



# INTERNATIONAL CATHOLIC STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL CATHOLIC STEWARDSHIP

March 2019 • e-Bulletin

## A STEWARDSHIP PRAYER for March

Merciful Lord,

As we prepare for our journey of renewal toward the great paschal feast of Easter, teach us to be good stewards of your mercy and forgiveness, so that we may extend these gifts to others.

Give us the strength to bear witness to you at all times, even in times of stress and adversity.

And fill our hearts with love that we may be faithful to the Gospel Jesus proclaimed and ready to celebrate his resurrection.

Grant this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

Amen.



## A Lenten Stewardship Reflection: Compassion

A central theme in the Gospel of Luke and a very good one for Lenten meditation is the notion of compassion. More than any other Gospel, Luke reveals the compassionate nature of Jesus Christ. Jesus said it emphatically and without mincing his words: "Be compassionate just as your Father is compassionate" (Luke 6:36, *New Jerusalem Bible*).

The word **compassion** is derived from the Latin words **pati** and **cum**, which taken together mean "to suffer with." Compassion asks us to enter into another's pain, to share in their suffering, to feel their brokenness, fear, confusion and anguish.



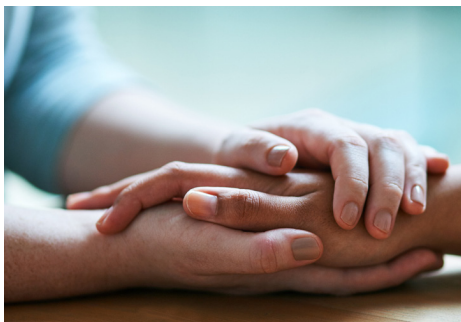
For Jesus, however, compassion was not just a feeling. It translated itself into action. Throughout Luke's Gospel, Jesus heals and cares for the downtrodden, the poor and oppressed. Jesus showed his followers that compassion is inherent to discipleship. He did not reach down and lift the poor up from above either. He became poor. He *suffered* with the poor. He chooses pain, rejection, persecution, and death rather than the path of "upward mobility" toward power, authority, influence, and wealth. It is this "downward mobility" that led to his own passion, death and subsequent resurrection and redemption for all.

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Jesus' path of downward mobility differs from the common notion today that compassion means helping those less fortunate than we are. It is a particularly privileged notion to think that if we volunteer in a soup kitchen or donate money to help others, we have been compassionate. To be clear, these actions are important and valuable ways of serving others. But when we are able to maintain our distance or stay in a place "above" those we serve, such acts easily become acts of pity, rather than compassion. This is the problem with the idea of serving "those less fortunate." We are somehow "more" and "they" are somehow "less." We have all the power. "They" have none. Genuine compassion, as embodied by Jesus, runs counter to our culture's concept. Christ's compassion is a call to suffer "along with" those who are powerless.



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Compassion is at the heart of the Christian stewards' life. It is an expression of God's love for us and our love for God and each other. Perhaps during this Lenten season we can place compassion front and center in our spiritual lives. What better time than the Lenten season to consider a radical reorientation toward others. And what better time than Lent to discover the compassion Jesus calls us to embrace.

## STEWARDSHIP SAINT *for March*



### Saint Joseph

Next to the Blessed Virgin Mary, Saint Joseph is the most honored saint in the Catholic Church for being the foster father of Jesus and the husband of Mary. His traditional feast day is March 19. Joseph's life is depicted in the gospels, particularly in Matthew and Luke. He was born in Bethlehem and is described as being a descendant of King David.

Mary was betrothed to Joseph, but was pregnant with the Christ child before Joseph took her into his home. According to Jewish law at the time, Mary could have been stoned to death if she was believed to have been unfaithful to her betrothed. An angel of the Lord told Joseph to take Mary into his home, that the child was conceived through the Holy Spirit, and that his name would be Jesus.

After Jesus' birth at Bethlehem, in yet another dream, Joseph was told to take Mary and Jesus to Egypt and remain there until Herod's slaughter of newborns had come to an end with Herod's own death. Joseph, Mary, and Jesus returned to the region of Galilee and settled in Nazareth where Joseph taught his craft of carpentry to Jesus. Joseph is last mentioned in the Gospels when, on their pilgrimage to Jerusalem, he and Mary frantically searched for the lost Jesus in Jerusalem, and found him in the Temple (Luke 2:42–52).

