

Ownership vs. Stewardship

The owner piles up
possessions;
the steward prizes
persons.
The owner treats people
like property;
the steward respects property
like people.

Ownership is a legal
arrangement;
stewardship is a moral
obligation.
Ownership examines
our rights;
stewardship explains
our duties.
Ownership claims
control;
stewardship commands
care.

Ownership concentrates on
what belongs to me;
stewardship meditates on
whom I long to be.
Ownership is the goal of
masters and despots;
stewardship is the focus of
servants and caregivers.

The penchant for ownership
is a manifestation of
venality;
the call to stewardship
is a revelation of
spirituality.

By disregarding stewardship
the owner becomes
a loner.

For the owner
the resources of the world
are a fountain
for personal opulence;
to the steward
they are the bounty
of God's munificence.

The nurture of nature
is the steward's imperative:
the earth is not ours to own;
it is our home on loan
from God to us
to use -- not abuse,
to develop -- not pollute,
to enjoy -- not destroy.

© *Msgr. Walter Niebrzydowski*
May 9, 1999

Fr-Walter@nyc.rr.com
www.fatherwaltersparish.org