation to come.

I know we will be rewarded for our efforts.

Thank you for listening.

Week Six

Stewardship Homily

Points to Emphasize

The focus of this weekend's Homily should be on the principles of Stewardship giving

- Everything we have is a gift from God. Stewardship giving is returning a portion of those gifts in gratitude for all we have. **It is an act of worship rather than an act of obligation.**
- The theology behind stewardship is: The master entrusts a steward with responsibility while he is away and when he returns he asks for an accounting of what has been done with the gifts with which the steward had been entrusted.
- Interestingly, nearly half of the parables of Jesus include references to stewardship and money. Jesus regularly preached that we should be good stewards.
- The Bible interprets being a good steward as **giving back to God the first fruits of our labors.**

“Honor the Lord with your wealth, with the first fruits of all your produce.” - Proverbs 3:9

- Our focus should be that our gifts to the church **are made in gratitude not out of obligation.**
- Being a good steward of the gifts God has given us also suggests that we should dedicate a portion of our week to **prayer and strengthening our relationship with God**; and that we should set aside a portion of **our vocations and abilities** to helping out in the church; along with setting aside the first fruits of our labors.
- These three pillars of stewardship are universally recognized as giving of your TIME, your TALENT and your TREASURE.
- Right now we are asking you to make your commitment of TREASURE.

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

- **Next weekend we will begin the process of gathering those commitments** in the form of your pledge to the parish's collection.
- It is not really even a pledge. It is more like a commitment that is between you and God. We will ask you to write it down for the parish's budgeting purposes, but it will be up to you to honor the commitment you make.
- I too am going to make my commitment next weekend.
- Going forward, we will ask you for **similar commitments to volunteer as well as to commit yourself to continued spiritual growth and prayer** by setting time aside for those things as well.
- We of course have tremendous needs for additional funding here and throughout the Diocese, and that is driving us to do this now. But this program about more than just specific projects. **Sharing Our Blessings is a necessary step in the evolution of the way we give back to God.**

- Parishes and Dioceses across the country are beginning to move toward this new way of giving. I wholeheartedly endorse the decision to begin this program here and now. **It is long overdue** and I am excited about the potential of this parish over the coming years.
- **Please pray about your commitment this week** and come prepared to make your decision next weekend. Whatever amount you decide on, your commitment will be greatly appreciated.

“As each one has received a gift, use it to serve one another...” 1 Peter 4:10

Week Six

Stewardship Homily

Example: Cathedral Church of St. Paul

Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time 2010

I have always loved the call of Isaiah, for three reasons:

- First, Isaiah knows what a mess he is. He tells the Lord to leave him alone, for he is a man of unclean lips and an unclean heart. How could God possibly use him? God's made a mistake... he chose the wrong guy!
- Second, God is persistent, incessant in his desire to get Isaiah to serve him. It was not you who chose me, Isaiah. I chose you. And I am God. Give me a break!
- Third, it's the way that God finally calls Isaiah. It's not with convincing words or any form of moral persuasion. No. God takes a hot coal and places it to Isaiah lips and burns away his sins.

Through burning, through suffering, God purifies Isaiah, like a jeweler purifying silver by burning it, or a sculptor perfecting a statue by cutting stuff away, or a marathon runner strengthening his muscles by running that extra mile, God uses suffering to purify and make us ready to do his will.

I was at the North American College in Rome last week for the Vox Clara Meeting, and I love to visit NAC because, like Saint John's, it is filled with seminarians: Young men so filled with love of Christ and His Church that all they want to do is be given the permission to give everything they've got to the Lord.

Like Isaiah, their only wish is to shout: "Here I am, Lord, send me!"

But they know suffering. When doubts assail them, when personalities collide, when young passions for truth become ideological crusades, and when all those trials which life places in the path of every other twenty-something make them trip and fall, their hearts break, their eyes tear and self-doubt swells.

They're human beings, just like you and me, with the same strengths and weaknesses, the same fears and hopes. But that's just why God calls these modern-day Isaiah's, so filled with human weakness, impurity, and doubt.

So he gives them suffering, calling them beyond their zones of comfort and safety, inviting them to join their suffering with the suffering of Christ, the High Priest and to make their lives one with his. And by suffering he purifies and strengthens them.

One of them was telling me of an exam he failed the other day. He had never failed at anything academic before in his life... this was one bright kid. But it was about a question in biblical Greek and he was taking the exam orally in Italian. He told me he had not slept the whole night before, or after the exam. But he smiled weakly and told me, don't worry Monsignor, I know that God will get me through, for what does not kill me will only make me stronger.

