

INTERNATIONAL CATHOLIC STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL CATHOLIC STEWARDSHIP

November 2019 • e-Bulletin

A STEWARDSHIP PRAYER *for November*

Gracious and loving God,

As the autumn season continues its transformation;
and the days become shorter, the earth cooler;
as we anticipate joining family and friends
in joyful celebration on Thanksgiving Day,
we pause to give You thanks and praise
for the abundant blessings You have bestowed upon us:

For life and health, safety and comfort,
food and nourishment, we are sincerely grateful.

Through your Spirit, open our hearts
so that we may be even better stewards
of these rich and unmerited gifts.

Show us how to be a blessing for the poor,
sick, lonely and all who suffer.

And help us nurture the gift of faith,
revealed to us by your Son, Jesus Christ,
our greatest gift,
who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit,
one God forever and ever.

Amen.



Gratitude: The Heart of Thanksgiving

In the United States, Thanksgiving Day is a holiday that is among the nation's finest national traditions. Indeed, setting a day aside for giving thanks to God is not just a U.S. phenomenon. Canadians have a Thanksgiving Day, and many countries worldwide celebrate harvest festivals that express gratitude to God. For Christian stewards, Thanksgiving Day has special meaning, for we know that gratitude lies at the very heart of stewardship.

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A grateful heart heralds the beginning of discipleship and opens the way to our deepest response, the desire to return to God for the bounty of our lives. The French educator Jean Baptiste Massieu put it beautifully: "Gratitude is the memory of the heart." For what do we thank our Creator? The early American colonists, who gave inspiration to the Thanksgiving Day tradition, were thankful for their very survival in a harsh and unforgiving environment. Many of their compatriots were buried in the soil of their new land, far from all that had been cherished and familiar.



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It's natural to thank God when things seem to turn out the way we had hoped, when disaster is averted, when life seems filled with abundance. Harder, perhaps, is the ability to thank God for being present to us in times of struggle, seeming failure, illness and death. But, in the heart of the Christian steward, the memory of God's presence is a comfort and a gift all its own. If we take time to reflect on our lives, we often discover that that for which we are most grateful was a gift which we struggled to receive. What came to us in the form of hardship has in hindsight revealed itself as gift. This is why each day's struggles and trials should be met with a heartfelt "thank you."

Meister Eckhart, the 14th century Dominican mystic, wrote, "If the only prayer you ever say is 'thank you,' that will suffice." At first, this seems puzzling. What of praise and petition? But Eckhart knew that the most genuine response, and indeed, the first and most spontaneous response of the heart which has discovered God, is "thank you." Gratitude lies at the beginning of true prayer. As we reflect on this time of thanksgiving, let us be present to those moments when God's gifts were hidden in shadow and remember to be thankful for all.

STEWARDSHIP SAINT *for November*

Saint Frances Xavier Cabrini

St. Frances Cabrini, better known as Mother Cabrini, was the first American citizen to be elevated to sainthood by the Catholic Church. Born in 1850, near Milan in northern Italy, she was the youngest of 13 children. As a young girl she was fascinated by the stories of missionaries and made up her mind to join a religious order. She tried twice to enter religious communities but was turned down

Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, was officially approved.

Sister Frances Cabrini dreamt of being a missionary in China, but Pope Leo XIII had other plans for her. He asked her to travel to the United States and minister to the Italian immigrant community in New York. She made that journey in 1889 with the six members of her community.

Said to have possessed remarkable administrative abilities, Frances



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both times because of poor health.

Having earned a teaching certificate, she became a school-teacher in a girls' school, and eventually became headmistress of an orphanage where she drew a small community of women together to live a religious way of life.

Gaining the attention of the local bishop for their way of life and their care of poor children in schools and hospitals, Cabrini and six other women took religious vows and in 1880, their community, the Missionary

Cabrini was responsible for the establishment of nearly seventy orphanages, schools and hospitals, scattered over eight countries in Europe, North America and in parts of Latin America.

There is much that can be learned first-hand about Mother Cabrini because of the letters and diaries she left behind. A very prayerful person, she was able to accomplish in her work what others said could not be done. And even as she was maintaining schools and hospitals and

in charge of hundreds of nuns, she was ever mindful to care for the poor, the homeless and immigrants who were without jobs.

Frances Cabrini's legacy continues today through the Missionary Sisters, their lay collaborators and in the innumerable religious institutions that bear her name. Her charism continues to inspire thousands who serve the poor in schools, hospitals and other ministries around the world.

