

© The Catholic News & Herald, April 25, 2008

### **A stewardship way of life**

*Conference explores benefits of sharing God's gifts*

by KATIE MOORE

staff writer

CONCORD — The advantages of stewardship are endless.

Such was the message shared at the seventh annual Regional Stewardship Day Conference, held at the Embassy Suites Hotel/Convention Center in Concord April 19.

Hundreds of participants from dioceses around the South met to discuss the value of giving one's time, talent, and treasure for the benefit of others and the good of the church.

This was the second year the Diocese of Charlotte has hosted one of the conferences sponsored by the Atlanta Province.

The Atlanta Province is made up of the Archdiocese of Atlanta, along with the dioceses of Savannah, Charleston, Raleigh and Charlotte.

“The importance of stewardship is that it is one very real and concrete way that we respond to the call to be disciples of Jesus,” said Barbara Gaddy, associate director of development for the Diocese of Charlotte.

The goal of the conference was “to educate parishioners and help them better promote stewardship as a way of life,” she said.

“Jesus has already shown us that the greatest purpose in life is to give ourselves away, to share our abundance,” said Msgr. Mauricio W. West, vicar general and chancellor of the Diocese of Charlotte, in his opening remarks at the conference.

“All that we are, all that we have is a gift — a gift to be shared in love,” he said.

“The focus of the development office is to be a resource to parishes in a number of different areas,” said Jim Kelley, director of development for the Diocese of Charlotte and board president of the International Catholic Stewardship Council.

“In the area of stewardship, we want to help parishes do a more effective job of spreading stewardship as a way of life among their parishioners,” he said.

The keynote speaker for this year's conference was Bishop J. Kevin Boland of Savannah, who spoke on the topic, “The Heart of Stewardship.”

Members of stewardship committees and pastoral councils, along with priests, deacons and other lay volunteers from throughout the Atlanta Province, attended the event.

More than 360 people attended this year's stewardship conference, making it the largest regional stewardship day in the country, according to the Diocese of Charlotte's Office of Development.

The conference included six breakout sessions on topics such as infusing stewardship into the life of the parish; blending multiple cultures in the parish; and forming, strengthening and sustaining parish stewardship committees.

Msgr. Anthony Marcaccio, pastor of St. Pius X Church in Greensboro, spoke about the vibrant ministry of stewardship at his parish in his presentation entitled, "Putting it all Together: Bringing the Principles of Stewardship into all Aspects of Parish Life."

"The great success we have had with stewardship flows from a profound appreciation of God's blessings," said Msgr. Marcaccio, who credits the achievements of his parish to the integration of stewardship in all aspects of their community.

According to the diocesan Office of Development, the benefits of stewardship often show up in numerous aspects of parish life.

For example, one parish found that five years after implementing stewardship in its community, the parish offertory nearly doubled, the number of volunteers ministering in the parish increased by more than 300 percent and weekday Mass attendance was up 200 percent.

"These are the kinds of fruits that most parishes find after they have been promoting stewardship annually over about a five-year period," said Gaddy.

Roundtable discussions provided an opportunity for stewards from around the region to network and share ideas.

"The part of the conference that I found most helpful was getting together with other stewards from other parishes and finding out what they're doing," said Jennifer Shinn, volunteer ministry coordinator at St. Gabriel Church in Charlotte.

What the conference does every year "is provide a new excitement and a new energy for stewardship committees and people on pastoral councils," said Gaddy.

The conference concluded with Mass concelebrated by Bishop Peter J. Jugis of Charlotte and Bishop Boland.

"Stewardship is an important concept for our spiritual growth as Catholics, both as individuals and as parishes," said Bishop Jugis in a letter to stewards who attended the conference.

"In a spiritual sense and temporal sense, adopting stewardship as a way of life changes people and changes the life of the parish as a whole," he said.

*Contact Staff Writer Katie Moore by calling (704) 370-3354 or e-mail  
kmmoore@charlottediocese.org*

**WANT MORE INFO?**

For more information on stewardship, visit [www.charlottediocese.org/stewardship.html](http://www.charlottediocese.org/stewardship.html).