

DIOCESE OF VENICE IN FLORIDA

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Stewardship: 'A spiritual issue, not a financial issue'

By: Heather Felton

(Venice - Apr. 14, 2006) When Ernie Bono began his motivational talk for Stewardship Days, he asked his listeners what they thought of when they heard the word "stewardship."

The answer: "Money."

But that's not what stewardship is all about, said Bono, an author and motivational speaker.

"Where stewardship has a hold in a parish, it is vibrant and alive," he said. "The priest doesn't own the parish. We own the parish... We have to have ownership. Then the parish will flourish."

That, he said, is really what stewardship is all about. It's a spiritual issue, not a financial issue.

"God is the owner and giver of all things," he said, "and we are called to give our time, talent and treasure to God."

After all, he said, everything we have, right down to the shoes on our feet, came to us through the good graces of God. It is up to us to give back to God for his gifts to us.

Bono was one of several presenters at the diocesan Stewardship Days, sponsored by the Stewardship and Development Department March 29 at Ss. Peter and Paul the Apostles Parish, Bradenton, and March 30 at Resurrection Parish, Fort Myers. About 150 people from 30 parishes attended over the two days

"We are all stewards of God's many gifts and the purpose of hosting Stewardship Days was to bring people together so that we might all be supported, inspired and strengthened in our role as stewards of our lives and parishes," said Mary Campo, director of the Stewardship and Development Department. "Many of the participants were church leaders who attended to

gather and share ideas on how to help parishioners gain a better understanding of stewardship and also to find ways to increase their parish ministries and meet the needs of the community. Each of the parishes represented are at different levels of understanding and implementation of the ideas that were shared. Hopefully

everyone left with at least one new idea and a renewed commitment to living his or her life as a good steward.”

Other presenters included the keynote speaker, Father Craig Scott, who echoed Bono’s thoughts about stewardship not being a financial question. Stewardship is about discipleship; we are all called to serve.

“Asking for money is not stewardship,” he said. “If you minister to people, the money will be there. Money follows ministry.”

He also used biblical stories from Christ’s life to highlight themes of stewardship, including the healing of Peter’s mother-in-law, where, once she was healed, she immediately got up and began to serve Jesus.

Following the keynote, participants broke up into groups to attend a breakout session with one of three presenters: Campo on “Ideas for Promoting Parish Stewardship,” Sister Sallie Latkovich, CSJ, on “Exploring Stewardship: A Word Come Back to Life,” and Cheryl Stock of St. Thomas More Parish on “Creating a Welcoming Parish.”

Paulette Kaczor, office manager of St. Bernard Parish, Holmes Beach, attended Stewardship Days to learn more about building stewardship at the parish. Kaczor said she was interested in Father Scott’s points about church being the responsibility of the people, not the priest running it.

“The people own it,” she said.

For Deacon John Crescitelli of Incarnation Parish, Sarasota, Stewardship Days “helps me change my attitude so I can do my ministry better.”

He said he finds it helpful to be reminded that everything is a gift from God and that everything in the parish is “a gift for the common good.”