St. Frances Cabrini died in Chicago in 1917 at the age of 67 and was proclaimed a saint in 1946. She is the patron saint of immigrants and hospital administrators. Her feast is celebrated on November 13.



A Whole House Purge and Making Room for Jesus

A condensed excerpt from Live Big, Love Bigger, a new book by Kathryn Whitaker, published by Ave Maria Press.

Scrolling through Instagram one January, I stumbled upon my friend Stephanie's post about embarking on a ten-day whole house purge and deep clean. My ears perked up and I thought to myself, *I was born for this!* I assembled my boxes, gathered my cleaning supplies, and armed myself with paper towels and microfiber cloths.

The first week I tackled the kitchen, dining room, playroom, laundry room, and living area. Week two was bathrooms, master bedroom, entryway, office, and the kids' rooms, including closets. The kids told me I was nuts. The next few days we finished the whole house purge. Yes, the cobwebs were gone and my baseboards were sparkling, but it was my heart I set free. By freeing myself of the physical clutter, I had made room for Jesus where it mattered – my soul. I finally had the space to see him at work in my life.

The more you purge, the less you have to take care of and the more time you have to spend doing things with people you love. The added bonus? Following the purge, we became more intentional about what we brought into our home.

When we detach ourselves from the physical clutter, releasing ourselves to be open to the will of God, we are given an opportunity. The purge sparked gratitude for every aspect of our life. Over the kids' computer area, I hand-painted one of our favorite quotes: *A grateful heart silences a complaining voice.* It was a gold nugget of a quote from an annual stewardship conference my husband attends.

In a society that lauds us for accumulating more, doing more, and being more, it's countercultural to hold up our hands in surrender and say, *no more.* Before the purge, I think I felt beholden – both consciously and unconsciously – to things. Perhaps it's time for you to do a whole-soul purge. It really is possible to remove the barriers to a true and lasting relationship with God, to scrub clean our doubts, to feel worthy of love, and to seek joy.

A life of order is a good and holy endeavor. Just be careful about responding to a challenge on Instagram. You may come armed with trash bags, magic solution and microfiber cloths, and walk away with a lighter heart, a happier home, and a joy-filled relationship with Christ.

Leading the Parish Community to Grow as Good Stewards

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

As stewardship leaders, we must keep the vision of stewardship in people's hearts and minds. We discern what to communicate, when and how, including invitations to deepen their commitment to Christ and to living and growing as stewards. Stewardship operates on two levels: individual and communal. While we as leaders focus much of our attention on communicating the stewardship



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message to parishioners on a very personal level, it is also necessary to be attentive to the ways in which the parish is living and growing as a faith community of grateful disciples.

Stewardship is ultimately about growing in gratitude and sharing our many blessings with others. As the United States bishops' pastoral letter on stewardship teaches: "Stewardship

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is an expression of discipleship, with the power to change how we understand and live out our lives." While stewardship formation encourages people to take stock of the ways in which they are living as disciples and stewarding their many gifts and blessings, we must also be attentive to how well the parish is stewarding resources. This personal and communal journey of discipleship lived out as stewards has the potential to transform hearts and minds, and to make lasting change



in the life of the parish, for the better. When referring to "the parish," it is important to recognize that the people are the parish! "The parish" often denotes the direction, strategies and practices that are incorporated into parish life, guided by parish leaders. "The parish" also refers to the entire faith community, and recognizes the tremendous impact this community has on the way in which each person lives and grows in faith.

For many of us, autumn is a time of renewal in mission, in which we look more closely at our current practices and consider new initiatives in order to lead our community to more faithfully live as disciples and grow as good stewards. This is why the annual ICSC conference is so important for many of us. It is a time to learn from one another, hear "what is working" for others, and be renewed in our commitment to stewardship leadership. What "is working" in your parish or diocesan stewardship process? What needs to change in order to more fully keep the vision of stewardship alive?

