



INTERNATIONAL CATHOLIC STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL CATHOLIC STEWARDSHIP

February 2020 • e-Bulletin

A STEWARDSHIP PRAYER for February



Heavenly Father,

You made the light
to shine out of darkness,
a light that reveals the goodness
of all you have created.

Your Son tells us
we are the light of the world.
It is a dark world in desperate need
of your infinite love and mercy.

Help us to be good stewards
of the light you shine in our hearts
so that through this precious gift,
we too may reveal your handiwork.

And by the power of Your Spirit,
show us how to shine
our light before others,
that they may see our good deeds
and glorify you.

We pray this in the name of
Christ Jesus,
your Son, who lives and reigns
with You
and the Holy Spirit,
one God, forever and ever.

Amen.

Stewardship: Living the Beatitudes

Three weekends in our February liturgical calendar will turn our attention to Jesus' teachings in the Gospel of Matthew explaining what is to be expected of those who choose to follow him. This is the familiar Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5:1 – 7:29), the most quoted part of the Bible. Jesus' sermon begins with messages of comfort, the Beatitudes (Matt. 5:3-12).



*Blessed are the poor in spirit,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

*Blessed are they who mourn,
for they will be comforted.*

*Blessed are the meek,
for they will inherit the land.*

*Blessed are they who hunger and thirst
for righteousness, for they will
be satisfied.*

*Blessed are the merciful,
for they will be shown mercy.*

*Blessed are the clean of heart,
for they will see God.*

*Blessed are the peacemakers,
for they will be called children of God.*

*Blessed are they who are persecuted
for the sake of righteousness,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

*Blessed are you when they insult you
and persecute you and utter
every kind of evil against you
(falsely) because of me.*

*Rejoice and be glad, for your reward
will be great in heaven.*

The word "Beatitude" refers to a state of deep happiness or joy. But these sayings are paradoxes. They turn our normal expectations upside down. Jesus is bringing us a new law, new expectations on how to live. He is bringing forth the Kingdom of God. As the United States bishops write in their pastoral letter, "Jesus does not waste time proposing lofty but unrealistic ideals; he tells his followers how they are expected to live. The Beatitudes and the rest of the Sermon on the Mount prescribe the lifestyle of a Christian disciple."

Each of these "blesseds" is a statement about an important aspect in how we exercise stewardship of our lives. Each of them offers us an ideal of how to live and how we find God living within us. Learn the Beatitudes, memorize them, make them part of your daily prayer life, and ask the Lord for the wisdom and strength to follow this stewardship way of life, a path that follows in the footsteps of Jesus.

STEWARDSHIP SAINT *for February*



Josephine Bakhita

Born in western Sudan in 1869, our February stewardship saint recalled having a loving family and happy childhood. At age seven, however, she was abducted by Arab slave traders; the trauma and sheer anguish of which caused her to forget her own name. A slaver sarcastically named her Bakhita, Arabic for lucky. For the next eight years, Bakhita would be sold and resold in African slave markets. She experienced the cruelties, humiliations and sufferings of slavery, including severe emotional abuse, beatings and indescribable mutilations.

In 1883, at age 14, Bakhita was sold to an Italian consul, who treated her with much kindness. She was gifted to an Italian couple in 1885 who took her to their villa outside Venice where she would become nanny to their infant daughter.

Needing to leave the country on business for a several weeks in late 1888, the couple entrusted their daughter and Bakhita to the care of a Venetian convent of the Canossian Daughters of Charity. But when time came for the pair to be collected, Bakhita refused to leave. To protect her, the religious superior complained to local authorities.

An Italian court ruled that because Sudan had outlawed slavery even before Bakhita's birth and because in any case Italian law did not recognize slavery, Bakhita had never legally been a slave, could not be considered property, and having reached majority age, could make her own decisions. Bakhita chose to remain with the religious community.

In 1890, Bakhita received the sacraments of Christian initiation, and embraced the name Josephine. She was eventually admitted into the Canossian community and in 1902, Sister Josephine was assigned to the convent in Schio, a town in the Italian Alps.

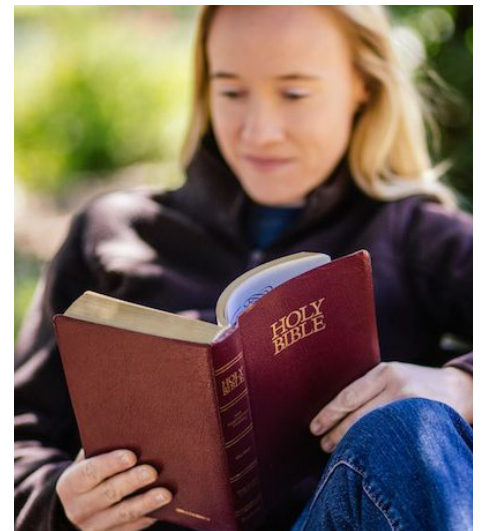
For the rest of her life, Sister Josephine happily served the community in Schio as sacristan, cook, and portress, the community member appointed to interact with the public and provide hospitality to guests. Besides her humble and faithful stewardship of daily prayer and service, Sister Josephine helped prepare other members for missionary work in Africa. Her gentleness, calming voice, and ever-present smile caught others' attention. She was encouraged by her community to tell her story, and in 1931, its publication made her well known throughout Italy.

Her life in Schio continued uninterrupted through two world wars. When air-raid sirens sent others scurrying for cover during World War II, Sister Josephine, unfazed, would continue her cooking or sweeping. Many believed their town escaped serious damage because of her saintliness and felt protected by her mere presence.

