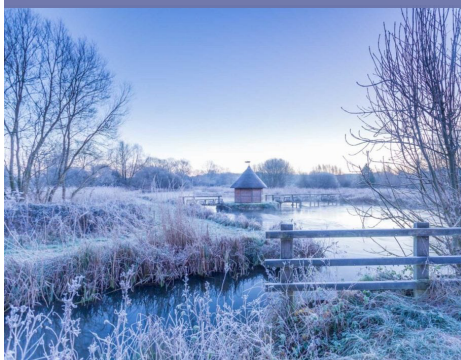


INTERNATIONAL CATHOLIC STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL

# CATHOLIC STEWARDSHIP

January 2020 • e-Bulletin

## A STEWARDSHIP PRAYER for the New Year



Lord of new life,

Thank you for the gift of a new year.  
You have entrusted us  
with the coming days,  
weeks and months as stewards  
of your divine plan;  
to live in gratitude, joy,  
and an ever growing confidence  
in your Kingdom to come.

We ask for the humility  
to reform our lives;  
the courage to commit ourselves  
to you no matter the cost;  
and the wisdom  
to shine the light of faith  
on others.

Open our hearts,  
give us your Spirit  
and show us how to  
share your love  
so that we may bring hope  
to a world in need of your  
justice and peace.

We pray to be a sign of your  
grace in this new year  
through your son, Jesus Christ,  
who lives and reigns with you  
and the Holy Spirit, one God,  
forever and ever.

Amen

## A Simple Word for the New Year: *Charity*

*Mary Ann Otto, Minister for Missionary Discipleship, St. Joseph  
and St. Mary Parishes, Appleton, Wisconsin*

Another year is upon us! Still in the context of our beautiful Christmas season, many of us will answer the questions: "What will be new in my growth as a follower of Jesus? What tangible changes of heart and habit will I strive for in 2020?" Perhaps we might even ask those questions as a parish community.

As Christian stewards, you and I could come up with some definite hopes and dreams for our personal and overall parish conversions, especially in light of the encouragement of Pope Francis in his Apostolic Exhortation: *The Joy of the Gospel*. In that document we are called over and over again to shine as the light and love of Jesus in the world.



Pope Paul VI also dealt with the demeanor of the faithful in his decree: *On the Mission Activity of the Church*. In this document, which also deals with evangelization, he writes:

*The presence of the Christian faithful in these human groups should be inspired by that charity with which God has loved us, and with which He still wills that we should love one another. (cf. 1 John 4-:11) Christian charity truly extends to all, without distinction of race, creed or social condition: it looks for neither gain nor gratitude. (#12)*

The word charity seems like such a simple term, but it generates a powerful outcome. It addresses all areas of the life of a Christian steward including time for our relationship with God, each other, the environment and human life. Charity asks us to consider our attitudes towards others, the use of our talents and of course our treasure. Saint Teresa of Calcutta was someone who placed the word within her heart and let it drive her life as a disciple of Jesus.

Perhaps you will make a list of New Year's resolutions for 2020. Perhaps you will set some simple goals as parish leaders this year. As you sit down to reflect, consider using the beautiful word charity as a guide and see how your resolutions might look different from prior years. Consider how it might help you imitate the life of Jesus more fully. Have a happy and charitable 2020!

## STEWARDSHIP SAINT *for January*



### **Saint John the Almsgiver**

Saint John the Almsgiver earned the title “almsgiver” because of his passion for social justice and his stewardship of the poor and oppressed. Born at Amathus, Cyprus, around 560, the son of the governor of Cyprus, he was wealthy and of noble lineage. His wife and children died before John reached the age of 50.

A devout Christian, John sought to live a life of simplicity and in the spirit of poverty despite his wealth. He used his riches and position to help the poor. Despite being a layman, the Church at Alexandria petitioned to have John appointed bishop. He was consecrated Patriarch of Alexandria in 610.

He pledged himself to practice “charity without limits” and placed several thousand needy persons under his personal, pastoral care. He always referred to the poor as his “lords and masters,” because of what he called “their mighty influence at the Court of the Most High.”