Saint Joseph was declared patron saint and protector of the universal Church by Pope Pius IX at the close of the First Vatican Council in 1870. He is also considered a spiritual model for families and Christian teaching frequently stresses his patience, persistence, and hard work as admirable qualities Christians should reflect upon and embrace. He is the patron saint of fathers, foster fathers, husbands, the unborn, working people in general and social justice.

Saint Joseph is the patron saint of several countries including Canada, China, Korea, Mexico and Peru. Many cities, towns, and other locations are named after Saint Joseph as well; and it has been noted that the Spanish form of Saint Joseph, San Jose, is the most common place name in the world.





# INTERNATIONAL CATHOLIC STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL 57<sup>th</sup> Annual ICSC Conference

October 6-9 | Sheraton Grand Hotel | Chicago, Illinois

## *Stewards of the Church*



### NETWORK

The ICSC annual conference is widely recognized as the most valuable opportunity for those involved in Christian stewardship to connect with others who share their commitment to teaching stewardship as a way of life. Many say meeting others with similar experiences is the main reason they attend the ICSC conference!



### LEARN

The ICSC annual conference is filled with sessions and forums that provide practical information you can take home and use immediately. You will be exposed not only to topics that offer fundamentals but also new ideas, innovations and strategies!



### GROW

The ICSC annual conference is a great opportunity to get away from your busy schedule to pray, reflect on your own life of faith, listen to inspiring reflections and participate in invigorating liturgies!



The newly renovated Sheraton Grand Chicago Hotel will offer a well-appointed and comfortable experience for the 57th ICSC conference. This convention hotel is set in the heart of the downtown district, along the Chicago Riverwalk near Navy Pier and the Magnificent Mile. ICSC has reserved intuitively designed rooms which boast city, river and lake views. Beginning March 1, ICSC conference registrants may [CLICK HERE](#) to book their rooms through the ICSC conference planner, Plaza Meetings. For questions about the hotel contact Plaza Meetings directly at 518-785-3392.

## REGISTER TODAY!

ICSC member Lenten-Easter Registration discount **\$499**  
visit [www.catholicstewardship.com](http://www.catholicstewardship.com)



## Important Notice for all ICSC Parish Members!

### ICSC 2019 Parish Stewardship Award Information

Has your parish developed  
stewardship materials that  
would help others?

Did your committee work hard  
on resources you are proud of?

*Please consider applying for  
one or more ICSC Parish  
Awards in 2019.*

Parishes at all stages of the  
stewardship journey are  
encouraged to apply!

Entries will be judged by  
members of the ICSC Parish  
Stewardship Education and  
Services Committee.

*Application Deadline is  
June 30.*

All applicants will be contacted  
by July 31.

Additional information, list of  
awards and entry forms are  
available on the ICSC website:

[catholicstewardship.com/  
stewardship-awards/](http://catholicstewardship.com/stewardship-awards/)



## Being a Good Steward of Lent

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



Every liturgical season has its natural stewardship connection, providing seasonal focus and themes for spiritual growth. Perhaps no season is as rich as Lent in providing a springboard for exploration, reflection, and transformation. As people who hope to lead others to a fuller expression of discipleship as Christian stewards, let us consider Lent as a gift which we are called to steward well.

**Part of our Catholic culture:** I often tell leaders who are ready to adopt new practices or to deepen current ones that Lent has great potential, because Catholics will do things during Lent that they will not do any other time of the year! Whether we were baptized as infants or were initiated as adults, Lent is a season that connects to our daily lives. The three traditional practices of prayer, fasting and almsgiving lead us to live each day as good stewards who put God first and who think about and act on behalf of others.



We are invited to turn our lives around, to embrace  
the way of Christ as people who are truly committed to  
grow in his self-giving way.

**Metanoia:** Lent is a season of turning away, turning toward, and turning around. Jesus tells us to repent and believe in the Gospel. The repentance of Lent is about turning away from sin, and it is about turning toward God. We are invited to turn our lives around, to embrace the way of Christ as people who are truly committed to grow in his self-giving way. This turning can also be one of accepting the call to grow as good stewards, as we turn away from selfishness, self-centeredness, and sinfulness, and turn toward God as the giver of all good gifts.

**Simplicity and Sacrifice:** During Lent, we encounter again Jesus' mercy, forgiveness, healing, and salvation, and we recognize more fully the depths of Christ's sacrifice on the cross. Jesus' sacrifice challenges us to give of ourselves, our talents, time, prayer, attention, and resources. This call to sacrifice also leads us to separate our wants from our needs, inviting us to simplify our lives, rid ourselves of unnecessary material possessions, and open our hearts to the grace of life lived in imitation of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.



