



INTERNATIONAL CATHOLIC STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL CATHOLIC STEWARDSHIP

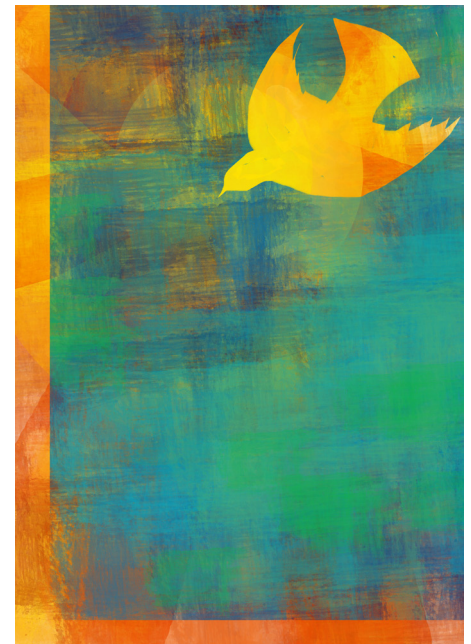
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We Stewards Are a Testimony to Hope

This is a heart-wrenching time for our Church. We are numbed by the recent reports of past sexual abuses and the failure of some Church leaders to protect the most vulnerable among us. These reports reveal a crisis in our midst and the anger and dismay are natural. But how do we, as Christian stewards, respond? How do we participate in the healing and guiding work of the Holy Spirit? How do we stewards become a testimony to hope?

First, we can re-think how we work within the Church to protect the most vulnerable among us. How might we become better stewards of those entrusted to us? Christian stewards do not stand idly by, helpless or disengaged. They open their hearts to conversion, draw closer to those who suffer and seek ways to respond to injustice even if it is within their own family of faith.



Christian stewards, as active instruments of God's mercy, understand the redemptive quality of being stewards of the Gospel

Second, let's make an honest assessment of our own life in Christ, beginning with the stewardship of our prayer lives. We pray for the victims and their families; for the innocents who continue to suffer; for a new resolve to reform the structures that have abetted wrongdoing; and even for those who have sinned. But let's be honest about our conversations with God and the way we reveal our own weakness and frailty. It is here that we come to know the power of the Holy Spirit within us. It is here that Christ declares, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor. 12:9).

Third, let us embrace a new awareness of our stewardship of the Church. Our Church is found in our parish at the Eucharistic celebration, at faith-formation gatherings, at our dinner table, in giving of our time at the soup kitchen, senior citizens' home or the religious education of our young people. It is found in the many ways we give witness to the loving presence of Christ in a suffering world and offer hope. Let's ask ourselves: "How am I stewarding our Church?"

JOIN US...

For the 56th Annual
ICSC Conference

Missionary Disciples:

Stewards of the Gospel

October 28-31

Gaylord Opryland Hotel
Nashville, Tennessee

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800-352-3452 or visit us at
catholicstewardship.com

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Let us embrace a new awareness of our stewardship of the Church.

One of the profoundly prophetic voices of the 20th century, Karl Rahner, insisted:

Quite enough terrible and base things have happened in the history of the church ... Where would we go if we left the church? Would we then be more faithful to the liberating spirit of Jesus if, egotistical sinners that we are, we distanced ourselves as the "pure" from this poor church? We can do our part to remove its meanness only if we try to live in the church as Christians and help bear the responsibility of constantly changing it from inside (The Practice of Faith, New York: Crossroad, 1983, p. 15).

As we persevere through the current crisis, let us remain mindful that Jesus taught us how not only to overcome evil, but to redeem it. Christian stewards, as active instruments of God's mercy, understand the redemptive quality of being stewards of the Gospel. It is in fidelity to this stewardship, made manifest in prayer, word and deed, that our testimony of hope emerges to reveal the healing power of Christ's presence.

STEWARDSHIP SAINT *for October*

Saint Luke

Luke is the author of the third Gospel and was a companion of Saint Paul. According to reliable tradition, he was a Syrian physician from Antioch who wrote his Gospel in Achaia (Greece). Both the Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles are attributed to Luke, because he appears to be the person intended by the first-person reference in Acts. The opening of Acts refers to the Gospel and is dedicated to the same person, Theophilus.