He divided the church treasury’s gold among hospitals and monasteries, and worked to establish an economic redistribution system whereby poor people received adequate money and means to support themselves. Refugees from neighboring territories were welcomed with open arms.

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### **A devout Christian, John sought to live a life of simplicity and in the spirit of poverty despite his wealth.**

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John was a reformer who established new hospitals and increased the number of churches in Alexandria from seven to seventy.

As bishop, John developed a reputation for kindness. Twice weekly, he made himself available to anyone, rich or destitute, who wished to speak with him. People lined up and waited patiently for their turn.

When asked about his passionate concern for the poor, it is said that John often recounted a youthful dream. In it, a beautiful young woman told him that she was “charity.” She told him: “I am the oldest daughter of the King. If you are devoted to me, I will lead you to Jesus. No one is as influential with him as I am. Remember, it was for me that he became a baby to redeem the world.” John used this story to persuade the rich to be generous.

When the Persians sacked Jerusalem in 614, John sent food and money to support the Christian refugees. Eventually, the Persians took over Alexandria, and John himself was forced to flee to his native Cyprus. John died peacefully on November 11, 619. His feast day is January 23.

## Embracing a Steward’s Mindset for the Coming Year

Christian stewards may very well interpret the greeting “Happy New Year” to mean: “I hope and pray for you a joyous year ahead in proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ!” If we are to interpret this cheery salutation in that way, should we not consider similar greetings throughout the year?



**“Happy New Day!”** In the lyrics of the popular gospel song “Oh, Happy Day!” we are reminded that Jesus taught us “... how to live rejoicing every day.” Be grateful for each of God’s amazing days.

**“Happy New Week!”** The motto of many is to Live for the Weekend. Why not live for the entire week? Let’s resolve to make a difference in our lives and the lives of others in our homes, offices and schools each week of the year.

**“Happy New Month!”** As we examine our monthly planners and budgets, we should ask ourselves: Have I left room for Jesus Christ this month? How can I be a good steward of God’s gifts in the coming month? What am I willing to do this month for the sake of the Gospel?

As we turn over 2019 to the history books, let’s approach 2020 with renewed vigor. Let us see the days, weeks and months for the God-given gifts they truly are: **“Happy New Year!”**



# A Stewardship Call to Action from Pope Francis

"Money must serve, not rule!" This is how Our Holy Father, Pope Francis, put the emphasis on one of seven major themes in his pastoral letter, *Evangelii Gaudium* (*The Joy of the Gospel*). The pontiff's letter, formally referred to as an "apostolic exhortation," devotes itself to the subject of the new evangelization, and shares ideas about how the church can reform itself in order to embrace a renewed sense of mission.



One of our Holy Father's urgent concerns is how the poor of the world are being treated.

One of our Holy Father's urgent concerns is how the poor of the world are being treated. In his letter he states emphatically that he loves everyone, both rich and poor, but that he is obliged in the name of Jesus Christ to remind everyone that the rich have a responsibility "... to help, respect and promote the poor" (par. 58).

Pope Francis is especially concerned about the growing global economic inequity and challenges world political and financial leaders to use our economic systems in a way that favors human beings:

*Just as the commandment "Thou shalt not kill" sets a clear limit in order to safeguard the value of human life, today we also have to say "thou shalt not" to an economy of exclusion and inequality. Such an economy kills. How can it be that it is not a news item when an elderly homeless person dies of exposure, but it is news when the stock market loses two points? (par. 52).*

The pope is insistent: God calls us to make a committed response to the poor in a way that transcends the logic of the marketplace.

In his Christmas message, Pope Francis urged us to "place ourselves at the service of the poor, make ourselves small and poor with them." He does not condemn capitalism, nor does he favor a Marxist view of economics. He is challenging each of us to follow Christ and be good stewards of his gospel message which includes loving God and neighbor, especially the poor, the prisoners, the sick, and the outcast; all whom Jesus makes reference to in his teaching on the final judgment of the nations in the Gospel of Matthew (25:31-46). It is a call to action Pope Francis urges upon us as we move into this New Year.