Thanks to ICSC Members! **Save the Date, Save the Cost!**

*for the International Catholic Stewardship Council's
58th Annual Conference!*

ANAHEIM, CALIFORNIA | September 27-30, 2020



Mission San Juan Capistrano
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Members Only Special Thanksgiving Rate
\$429

Take advantage of this special Thanksgiving offer,
register before November 30, 2019

Click here to register now

or call us at 800-352-3452 or email ICSC@catholicstewardship.org

Be a Good Steward of Thanksgiving Day

Your Thanksgiving Day can be more than just enjoying a great meal and turning on the television to search for the traditional parades and football games. How about expressing your stewardship of this day in a more meaningful way? Here are some suggestions for making Thanksgiving an opportunity for expressing our gratitude to the Lord in creative ways:



- Write "I'm thankful for you" cards and give them out or e-mail them on Thanksgiving (or mail them beforehand).
- Share your Thanksgiving meal with someone who is alone this Thanksgiving. Look for someone, such as a neighbor, co-worker, fellow parishioner, college student or armed services personnel who may be separated from family and ask them to join in your Thanksgiving dinner.
- Volunteer your time at a soup kitchen to help prepare and serve Thanksgiving dinners to others.



- Visit the sick. Check with hospitals, assisted living facilities or nursing homes in the area to see if there are volunteer opportunities to visit with patients or residents on that day.
- Practice ecumenism! Many parishes make Thanksgiving an opportune time to join in ecumenical services with other Christian worshipping communities, or inter-faith activities. Find one nearby and experience something new and enriching.
- Help someone if you can. Extend your generosity and blessings beyond your own family. Be part of an adopt-a-family effort, help



Go to Mass and count your blessings. Start the day off on a positive note and celebrate the Eucharist. In your prayer reflect on five things you are most grateful for in your life. Then reflect on how you can be an even better steward of these gifts.

distribute food baskets, or bring canned foods or clothing to St. Vincent de Paul centers.

- Take a walk. Find a place to enjoy God's gift of creation. Head out the door for a refreshing walk. Invite family, friends or others to share the experience too.



- Most important! Take advantage of the Thanksgiving holidays to focus on what you're grateful for and the things you appreciate about yourself and others. It is an ideal time to remember and to celebrate the many blessings in our lives.



A STEWARDSHIP MOMENT

Thirty-first Sunday in Ordinary Time Weekend of November 2/3, 2019

The Gospel story of Jesus' encounter with Zacchaeus makes for an ideal stewardship reflection. So does today's first reading from the Book of Wisdom. Good stewards have faith in, and give thanks for, an almighty and powerful God who transcends the universe, but who gives personal attention to every human being.

God loves his creation, his people. He lives in them, and through his Holy Spirit, instills a fundamental goodness in them. Good stewards recognize this movement of the Spirit as a gift, and make efforts to cultivate this gift and grow in their faith. Take time this week to stop and look around you, be aware of God's awe-inspiring creation, and give thanks for God's loving care and concern for each of us.

Thirty-second Sunday in Ordinary Time Weekend of November 9/10, 2019

In today's second reading we hear Saint Paul urging the members of the community at Thessalonica to direct their hearts to God's love through Christ. He wants them to be laser-focused on Christ, and nothing else. He desires that they be strengthened by the Lord and shielded from what is not Christ-like.

Good stewards cultivate a "laser-sharp" focus on Christ; not on things that could give them false or superficial images or ideals. Let's think about our own daily focus: Do we direct our hearts toward Christ or are there other "gods" that claim our attention? Our career? Material possessions? Sexuality? Favorite sports team? Political leanings? Does our daily life point to Christ so that those who are younger and less mature in their faith learn from our example?

Thirty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time Weekend of November 16/17, 2019

In today's Gospel Jesus suggests that his disciples must be prepared to suffer ridicule, persecution and perhaps even death if they are to follow him. Sometimes we may wonder if enduring ridicule and scorn are what we really signed up for when we received the sacraments of initiation. Would we not rather sneak through life as painlessly as possible? Good stewards take their faith seriously and find comfort in the closing words of today's Gospel: "You will be hated by all because of my name but not a hair on your head will be destroyed. By your perseverance you will secure your lives." Let us make it part of our daily prayer routine to ask the Holy Spirit for the courage to act in Jesus' name no matter the consequences.

Our Lord Jesus Christ King of the Universe Weekend of November 23/24, 2019

In today's Gospel we hear of the rulers who sneered at Jesus, the soldiers who jeered at him, the criminal who reviled him, and the people who just stood by. At our own parish church the cross stands high. Yet, every Sunday there are those who sit in front of it and are not moved by it. There are people who walk right by the cross, unmoved by it. Perhaps they've walked by it so many times they no longer give it a second thought. Could it be they are unmoved because the heart of this unbelieving thief is in them? Good stewards walk by the cross, notice it and ask themselves: "All this you did for me, what have I done for you?"