Here's this 25 year old kid, preaching to me, and like Jesus in today's Gospel, calling me to cast out into deeper waters.

You heard the scene a couple minutes ago. They've been fishing all night and have caught not a single fish. Can't we relate to that! And along comes the Lord and tells them to get back in the boat and to cast their nets into deeper waters.

He's talking to us! **Calling us to risk more, to give more, to suffer more**, to cast out into deeper waters.

- Where once we forgave those who have reached out to us, he calls us to forgive those who still hate us, revile us, and talk behind our back... into deeper waters!
- As once we prayed each morning and evening and went to Mass on Sundays, he calls us to pray at mid-day and in the middle of the night when you can't sleep and all through the day in thanksgiving for his infinite gifts...into deeper waters!
- Where once we cared for elderly parents or friends, he calls us now to visit the stranger in the nursing home or the hospital or even the House of Correction into deeper waters!
- Where once we said a prayer for the good works of the Cathedral Parish, he asks us to volunteer to unload food for the Food Pantry to help teach our Children in CCD, to join the Knights or the Choir or any one of innumerable ministries into deeper waters!
- Where once we gave generously of our surplus to the works of this Cathedral Church, he **calls us to give just a bit more of our substance**, to accomplish the work of God...to maintain these aging buildings, to expand our Religious Education programs, and to maintain the tradition of being Catholic at the foot of Crown Hill that goes back 150 years to the days when Fr. John Power stood in a pulpit on that column and asked the people of Saint Paul's to be just a bit more generous and a tad more open to doing the work of God.

And he doesn't just ask you. He asks me, too. Last year, like Father Reidy before me, I gave a larger proportion of my salary as a donation to my parish than most people I know. I say that not to toot my own horn, but to encourage you to toot yours, and to join me in setting out into deeper waters, that Christ might continue to accomplish great things through our hands.

Next week is Commitment Weekend for the Sharing Our Blessings program at Cathedral. At that time, I will ask you to return a commitment form indicating your decision to increase your giving to this Cathedral Church in whatever way you possibly can.

I already know of your extraordinary generosity...you are more giving than any parish I have ever been in. But now, I invite you to join me on this great journey and to set out into deeper waters, in response to the call of the Lord!

We have tremendous needs for additional funding here at Cathedral, and that is driving us to do this now. But this program about more than just specific projects. **Sharing Our Blessings** asks us to examine the way we **give back to God**.

I wholeheartedly endorse the decision to undertake this program here and now. It is long overdue and I am excited about the potential over the coming years.

Please pray about your commitment this week and come prepared to make your decision next weekend. Whatever amount you decide on, your commitment will be greatly appreciated

Saint Augustine once said, God does not just want our gifts, he wants us! Join me, in setting out into deeper waters and in being willing to say to him, Here I am, Lord. Send me!

Week Seven

Commitment Weekend Guide

The key outcome of Commitment Weekend is to receive an informed prayerful decision from all parishioners during Mass. It is an “every member” appeal. The responses will fall into one of the four categories:

1. **New Commitment** – If you would like to make a commitment today
2. **Amen** – If you have already made your commitment
3. **No** – If you are unable to make a commitment at this time.
4. **Need More Time** – If you need more time to consider your commitment and would like a volunteer to call

In addition to conducting this plan at all Masses, parishes should:

- Enlist volunteers or ushers to distribute Commitment Forms to all attendees during Masses.
- Encourage participation of *all* parishioners at *any level* and emphasize the importance of everyone completing and turning in a form, no matter what the decision.

The Goal of Commitment Weekend is to receive a completed card from every family in mass

Keys to Success:

- Use the script as a guide for getting every form filled-out
- Have pencils scattered throughout the pews
- Hand out envelopes to each family as presentation begins
- Begin presentation during or immediately after the homily
- Ask them to hold up their envelopes for reference
- Give them time to fill in their name (1 minute)
- Give them time to fill in Commitment Form (2 minutes)
- **Have a special collection immediately, just for the forms**
- Offer a prayer of thanks and for help in meeting commitments

What Doesn't Work:

Making it optional – each family should complete a form, regardless of decision

Doing it at beginning or end of Mass – this exercise should be undertaken when the most people are in the pews and paying attention; preferably before the Prayers of the Faithful

Leaving envelopes in the pews – they should be handed out in person, otherwise they will be forgotten (and used as drawing material for children)

Asking them to return it next weekend – this never works, we need them back immediately

Asking them to put it in the offertory collection – they usually forget about the form by this point, we need to collect the envelopes separately

Suggested Commitment Weekend Script

Delivered by Pastor after the Homily

As you know, this weekend is **Commitment Weekend**; the time we will make our commitments to increase our regular giving to (Parish).

