

Teens called to simple acts of stewardship

BALTIMORE – The U.S. bishops in a new statement are calling teenagers to be disciples by performing acts as simple as assisting with liturgical ministries, giving up the cost of a movie ticket to support the poor, or visiting people who are alone.

In “Stewardship and Teenagers: The Challenge of Being a Disciple,” approved in a 198-6 vote Nov. 14 during their annual meeting, the U.S. bishops spelled out in simple language what young people can and should do to share their “time, talent and treasure.” The text is intended to be circulated as a brochure.

A Spanish-language version of the brochure also will be published; it is called “Coresponsables de los dones de Dios en mision.”

Bishop Robert J. Baker of Birmingham, Ala., who chairs the Ad Hoc Committee on Stewardship, said the Spanish version is not a translation, but was written originally in Spanish to better reflect language suited to young people.

To love Jesus, the English-language document says, “means loving Jesus as my brother and my savior, my best friend and my God. It means living our faith fully. It means sharing it freely as disciples of Jesus Christ by living out the Gospel value of stewardship. It means walking a mile in the other person’s shoes.”

The document follows the 2004 approval of a similar stewardship brochure directed at young adults. In the new text, the bishops explain that stewardship is born out of love, and ask young people to think of those they love the most or who love them the most.

“Know that the love of God for you is so much more than the greatest love you have ever felt or known!” the document says. “The love of God is without end, and through following Christ, you have the benefit of the role model of sacrifice for the greater good.”

It encourages building a relationship with Jesus through prayer and using that

guidance to be a disciple and live out stewardship.

“God has given you many gifts,” it says. “Look around at the people in your life; think about the many opportunities you have been given; rejoice in the ways you are already using your talents for the betterment of the church and your community. These are all gifts, and they are all from God.”

Stewardship is about acting for others, it explains, and discipleship means doing for others without counting the cost.

“Even the smallest act of kindness can bring joy and relief to another,” it says. “You are in a unique position to reach out to your peers and share with them the unconditional love of God. Seize every opportunity to show them God’s love through your random acts of kindness: an encouraging word, a pat on the back, a helpful hand.”

The statement notes that young and old alike struggle to be true to God’s call, adding that the church – especially through the sacraments – is there as a guide.

“It is a day-by-day journey, and the way may not always be clear,” it says, but daily prayer and weekly attendance at Mass can help one find the way.

It concludes by explaining that both Pope John Paul II and his successor, Pope Benedict XVI, have called the church to be a place for young people, “a church that is not afraid to require much, after having given much; that does not fear asking from young people the effort of a noble and authentic adventure, such as that of following Christ. We, your bishops, are asking: Come join us in the adventure!”