Sister Josephine died on February 8, 1947. Since then, many have sought her prayerful intercession, especially those who experience any form of slavery, and those who need to find peace, forgiveness and reconciliation in their lives. She was canonized a saint in 2000 by Saint John Paul II. Her feast day is February 8.

Stewardship of God's Word: Reading the Bible

February is a transitional month, especially in 2020 with its 26th day as Ash Wednesday, the beginning of the season of Lent. Many of us also begin to hope that spring will be around the next corner. The first seed catalog we find in the mail reminds us this must be true, yet we know it's not time to turn the soil. We wait in the quiet of late winter.



Find some quiet time. Pick up your Bible. And use God's gift of these quiet February days to deepen your knowledge of Christ through sacred scripture.

What better time than February, before Lent and the advent of spring, to settle in for some reading and praying with sacred scripture? February can be a quiet time of patient reflection for the Christian steward. The psalms, like so many biblical passages, remind us of the benefits of reading God's word: "Your word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path" (Ps 119:105).

Our liturgical year offers us a wonderful pathway to the Bible by

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Reconnect old friends, and pair newcomers with returnees. It is awkward when it seems to newcomers that everyone else knows each other. While encouraging old friends to reconnect, be intentional about the ways new participants are integrated into the experience.

As the young adults serve side-by-side, they get to know each other. They talk, and break open their experiences, and by the time they get home, they have become friends.

Invite testimonials. Those who have had powerful experiences of service are the best ambassadors for future participants. Testimonials at the end of Mass and in the bulletin or newsletters speak to the many ways people are touched, from the friendships they made to the ways in which serving leads them to a deeper living faith in Jesus Christ.



Focusing on the Victims of Human Trafficking



“All of us can and must work together to denounce the cases of exploitation and slavery of men, women, and children”.
~Pope Francis

February 8 is designated World Day of Prayer and Awareness against Human Trafficking. The day is intended to raise awareness and encourage reflection on the violence and injustice that impact victims of human trafficking. February 8 was selected because it is the day commemorating Saint Josephine Bakhita, who herself was sold into slavery as a young girl and whose powerful testimonies raised awareness of human trafficking around the world.

Human trafficking exists in the United States and throughout the world. People are conscripted to work in factories, on farms and as domestic help, and a particularly egregious form of trafficking involves the sex trade. According to Covenant

House, the nonprofit agency which serves runaway and homeless youth, sex trafficking in the United States ensnares over 100,000 youth yearly. Traffickers frequent malls, middle schools and high schools, theaters and bus transit centers looking for vulnerable youngsters. Covenant House also maintains that a girl who has taken to the streets is likely to be approached within 45 minutes. Traffickers create a cycle of dependency and coercion from which it is extremely hard to escape.

Millions throughout the world are subjected to modern forms of slavery, and this subjugation can occur in neighborhoods close to us. It happens wherever the homeless, the mentally ill, the runaways, and the poor are

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neglected. It happens to those who answer ads for employment in faraway places and may not understand what they are getting into. It happens in our cities and small towns.



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Pope Francis drew attention to the “plague” of human trafficking, and called on government leaders to confront the causes of the trade in human beings. We are asked to support legislation to strengthen anti-trafficking measures, support the efforts of those who take care of street kids and to be alert to situations around us. The pontiff has insisted that all our efforts to stop human trafficking should begin with prayer, “Prayer is the force that sustains our common commitment” to ending trafficking.

Recalling last year’s World Day of Prayer and Awareness against Human Trafficking, the Holy Father said that February 8 is a day that invites us to join forces to overcome this challenge. “All of us,” he said, “can and must work together to denounce the cases of exploitation and slavery of men, women, and children”.



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A STEWARDSHIP MOMENT

Feast of the Presentation of the Lord Weekend of February 1/2, 2020

In today's first reading the prophet Malachi compares our need for conversion with the refinement of gold and silver. To purify these precious metals, gold and silversmiths subjected their ores to extreme heat. As the metals reached temperatures as high as 2,000 degrees Fahrenheit, impurities began to melt away and only the precious metal in its purest form remained. When these ancient refiners saw their reflections in the metal, they knew the gold or silver was ready; that it was pure. Good stewards know they, too, are full of impurities, and the only way God will see his image in them is when they allow themselves to undergo constant refinement; to accept ongoing conversion to take place in their lives. Do we take active steps to improve and refine our lives? Do we allow Christ to help us rid ourselves of our impurities?

Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time Weekend of February 8/9, 2020

In this weekend's readings and psalm, the prevailing theme is that of light: We are the light of the world; our light breaks forth like the dawn; our light shines in the darkness; our light reflects generosity and justice. Good stewards know they are the lamp, and Christ is the flame that, through them, illuminates the earth. They know that they carry Christ's light in their hearts, and let it shine through

their words and deeds. What are we doing to shine Christ's light on the hungry, the homeless and others most in need of God's mercy? How do we exercise good stewardship over the light of Christ that burns within each of us?

Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time Weekend of February 15/16, 2020

In today's Gospel, part of his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus does not speak of replacing the law of the Old Testament. He goes beyond it. He obliges his followers to work at being holier than even the strictest of Pharisees. But the work is not accomplished by following a religious "law", it requires growing in love for other human beings. Followers of Jesus know they are required to be good stewards of others. In what way will you exercise good stewardship over other people this week?

Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time Weekend of February 22/23, 2020

In another passage from his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus continues to turn his disciples' way of thinking upside-down. One of the lessons for the Christian steward in today's Gospel is that if we have a chance to help someone in need, we should be generous and give more than is expected of us. Jesus went "the extra mile" for us. Can we be more like Jesus and "go the extra mile" for others?