If you are like me, this decision did not come without much prayer and contemplation. However, as you have heard these past few weeks, and as you read in my most recent letters, (Parish) needs our help and we have a responsibility to do more than just talk about stewardship, we need to live it.

Today we are asking you to make your commitment to the parish's collection. This process, when undertaken by everyone in the parish, will enable us to meet our budget for the coming year and undertake long-overdue projects.

As we all make our commitments today, remember that we are truly **returning to God** what has been given to us. The ownership lies with Him.

Here's how this will work:

The ushers (or volunteers) are going to come down the isle now right now and distribute the Commitment Weekend Envelopes. If you have brought your own Commitment Form in today, please place it inside this envelope and seal it. Thank you!

If you are not able to make your commitment at this time or if you are not a (Parish) parishioner, I'd still like you to complete and return an envelope today. This way nobody will feel left out.

The point is that this is an every member appeal and **I'd like to receive a completed envelope from every family in the pews today.**

- **First, please fill in your name and contact information on the bottom portion of the envelope.**
- **Next, please check one of the four options:**
 - **Yes** – which means you are going to indicate your commitment today
 - **Amen** – which means you've already turned yours in: THANK YOU! Please fill in the top of the envelope anyways
 - **No** – which means you can't commit to an increase at this time
 - **Need more time** – please write down your number if you'd like me to talk with someone before making your commitment.
- **Next, on that top space of the envelope, please indicate the amount you typically give to the collection and how often.**

- **In the next line, please indicate the new amount with which you are committing to supporting the parish going forward.**
 - This is so important to the process. We will be able to use these figures for generating next year's budget.
 - And please, I encourage you to sign up for electronic giving. This would be convenient for you and would make our budgeting process even easier knowing there is a consistent source of income coming in automatically. Please check that box if you are interested and we'll send you some information to get started.

Please take a moment to complete the information on the envelope and seal it.

I would now ask you to turn the commitment forms in.

Here's how we'll collect the envelopes:

Choose the desired approach for collection of Commitment Forms

- *Special procession to front of church and place in a basket*
 - We have #_____ baskets up here in the front of the church. Just like we do in communion, I'd like to have each family come up and offer your commitment by placing your envelope in the basket.
 - I'll start things off by placing mine in the basket.
- *Special collection by ushers*
 - I'll now ask the ushers to come back down and collect the envelopes. Please place your sealed envelopes in the collection basket.

*Have the ushers bring the Commitments to the front of the church and **offer a prayer** of thanks for the sacrificial giving and to help parishioners meet these commitments.*

I thank you all for your generosity.

Week Eight

Update Announcement

Delivered by Pastor

I am please to report to you that *Sharing Our Blessings*, our increased offertory initiative, is a success. During Commitment Weekend last week, our parish received _____ Commitment Forms representing an increase in parish giving of \$_____. This equates to a _____% increase in our regular offertory over last year. I am personally grateful to each of you that made your commitment.

(Parish) is truly blessed to have such generous and committed members.

Some of you have not yet taken the opportunity to document your commitments. If that is the case, an “in-pew” Commitment Envelope is available for your use. If you would, please complete the information on this envelope and include your increased offering in the basket today. I hope to report next week that our parish received even more intentions.

Thank you all, once again, for your tremendous display of stewardship. It once again reinforces my belief that at (Parish) we are a people of action. God bless you all.

Week Nine

Update Announcement

Delivered by Program Chair

I would like to report more exciting news about *Sharing Our Blessings*. As of today, ____% of the parish has responded to the Program and we have realized an actual increase of _____% to our regular offertory. To those of you that have helped make this possible, thank you for your generosity. It has been truly humbling.

If you have not yet made your commitment, please contact the parish office to receive information on how you can. By the end of this week, we hope to have decision from all parishioners. All of our members are important and we hope each of you will become part of this Program.