The basic point of Luke's New Testament writings is to emphasize the love and compassion of Jesus Christ. Luke also has an interest in the reality of poverty and reveals a deep concern for the poor, the outcast, and the underprivileged throughout the Gospel.

Stewardship is a major theme in Luke's Gospel. As a matter of fact, what emerges from Luke's writings is a sophisticated theology of stewardship that is unique to his Gospel and not addressed so profoundly by other New Testament writers. Luke defines the duty and role of a steward as a unique sort of

servant who is entrusted with material possessions by a master, takes charge of them and is required to use them prudently.

Luke envisions the steward as not having any possessions or property of his own, but as taking care of his master's property and wealth until the master summons him to turn in an account of his stewardship.

Luke defines the duty and role of a steward as a unique sort of servant who is entrusted with material possessions by a master, takes charge of them and is required to use them prudently.

There is a finiteness to stewardship. According to Luke, a steward carries out his responsibilities with alertness, knowing that the master's return may come at any time. And depending on the quality of his stewardship, there is the anticipation of a reward as a result of his stewardship. Luke believes stewards are not just a chosen or appointed few. Stewardship is the responsibility of all Christian disciples.

Luke takes his basic ideas of stewardship and applies them to the motif of material possessions as well, instructing his readers on the right use of wealth and the wrong use of wealth.

Finally, Luke's concept of almsgiving, based on his theology of stewardship, was unique and radical at the time of his writing. Almsgiving was considered an obligation of Christian disciples; imperative inside and outside the community. Luke enjoined his readers to look upon the poor with genuine sympathy and urged those with material resources to remember their identity as stewards, to distribute their wealth to the poor as alms, and to give up ownership of their own material possessions.

Luke is the patron saint of physicians, artists and butchers. His feast day is October 18.



A STEWARDSHIP PRAYER for October

Come, Holy Spirit!
Come down upon us.
Watch over us.
Guide us.
Make us good stewards of your wisdom.

You are the promised one of Jesus,
the ultimate protector of the church
and its most vulnerable.

You are the Lord,
the giver of life
who brings us peace in the midst
of storms
and comfort in our pain and
discouragement.

You are the one who
transforms weak and timid disciples
into bold proclaimers of the
Good News.

Breathe your life into us.
Unleash your power upon us.
Set us on fire!
So that our stewardship of the Gospel
may bring hope to others
and give glory to you,
Father and Son,
One God, forever and ever.
Amen.

Listening: An Essential Virtue for Stewardship Leaders

by Leisa Anslinger, Associate Department Director for Pastoral Life,
Archdiocese of Cincinnati

In previous articles in this column, we have considered the importance of discerning the ways in which we will form our people as disciples who are growing as good stewards. Last month, we established the necessity to be clear about our vision, why we do what we do as stewardship leaders. This is the first essential step in the discernment process. Now, let us turn our attention to the ways in which we listen to the people of our community in order to effectively communicate the stewardship message.



Communication is a two-way process of listening and speaking. In order to form people as stewards, we must listen. We must hear how people are living as stewards, how they experience the challenge of stewardship in their daily lives, and the impact of living as stewards in their homes, at work, in the parish and the wider world. Listening happens formally and informally:

Formal listening: What processes or structures exist in your community for listening to your fellow parishioners? Some parishes have a clear leadership structure that provides the means for members to take responsibility for specific elements of parish life. Often, stewardship leadership falls within this structure, either as a sub-committee of the pastoral council or as a commission or committee. Dioceses sometimes have a stewardship commission or advisory group that has similar responsibilities. Formal listening falls within the auspices of the stewardship committee through discussion in parish meetings, and surveys or focus groups that give parishioners opportunities to share their experiences and insights. Through these listening processes, parishioners know that their experiences, needs, and hopes are taken into consideration as parish practice is developed and implemented.