# Good Stewards Learn to Develop God's Gifts

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

God has blessed each of us with many gifts and our task is to discover, acknowledge and develop those gifts. Some of our gifts we discover ourselves; other gifts have to be pointed out by others. One of life's greatest challenges involves discovering and developing all of our God-given gifts. Parents, siblings, teachers, coaches, scout leaders and friends play an important role in this journey. Once we know we have a gift, we have to believe in the gift and commit ourselves to developing it.

We have to work on our gifts and have the discipline to hone them to perfection. Blessed John Cardinal Newman once said, "Nothing would



be done at all if one waited until one could do it so well that no one could find fault with it." Many people are afraid to test their gifts. Fear of failure, it seems, is pervasive. We are not born with a fear of failure. Fear grows on us. Fear wears many disguises – fear of failure, fear of success, fear of ridicule, fear of not belonging, fear of looking foolish – to name but a few of fear's disguises. All of fear's disguises lead to stagnant energy. Fear always brings with it inertia and inertia always leads to stagnation. No one develops their gifts responsibly



Life is a series of failures that morph into successes sometimes without our realizing it or knowing how it happens but it does.

without risk-taking, hard work and overcoming fear.

Allow me to offer an example. Do you remember what it was like to learn how to ride a bicycle? We start off with a tricycle and for a while that is enough but soon we want more. We want a bicycle and the day comes when we get our first bicycle but our joy quickly fades when we realize that the bicycle comes with training wheels. So instead of going from three wheels to two wheels we go backwards to four wheels. Finally the fateful day comes when the training wheels are taken off. A person we thought loved us, usually a mother or a father, puts us on the bicycle, puts one hand on the back of the seat and the other on the handlebar, tells us we can do it and pushes us off to fend for ourselves. The result is always the same – we fall to the ground.

Then the person we thought loved us picks us up and repeats the process. Eventually we get the hang of it but not before we have fallen and picked ourselves up more often than we choose to remember.

The gift of balance is key to being able to ride a bicycle; the process of discovering that gift is repeated many times in our lives. Life is a series of failures that morph into successes sometimes without our realizing it or knowing how it happens but it does. We had to learn how to be brothers and sisters, we had to learn how to be husbands and wives, and we had to learn how to be friends and neighbors. We need to learn how to be good stewards of the many gifts God has given us; to discover them, cherish them and not be afraid to develop them.



# Forty Days, Forty Ways

## to Exercise Good Stewardship of Lent and Easter

Are you looking for ideas to help you with your Lenten experience? Here are 40 ideas to fill the 40 days of Lent and the beginning of the Easter season.

1. Attempt a more intentional prayer life – start a habit in the morning and before bedtime.
2. Attend Mass on Ash Wednesday. Wear your ashes out into the world as a witness to our faith.
3. Make a prayer basket at home - slips of paper or construction paper hearts (invite kids to participate) writing names or intentions that each person around the table picks out before each meal.
4. Attend a weekday Mass.
5. Pray the rosary.
6. Make a point of experiencing the sacrament of reconciliation at the beginning and end of Lent. Consider inviting someone who's been away from the sacrament to join you.
7. Pray for someone with whom you are out of touch.
8. Give up meat on Fridays but don't substitute lobster - make fasting something that is truly sacrificial.
9. Resolve to stop engaging in rumors, gossip, and negative chatter that devalues others.
10. Begin and end each week with an e-mail thanking someone for all that they do.
11. Be sure to say grace at any restaurant you frequent (don't dodge making the Sign of the Cross either).
12. Buy a cup of coffee for someone living on the street but not until you learn their name and exchange in some conversation.
13. Pray before the Blessed Sacrament.
14. Reconcile with someone you've hurt or aren't speaking to.
15. Invite someone who's been away from the church to attend Mass with you.
16. Make a gift to a charitable cause - make it a sacrificial gift.
17. Attend a parish or diocesan event centered on faith issues.
18. Thank a bishop, priest or member of a religious congregation for their public witness - invite them out for coffee or a meal.
19. Learn about the life of a saint, perhaps your parish saint.
20. Visit someone who's alone.
21. Reflect on the most pressing challenges confronting our Church and pray for a Spirit-filled response.
22. Pray for our Holy Father, Pope Francis.
23. Attend the Stations of the Cross.
24. Find out if there is a person participating in your parish's RCIA program and send a note of encouragement.
25. Find out how your diocese is involved in refugee resettlement and see how you can help.
26. Attend your parish's Good Friday liturgy, squeeze in and make room in your pew to give others a spot to sit.
27. Make time for family activities that are faith-related such as reading the Bible as a family.
28. Keep a journal during Lent about your spiritual highs/lows.
29. Make a playlist of spiritual music that you enjoy and share it with a friend.
30. Embrace periods of silence in each day.
31. Attend a parish mission or Lenten Retreat; invite others to join you.
32. Offer to be part of the church preparation crew or cleanup crew for the Easter Triduum liturgies.
33. Commit to a parish ministry or try a different ministry than the one you in which you are currently engaged.
34. Cut your media consumption to open time for prayer or scripture reading. Start and end each day free from the influence of the media.
35. Attend a Friday fish fry at a local parish with friends or co-workers. It's not the healthiest meal, but a fun Catholic tradition to join others and help you abstain from eating meat on Fridays during Lent.
36. Find a form of Lenten fast appropriate for your age and state of health.
37. Buy a book of daily spiritual reflections, keep it by your bed and read it upon rising or retiring or both.
38. Dedicate a portion of your time during Lent to serve others such as working at a soup kitchen or homeless shelter.
39. Participate in Catholic Relief Services' (CRS) Rice Bowl collection. Visit [crsricebowl.org](http://crsricebowl.org) to watch videos of the people and communities you support through your Lenten gifts to CRS Rice Bowl.
40. Invite someone you know who will be alone to Easter Sunday dinner.







**Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time**  
**Weekend of March 2/3, 2019**

“For every tree is known by its own fruit.” Jesus states this principle in today’s Gospel reading to illustrate a parallel stewardship principle in our spiritual lives. Just as a good tree bears good fruit and a bad tree bears bad fruit, so also the good steward produces good and an evil person evil. This is no coincidence. Our words and actions are outward expressions of what lies in our hearts. It is out of the “store of goodness in his heart” that the good person produces good and “out of the store of evil in his heart” that the evil person produces evil. A reflection for the week: How are our words and actions accurately reflecting what lies deep in our hearts?

**First Sunday in Lent**  
**Weekend of March 9/10, 2019**

The second reading from Saint Paul to the Romans is a favorite of those involved in the ministry of evangelization. There are no “secret” disciples of the Lord. Those who exercise good stewardship of their faith realize that publicly identifying themselves as followers of Christ has a cleansing effect on their lives. Openly confessing Christ makes them more conscious of how they live their daily lives. Are we content to privatize our faith or are we good stewards of a faith that we share, make public, and regularly identify as a life in Christ?

**Second Sunday in Lent**  
**Weekend of March 16/17, 2019**

In today’s second reading we learn that one of Saint Paul’s principles of Christian living is to watch and imitate other followers of Christ. There is a pattern for Christian living that Saint Paul wants others to discover and then imitate. This pattern includes a life of prayer, selflessness, sacrifice, and caring for others, including our family of

faith. Good stewards choose their friends wisely. They cultivate friendships with other Christian stewards, spend time with them, observe how they live, ask questions about their faith and learn from them. Who are your friends? Are they good stewards of their faith? Are they those who can help you on your own journey of faith?

**Third Sunday of Lent**  
**Weekend of March 23/24, 2019**

In today’s Gospel Jesus offers his parable about last chances. The fig tree will have one last chance to bear fruit before it is cut down and destroyed. Good stewards realize that, like the fig tree, they are endowed with God-given gifts that are meant to “bear fruit” for God and neighbor. God has legitimate expectations of them. They also realize they do not know how much time they have left before the gardener returns for an accounting of their fruitfulness. How are we using our God-given gifts? How might we use our gifts to bear more fruit? The answer requires some urgency.

**Fourth Sunday of Lent**  
**Weekend of March 30/31, 2019**

Today we hear one of the most beloved stories in the Gospel of Luke, Jesus’ parable of the Prodigal Son. Reconciliation is a prominent theme. Seeing the younger son returning to him, the son who left the family and squandered his inheritance, the compassionate father runs to embrace him. Jesus offers us a vision of a loving God who is merciful and forgiving when we, through our own sinfulness, leave his presence, and then through repentance, return to him. The remainder of the Lenten season offers us an opportunity to reflect on God’s compassion and our need for reconciliation. Consider celebrating the sacrament of reconciliation and experience God’s loving embrace and forgiveness.