Week Ten

Final Announcement

Delivered by Pastor

As the initial phase of *Sharing Our Blessings* officially comes to a close, I would like to take this opportunity to once again thank all of you that made it a success. We have realized a ____% increase in our regular giving and I am confident that, as faithful stewards, we will sustain this generosity to the parish.

Over the next year I promise to keep you informed on how we are doing as a parish in meeting the commitments that have been made.

And going forward, I look forward to incorporating this new way of giving into our annual budgeting process.

Please know how grateful I am and how pleased Bishop McManus is at the response of (Parish). You have set an example for other parishes to follow.

Sample Weekly Bulletin Announcements

Weekly announcements should be regularly printed in the parish bulletin during your parish's program. It is suggested that these announcements be printed in the same spot in your bulletin each week. Use *Sharing Our Blessings* logos to set the announcements apart even further. In addition, it is suggested that each weekly announcement (after Commitment Weekend) contain a statistical update, as well as a reminder of any program meetings.

ALL ANNOUNCEMENTS AND BULLETIN SUGGESTIONS INCLUDED BELOW ARE INTENDED TO SERVE AS A GUIDE TO PARISHES. SPECIFIC CASE ELEMENTS, STATISTICS, NAMES, ETC. ARE EXPECTED TO BE ADDED BY THE INDIVIDUAL PARISH PRIOR TO PUBLICATION.

Summer Bulletin

Sharing Our Blessings: AN OPPORTUNITY FOR GROWTH

This fall you will hear and read more about an exciting new program taking place in parishes throughout the diocese. This program, *Sharing Our Blessings*, is an opportunity for all of us to work together to address the most pressing needs in our parish through an increased giving campaign. Our hope is to increase our weekly offertory collections by at least 25%.

Sharing Our Blessings is a program about sacrifice, about giving back to God, and about strengthening the future of our faith community. Please be on the lookout for more information about this initiative, which will begin after Labor Day.

Electronic Giving Introduction Bulletin Language

(For parishes not already offering electronic giving)

To strengthen stewardship at (Parish), we are considering introducing a new and easier way to support our parish...Electronic Giving.

What is Electronic Giving?

An alternate means of supporting the parish instead of envelopes. In lieu of weekly collections, an electronic giving program would allow parishioners to make automatic contributions directly from checking, saving, or credit card accounts. There would be NO cost to parishioners for participating in the program.

We are currently researching our options and would be interested in hearing from you if you would like to participate in such a program. Please contact the parish office at XXX-XXXX.

Week One Bulletin

Sharing Our Blessings: AN OPPORTUNITY FOR GROWTH

In the weeks ahead, you will be reading more about a new program taking place throughout the Diocese of Worcester. The program, *Sharing Our Blessings*, is an opportunity for all of us to address the most pressing needs in our parish through this increased giving campaign. Our hope is to increase our weekly collection by at least 25%.

Currently our weekly collection is \$_____. To address our needs, we need to increase our income to \$_____.

Each week, this space in the (Parish) bulletin will be devoted to reminders and important announcements concerning *Sharing Our Blessings*. Please be on the lookout for more information about this exciting opportunity.

Team Captain Meeting: _____



Stewardship Link: Proverbs 3:9 “*Honor the Lord with your wealth, with the first fruits of all your produce.*”

Electronic Giving Introduction Bulletin Language

To strengthen stewardship at (Parish), we request that you to consider utilizing a new and easier way to support our parish...Electronic Giving.

What is Electronic Giving?

An alternate means of supporting (Parish) instead of envelopes. In lieu of weekly collections, our new electronic giving program allows you to make automatic contributions from your checking, saving, or credit card account. There is NO cost to you for participating in the program.

Please contact the parish office at XXX-XXXX to receive more information.

Week Two Bulletin

Sharing Our Blessings: AN OPPORTUNITY FOR GROWTH

In the weeks ahead, you will be reading more about a new program taking place throughout the Diocese of Worcester. The program, *Sharing Our Blessings*, is an opportunity for all of us to address the most pressing needs in our parish through this increased giving campaign. Our hope is to increase our weekly collection by at least 25%.

Currently our weekly collection is \$_____. To address our needs, we need to increase our income to \$_____.

Each week, this space in the (Parish) bulletin will be devoted to reminders and important announcements concerning *Sharing Our Blessings*. Please be on the lookout for more information about this exciting opportunity.

Team Captain Meeting: _____



Stewardship Link: Luke 12:34, Matthew 6:21 “*For where your treasure is, there also will your heart be.*”

Electronic Giving Introduction Bulletin Language

To strengthen stewardship at (Parish), we request that you to consider utilizing a new and easier way to support our parish...Electronic Giving.