Informal listening: We also have informal opportunities to listen in our day-to-day interactions with the people of our community. In our leadership groups, we may identify specific aspects of stewardship spirituality that we will listen for in our conversations with parishioners. With these things in mind, we will be attentive to what we hear in order to integrate this input in our stewardship formation strategies in the future. When you listen to parishioners, what do you hear?



56TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE

October 28-31, 2018 | Nashville, Tennessee

Becoming Missionary Disciples: Stewards of the Gospel

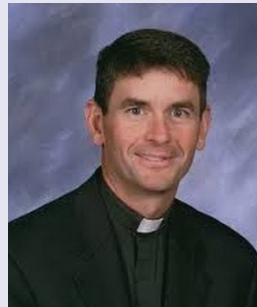
Responding to the urgent call of Our Holy Father, Pope Francis, and the United States Catholic bishops, the 56th annual conference of the International Catholic Stewardship Council (ICSC) is dedicated to the themes of stewardship, evangelization and missionary discipleship.

The 2018 ICSC conference, a gathering of Catholic stewardship leaders from around the world, and with over 100 Catholic leaders presenting, has added a number of evangelization formation sessions for pastoral leaders to be even better equipped to proclaim the Good News.

Some of the conference sessions are specifically designed to prepare us for Missionary Discipleship:

- Evangelizing to Youth and Young Adults
- Using Social Media to Evangelize
- Maximizing Parish Communications for Missionary Discipleship
- Missionary Families: How They Evangelize
- Making Evangelization and Stewardship Effective in Your Parish
- Stewardship Through the Lens of Evangelization and Disciple-Making
- How the Practice of Stewardship Leads to Evangelization

Four notable Catholic evangelizers you will not want to miss:



Rev. John Riccardo is pastor of Our Lady of Good Counsel Catholic Church in Plymouth, Michigan and host of the Ave Maria Radio Program "Christ is the Answer."



Julianne Stanz is Director of New Evangelization in the Diocese of Green Bay and consultant to the USCCB Committee on Catechesis and Evangelization.



Tony Brandt and Chris Stewart are co-founders of Casting Nets Ministries, a nonprofit lay apostolate dedicated to the challenge of the New Evangelization.



REGISTER TODAY by calling 800-352-3452, or by visiting our website at catholicstewardship.com/events/icsc-annual-conference/

Of course, all of us are called to mature in our work as evangelizers. We want to have better training, a deepening love and a clearer witness to the Gospel. In this sense, we ought to let others be constantly evangelizing us.

– Pope Francis (*Evangelii Gaudium (The Joy of the Gospel)*, 121)

Everything We Have is a Gift from God

By Rev. Joseph D. Creedon, pastor emeritus, Christ the King Parish, Providence, Rhode Island
This excerpt is fifth in a series based on his forthcoming book.

Everything we have is a gift from God. That is a foundational principle in the spirituality of Christian stewardship. It is not easy to embrace the reality that everything we have is a gift from God. Many of us, at a subliminal level, believe that everything we have is a result of our own efforts. The following story points out how persistent this false belief can be.

The setting for the story is the Irish countryside; the focus is an

abandoned farmhouse. A stranger buys the dilapidated farmhouse and immediately begins to make improvements. The stone walls are rebuilt, the house gets a new coat of whitewash, the fields are plowed and planted and the thatched roof is repaired. The people in the nearby village watch all this work with curiosity and wonder. One thing they know for certain is that whoever the new owner is he never goes to church. A group of the villagers goes to the parish priest and convince him to discover who the new owner is and to invite him to church. Soon thereafter the parish priest goes out to the newly restored farmhouse and knocks on the door. The door is opened, the priest is greeted and he soon finds himself seated at the kitchen table enjoying



The story is both humorous and tragic. Humorous because it invites us to laugh at ourselves. Tragic because it lays bare the fact that we are inclined to take too much credit for our successes and too little blame for our failures. The new owner's heart is not filled with gratitude because his heart is too full of pride in his own accomplishments. Needless to say, he is not alone in this attitude. If we are to embrace fully the spirituality of stewardship, we must embrace the belief that "everything we have is a gift from God." We must develop what stewards call "the attitude of gratitude." Prayerfully consider what will help you realize more fully that everything we have is a gift from God.