## Helping Your Parish Embrace Its Life of Stewardship in the New Year

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

Turning the page to a new year offers us the opportunity to review time that has passed and to look forward to newness of life and ministry in the year to come. As individuals, we recognize our many blessings, give thanks for God's merciful love, and re-commit ourselves to living as disciples and stewards, with resolutions to solidify our commitment to Christ and one another. In our dioceses and parishes, we can do the same: look back on the year that has just passed while looking toward the one to come. While the reflection itself may lead to enhanced pastoral life, a more focused



Gather your advisory group (committee, commission, task group) to reflect and discuss.

examination of past and current practice will be great fruit. I suggest we do so by using the phrase Curt Liesveld coined in directing people's reflection of and building upon their God-given talents: name it, claim it, aim it!

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**Name it:** In what ways has your parish or diocese helped people to understand the meaning and spiritual underpinnings of stewardship as a way of life? What annual rhythm of stewardship education, lay witnesses, homily connections, and invitation to commitment has been established? How do you help people to recognize stewardship as a disciple's response, by pointing their attention to Christ's way of self-giving love?

**Claim it:** List the practices you already have in place. Where is there room for growth? Are there aspects of your stewardship process that have become stale or have never quite taken hold? What might you learn from effective practices, yours or someone else's, in order to address these areas of potential growth?

**Aim it:** Gather your advisory group (committee, commission, task group) to reflect and discuss. Invite members to tell their stories of stewardship insight and challenges in living as a disciple and steward. Together, give thanks to God for what has been, and ask for guidance, insight, blessing and strength as you discern future possibilities; celebrate the year that has been; acknowledge the gaps or areas in need of attention; plan new or enhanced strategies for calling people to grow as good stewards in the year that is just beginning. Your diocese or parish will grow in response to God's grace and blessing, and you and all with whom you minister will grow as servant leaders, stewards of the mysteries of God.

## Special Advent/Christmas Member Savings!



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# “Celebrate Catholic Schools Week” – Stewarding the Church’s Educational Mission

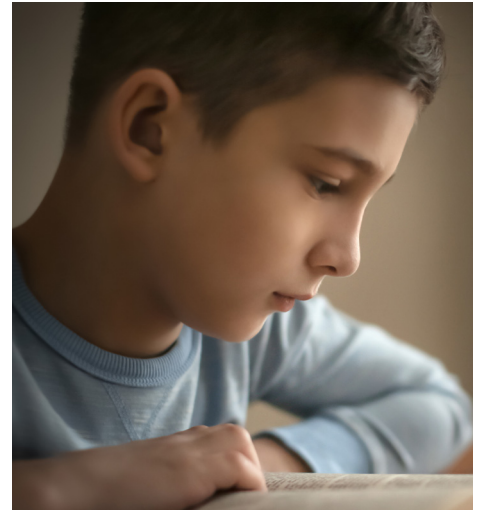
“Celebrate Catholic Schools Week” in the U.S. begins this year on Sunday, January 26, and ends February 1, 2020. The theme of this week of celebration and reflection is “Catholic Schools: Learn. Serve. Lead. Succeed.”

It would be impossible to overestimate the influence that Catholic schools have had on the Catholic faith, and indeed on all of civic society, in the U.S. Catholic schools have produced generations of leaders and nurtured the faith in ways incalculable.

north, Jesuits were educating Indian children, including our new American saint, Kateri Tekakwitha.

Women like Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton, who helped to found the Catholic school system in America, and Saint Katherine Drexel, who labored for the education of Black Americans, were among the thousands of religious women who gave their lives to “raise the standard” in Catholic education.

The influx of immigrants in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, coupled with a decidedly anti-



Today, 7,000 Catholic schools continue to serve the Church and nation, and produce America’s leaders and faithful Catholics.