After careful consideration and research, (Pastor) and the Finance Council have agreed to make a viable effort to provide our community with a new and better way to support our church. We hope that your family will also join this spiritual movement and offer your talents, time and treasure.

Please contact the parish office at XXX-XXXX to receive more information.

Week Three Bulletin

Sharing Our Blessings: MOVING FORWARD

As you know, (Parish) is now involved in *Sharing Our Blessings*, an increased giving campaign to strengthen all 100+ parishes in the Diocese of Worcester.

In recent weeks our parish has been preparing for the Program by recruiting volunteer leadership, updating parish records and producing program materials. Soon all members of (Parish) will be invited to participate in *Sharing Our Blessings*. We hope you will respond positively and with generosity.

This week you will receive a letter from Father/Monsignor _____ describing *Sharing Our Blessings* and how our parish will be involved. It is an opportunity for all of us to take an active role in growth of our parish and for each parishioner to practice the principle of stewardship — giving back a portion of our blessings to God.

On (Commitment Weekend Date), each parishioner will be asked to make a commitment to the parish's regular collection. Please pray about your participation in this important effort.

Program Advocate Orientation Meeting: _____



Stewardship Link: 1 Peter 4:10 “As each one has received a gift, use it to serve one another as good stewards of God's varied grace.”

Electronic Giving Introduction Bulletin Language

Electronic Giving Is Here...Have You Signed Up Yet?

- ✓ **It benefits you and our parish!**
- ✓ **Enrollment is friendly and trouble-free.**
- ✓ **Never worry about forgetting to bring money to church again**

It's easy to sign up. Simply fill out the enrollment form and drop in the collection basket or enroll on-line at www.ourparish.com. Please contact the parish office at XXX-XXXX to receive more information.

Week Four Bulletin

Sharing Our Blessings: GIVING AS A RESPONSE

As (Parish) prepares for *Sharing Our Blessings*, we are challenged to evaluate our lives and give back a just portion of our blessings to God.

In spite of the difficult economic times we are fortunate people. Our thanks for these and many other blessings should be reflected in what we give to our Church.

Remember, giving opportunities come in many forms, not just financial. Give of yourself as a volunteer and donate your time to worthwhile causes. "What you give will be returned tenfold."

The following members of (Parish) have graciously accepted parish leadership positions on the *Sharing Our Blessings* leadership team:

- General Chair
- Program Secretary
- Team Captains

Program Advocate Orientation Meeting: _____



Stewardship Link: 2 Corinthians 9:11-12 *"¹¹You are being enriched in every way for all generosity, which through us produces thanksgiving to God,¹²for the administration of this public service is not only supplying the needs of the holy ones but is also overflowing in many acts of thanksgiving to God."*

Week Five Bulletin

Sharing Our Blessings: PROGRAM BEGINS THIS WEEK

This week you will receive another letter from Father/Monsignor _____. You will be asked to consider a specific increase to your regular parish giving. Please pray about this request. ***Sharing Our Blessings*** is a program about sacrifice, about giving back to God, and about strengthening the future of (Parish).

While this particular request comes in the form of financial commitment, other opportunities to practice stewardship present themselves on a daily basis. You could commit a portion of your time and ability to ***Sharing Our Blessings*** as a Parish Advocate. To find out more about this possibility, call the Parish Office at _____ or join us at the Parish Advocate training and Assignment meeting on _____ in the (Parish Hall / Rectory)

Our current weekly offertory is \$_____. In response to ***Sharing Our Blessings***, our goal is to increase this to \$_____.

Program Advocate Orientation Meeting: _____



Stewardship Link: 2 Corinthians 8:12-15 “¹²For if the eagerness is there, it is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what one does not have; ¹³not that others should have relief while you are burdened, but that as a matter of equality ¹⁴your surplus at the present time should supply their needs, so that their surplus may also supply your needs, that there may be equality. ¹⁵As it is written: ‘Whoever had much did not have more, and whoever had little did not have less.’”

Week Six Bulletin

Sharing Our Blessings: HOW CAN WE PARTICIPATE?

Next weekend is Commitment Weekend for *Sharing Our Blessings*. Please pray about your level of commitment and come prepared to make your decision next weekend. Volunteer Advocates have been busy calling each household to ensure each parishioner has an opportunity to ask questions and be fully informed about our plans. Please contact the office if you would like to discuss the project with someone.