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a cup of tea and homemade scones. After the obligatory small talk, the priest zeroes in on the purpose of his visit. He says to the new owner, "I love what you and God have done with this place." The new owner pauses, takes a sip of tea and says, "Father, do you remember what the place looked like when God had it all to Himself?"

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October Observances

Month of the Holy Rosary is dedicated to one of the best known of all Catholic devotions. Catholics are encouraged to pray the rosary. It is a form of contemplative prayer which brings down God's blessings on the faithful. It is a biblically inspired prayer which is centered on meditation of the salvific mysteries of Christ in union with Mary, who was so closely associated with her Son in his redeeming activity.

October 7 - Respect Life Sunday kicks off a month-long celebration of human life by our family of faith in the United States. Respect Life Month proclaims the immeasurable value of every person from conception to natural death. The United States Conference of Catholic

Bishops assists parishes, schools and other Catholic ministries with helpful resources. The theme is "Every Life: Cherished, Chosen, Sent" and highlights the call to build a culture of life as missionary disciples.

October 16 - World Food Day reminds us that in a world of plenty, millions go to bed hungry each night. This day seeks to increase awareness, understanding and informed year-round action to alleviate hunger. To find out more, consult Catholic Relief Services (www.crs.org), the official overseas arm of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, and contribute to a food pantry near you.

October 21 - World Mission Sunday, organized by the Propagation of the Faith, is a day set aside for Catholics

worldwide to recommit to the Church's missionary activity through prayer and giving. As described by Saint John Paul II, it is "an important day in the life of the Church because it teaches how to give: as an offering made to God, in the Eucharistic celebration, for all the missions of the world."

October 28 - Priesthood Sunday is a special day set aside to reflect upon and affirm the role of the priesthood in the life of the Church as a central one. This nationwide event is coordinated by the USA Council of Serra International. Serrans are encouraged to spearhead events in their dioceses, parishes and schools to show appreciation for their priests.



A STEWARDSHIP MOMENT

Twenty-seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time Weekend of October 6-7, 2018

In today's Gospel Jesus teaches us about the sacredness of marriage; a covenant that is a gift from God. Our relationships with our spouses, family, friends, coworkers, and those in our community of faith are all gifts from God. Jesus reminds us today that it is the hardened heart that damages or breaks up relationships. Good stewards understand the holiness of relationships and pray for the love, patience, understanding and kindness necessary to sustain those relationships. Take time out to prayerfully reflect on your relationships this week. Is your stewardship of these relationships as God intended? What relationships need to be healed and reconciled?

Twenty-eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time Weekend of October 13-14, 2018

Jesus offers a hard lesson regarding wealth and possessions in today's Gospel. The rich man whom he encountered could not part with his possessions as a condition to becoming a disciple of Jesus. Would our response be the same as the rich man? Do we place our trust in our money and possessions instead of trusting in God's generosity? Do we seek security in our possessions? Good stewards realize that their possessions must not possess them, lest those possessions block their relationship with the Lord.

Twenty-ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time Weekend of October 20-21, 2018

In today's Gospel Jesus teaches his disciples that whoever wishes to be great among them must be a servant, just as he came to be a servant. Today is World Mission Sunday – a reminder of our call to be good stewards of the Gospel and to support those who make evangelization their servant ministry throughout the world. Not to be a servant of the Gospel would be poor stewardship. But how do we serve the Gospel in our daily lives? How do we support others who serve those who have never heard the Gospel or who have chosen to reject the Gospel of Jesus Christ?

Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time Weekend of October 27-28, 2018

After healing the blind man in today's Gospel Jesus told him to go, to be on his way. But the man chose to follow Jesus. Being a disciple of Jesus is a choice. The stewardship way of life likewise involves a choice, in fact many choices. We choose to be grateful, we choose to live generously, and we choose to trust that God will always provide for our needs. These are three choices central to the stewardship way of life. What choices will we make this week that give witness to our decision to follow Jesus Christ?