When and where was the first U.S. Catholic school established? According to the National Catholic Education Association’s Web site, it’s hard to pinpoint, but clear that U.S. Catholic education has deep roots. The Franciscans opened a school in what is now St. Augustine, Florida, in 1606. Not too much later, and farther

Catholic bias present in some public schools of the time, propelled the enormous growth of Catholic schools in America’s great cities and small towns. Entire generations of U.S. Catholics are graduates of the Church’s school system.

Times have changed. Many dioceses face consolidations and



closures of schools; public schools have become inclusive, and the network of religious women who made Catholic schools so affordable has been largely replaced by a dedicated pool of lay men and women.

Yet, Catholic education continues to flourish and continually seeks new ways to enhance our Catholic faith through education. Today, 7,000 Catholic schools continue to serve the Church and nation, and produce America’s leaders and faithful Catholics.

As Catholic stewards, we are grateful for the gift to our Church and nation of Catholic schools, and we pledge our continued support and prayer.



## A STEWARDSHIP MOMENT

### **Solemnity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of God January 1, 2020**

The encounter between God and Moses in today's first reading is awe-inspiring. God bestows three blessings upon Moses and directs him to extend those blessings to others: The Lord blesses you and keeps you. The Lord lets his face shine upon you and be gracious to you. The Lord looks upon you kindly and gives you peace. Good stewards realize these blessings are showered upon them in a unique and special way each time they receive the Eucharist, and exercising good stewardship of the Lord's blessings in this sacrament begins by receiving these gifts with profound gratitude. Perhaps it would be a good idea this week to memorize these marvelous blessings and repeat them to yourself frequently. Make them part of your morning prayer each day.

### **Solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord Weekend of January 4/5, 2020**

"You have heard of the stewardship of God's grace..." This is how Saint Paul begins his letter to the members of the Church at Ephesus in today's second reading. He proclaims that he, and they, are stewards of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and therefore stewards of God's loving, unifying and inclusive grace. He also proclaims that the Holy Spirit is at work within each of them, if only they would be open to the Spirit. Today, our world races by with intolerance, violence, desperate poverty, fear and division. At the beginning of this New Year, perhaps it is appropriate to reflect on Saint Paul's words and ask ourselves how we can be good stewards of the gospel today. How will we allow the Holy Spirit to work within us? How can we be better stewards of Christ's justice and peace?

### **Feast of the Baptism of the Lord Weekend of January 11/12, 2020**

Saint Matthew's story of the baptism of Jesus is an appropriate scripture reading to reflect on our own baptism. Jesus' baptism has been understood as a symbol

of his death. Baptism is the sacrament by which we die to an old life of sin and enter a new life of grace. We "put on Christ." To be a good steward of one's baptism means to accept that one has new life in the risen Lord and is willing to be guided by the life of Jesus. As this year begins to unfold, reflect on the meaning of your own baptism, and how you might make an even deeper commitment to a new life in Christ Jesus.

### **Second Sunday in Ordinary Time Weekend of January 18/19, 2020**

In today's Gospel, John the Baptist shows us how what we do and say reveals to others what we really believe. He has a clear sense of who he is and who he is not, and by his life's work he gives testimony to God's active presence in people's lives. He challenges us to examine how our actions reveal our attitudes, testify to our beliefs and show how those beliefs reveal our true selves to others. Good stewards of their faith are aware of the sort of God they reveal to the world by their words and actions. Do our acts witness to a God who takes away that which alienates people from God and each other? Do our actions truly reveal God's presence in the world today?

### **Third Sunday in Ordinary Time Weekend of January 25/26, 2020**

In today's Gospel Jesus begins his ministry of healing, proclaims the kingdom of God and calls his first disciples, Simon and Andrew, and then the sons of Zebedee, James and John. Those first disciples might have preferred to keep their jobs, remain with their families and stay with the life they knew. Remarkably, though, all four of these people, just as they are, follow after this stranger who interrupts their daily routine. When they see Jesus and hear his words to them, they make a different choice. They take a risk, step out in faith, leave behind that which is comfortable and secure. They choose to follow Jesus. How far are we willing to go to leave the comfort and security of the life we know to follow Jesus?