Our current weekly offertory is \$_____. In response to *Sharing Our Blessings*, our goal is to increase this to \$_____.

The commitments secured during *Sharing Our Blessings*, and sustained for years to come, will be directed towards specific needs that have been identified at the parish. They include:

- Case
- Case



Stewardship Link: Sirach 35:9 "*Give to the Most High as He has given to you, generously, according to your means.*"

Week Seven Bulletin

Sharing Our Blessings: COMMITMENT WEEKEND!!

Today is the day! All members of (Parish) are asked to make their commitments to *Sharing Our Blessings*. This program is very important to the ongoing work of our parish. Please give with a sacrificial heart. Remember, our goal is to increase our regular giving from \$_____ a week to \$_____.

Here at (Parish), the commitments secured during *Sharing Our Blessings*, and sustained for years to come, will be directed towards specific needs that have been identified at the parish. They include:

- Case
- Case

With all parishioners of (Parish) involved in this program, our parish's stability will be strong for generations to come.



Stewardship Link: Deuteronomy 16:10, 16-17 *"The measure of your own free will offering shall be in proportion to the blessing the Lord, your God, has bestowed on you...No one shall appear before the Lord empty handed, but each of you with as much as he can give, in proportion to the blessings which the Lord, your God has bestowed on you."*

Week Eight Bulletin

Sharing Our Blessings: THANK YOU!

Last Sunday, _____ parishioners returned Commitment Forms for *Sharing Our Blessings*. These commitments totaled \$_____ in increased gifts, which would equate to an increase of _____ % over (Parish) total income from last year. To those of you that made your commitment, thank you for your generosity and dedication to (Parish).

Some of you have not yet responded to the request from Father/Monsignor _____. You will find in church a confidential commitment envelope for your use. Simply indicate your intended increase and include your new, increased offertory in the basket today.

Our parish has responded with great generosity and enthusiasm. We hope to have all parishioners involved by the end of this weekend.



Stewardship Link: Psalm 116 "*What return shall I make to the Lord for all He has given to me?*"

Week Nine Bulletin

Sharing Our Blessings: MORE GOOD NEWS

We are pleased to announce that the regular offertory to (Parish) was sustained during the first week following the *Sharing Our Blessings* Commitment Weekend. We have realized a ____ % increase in our offertory over last year, which will be used for the following objectives:

- X
- X
- X

Many thanks to all that have participated. If you have not already made your commitment, Commitment Envelopes are available in the back of the church.



Stewardship Link: Luke 6:38 "*Give and it shall be given to you.*"

Week Ten Bulletin

Sharing Our Blessings: THANK YOU

We are pleased to announce that the regular offertory to (Parish) was sustained during the second week following the *Sharing Our Blessings* Commitment Weekend. We have realized a ____ % increase in our offertory over last year, which will be used for the following objectives:

- X
- X
- X
- X

Thank you so much to all that have participated and to all who have increased their giving. If you have not already made your commitment, Commitment Envelopes are available in the back of the church.



Stewardship Link: Deuteronomy 14:22 *"Each year you shall tithe all the produce that grows in the field you have sown."*

Final Report Bulletin

Sharing Our Blessings: SUSTAINING THE PROGRESS

As the official tracking phase of (Parish's) increased offertory program comes to a close, we would like to share some results with you and thank all of those generous parishioners that have participated in *Sharing Our Blessings*.

As a parish family, we have realized an increase in our regular offertory almost of ____%. This is indeed a great accomplishment, though it must be sustained in order to truly be called a success. The following chart highlights how the collections have risen since our Commitment Weekend on (Commitment Weekend Date):

2009 Average Weekend Collection:	\$_____
Current Average Weekend Collection:	\$_____
% Increase over FY09:	_____%

Weekend	Collection	Increase over 2009 Avg.
(Date):	\$_____	____%
(Date):	\$_____	____%
(Date):	\$_____	____%
(Date):	\$_____	____%
(Date):	\$_____	____%

Thank you so much for making this possible. Your generous support will enable us to begin cleaning the church, upgrading office equipment and for the first time in several years, operate on a balanced budget.

In the coming weeks and months, you will be confronted with circumstances that will call for you to act as a steward, just as you have during *Sharing Our Blessings*. Accept the challenge to live your entire life as a steward of God, giving back to Him a portion of your blessings.