

A BRIEF EXPLANATION
HOW *STEWARDS OF HOPE* CAN HELP SMALL PARISHES
SEPTEMBER 2010

- By now, most of us have heard of *Stewards of Hope*, the Pastoral Plan to strengthen Catholic life in our parishes. A Diocesan Planning Commission worked on the Plan for two years. Bishop Coakley announced *Stewards of Hope* at a Diocesan Assembly in June, and it goes into effect this coming January.
- The priests and Parish Life Coordinators have been talking about *Stewards of Hope* for quite a while now, so we're pretty familiar with it. It's a very sound plan, and I'm going to make every effort to make sure our parish benefits from it.
- As many of you know, I've already appointed a *Stewards of Hope* Committee that will guide and monitor the Pastoral Plan here and in the other parishes (names) where I am pastor. There's just one committee for the (two, three, four) of us. (Names) are members of the committee from this parish, and (name) from (parish) has agreed to serve as Chair. (PLCs adjust wording as necessary.)
- As I've said before, *Stewards of Hope* is not about nuts and bolts, it's not about paving the parking lot or fixing the roof, though we still have to think about those practical matters. *Stewards of Hope* is about the spiritual life of this parish; it's about strengthening our spiritual life. It's about strengthening the spiritual life of our whole 300-mile-wide Diocese.
- "Well, that's fine, Father," you might say, "but why do we have to work with the other parishes?" First of all, because we're all Catholics, all part of the Body of Christ, so we need to help one another. Second, just as a practical matter, we might not be able to succeed with *Stewards of Hope* if we were working alone. It's a complex document with 13 different sections that will guide the Diocese and its parishes for the next four years.
- I think we can all agree that this parish should want to become more Catholic, so it doesn't get isolated or get left behind while the whole Diocese is busy with *Stewards of Hope*. Small parishes have much to offer in this Diocese: for example, a great community spirit. Making a contribution is part of our mission as Church.
- I've heard that there is a rumor going around--maybe not here, but in some places--that the *Stewards of Hope* Pastoral Plan is just an excuse for merging or closing small parishes. Actually, the truth is exactly the opposite. Bishop Coakley wants to strengthen the smaller parishes by encouraging them to combine resources so they can be successful with the Pastoral Plan. Working together allows the smaller places to be part of this big diocesan effort. As the Bishop said at the Diocesan Assembly, "We're all in this together!"
- So I'm inviting your support of *Stewards of Hope* and your *Stewards of Hope* Committee. I believe the Pastoral Plan opens up a bright new future for (name of parish).