



INTERNATIONAL CATHOLIC STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL CATHOLIC STEWARDSHIP

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A STEWARDSHIP PRAYER *in a Time of Crisis*

God of love and mercy,
we are living under the cross of your Son
in an unexpected and unwelcome way.
We feel the gripping power of fear,
anxiety, powerlessness and dread.
We face the cross with a fearful heart.

Send your Spirit down upon us
to give us wisdom and courage,
to console us
and give us peace.

One with you and your Son,
the Spirit is the giver of life
who can guide us through the storms
and comfort us in our pain and
discouragement.

Through your Spirit, transform our
weakness into strength
and breathe confidence into us,
so that our stewardship of the Gospel
will give us a new boldness to
proclaim the hope of your cross
and the joy of Easter morning.

We pray this in Jesus' name.
Amen.

Walking Alongside Jesus with Courage and Hope

On Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion, we are at the entrance to Holy Week. We've made a Lenten journey and now stand with Jesus before the gates of Jerusalem. We know that once we enter through those gates we shall be swept up in events that we cannot control and that will bring us to the very edge of what we can bear, as we walk with Jesus to Calvary and the tomb.



The gates to the city of Jerusalem are open. Jesus does not steer us away from the gates and send us back into the silence of the desert.

Our Lenten journey with COVID-19 (Coronavirus) has become an unusual one indeed. We have walked into the valley of the surreal. The new pandemic has left most members of our society feeling afraid, anxious, isolated and alone. In an increasingly tension-filled society, the Coronavirus could rapidly mutate into an epidemic of despair.

But Christian stewards are strengthened by their faith, courage and hope as they have for centuries in times of pandemic. It is precisely at times like these that their stewardship of faith and love of neighbor make the Gospel of Jesus Christ real and not just a mere sentiment. More than ever, their lives of faith give them the courage to live with an open heart even at the center of seemingly unbearable tension.

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Holy Week teaches us that God is able to transform everything about us, especially our fears and anxieties, our unfaithfulness and sinfulness. But to be open to that transformation in our lives requires some radical changes in our hearts, so much so that we might be stunned and frightened at the thought. It requires the will to endure some dying to self.

Let us start with our stewardship of prayer: Prayer is the great mediating force that gives us hope. Jesus instructed his disciples to pray always and not lose heart. Let us make a commitment to prayer as we have never done before, with great trust that our prayer has real power. Stewardship of health: Let us embrace a new health regimen that includes obsessively maintaining a scrupulous hygienic

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routine so that we may take better care of ourselves and avoid infecting others. Stewardship of our neighbor: Let us follow Jesus' injunction to love our neighbor as ourselves. Let us remember to check in on our neighbors and older family members and help where we may. And let us ultimately be ready and willing to sacrifice for others without counting the cost to ourselves.

The gates to the city of Jerusalem are open. Jesus does not steer us away from the gates and send us back into the silence of the desert. He keeps us close to him as we stand at the entrance. He bids us peace and assures us that he will always be with us if we will only listen. With the help of God's grace, let us embrace stewardship more fully and find the strength to enter into the great city with Jesus, to walk with him to his cross and his resurrection with courage and hope.

STEWARDSHIP SAINT *for April*

Blessed James Oldo (Giacomo Oldo): Good Steward of his neighbors during a Pandemic



Giacomo Oldo was born in 1364 to a prosperous family in Lodi, Italy near Milan. His father died while he was young, leaving him a legacy that made him a wealthy man. Giacomo was married at a young age to Caterina Bocconi, and they had three children. The young couple enjoyed a life of extravagance and luxury.

In the late 14th century, when the Black Death pandemic of 1347 re-emerged in northern Italy, Giacomo, like many other wealthy citizens of Lombardy, took Caterina, his mother and three children and secluded

them in one of their country houses to escape the disease. Despite their precautions, however, two of his daughters died from the plague.

Giacomo's grief was deep, but it was not until he attended the funeral of a close friend who died from the pandemic that he experienced a profound radical conversion to Jesus Christ. He became a Secular Franciscan and began using one of his houses as a hospital where he took care of the sick and provided for the poor in his region of Lombardy. Caterina was initially opposed to his work, as was his mother. But after seeing his devotion and tireless efforts on behalf of the sick, they eventually joined him in caring for the afflicted. Caterina became a Secular Franciscan herself.

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In 1397 Caterina passed away, and soon thereafter, Giacomo was ordained a priest by the bishop of Lodi. His house was transformed into a chapel where small groups of people, many of them fellow Secular Franciscans, came for prayer and support. He became a celebrated preacher, and was known to have inspired many to enter consecrated religious life.

Giacomo died in 1404 at the age of 40 after contracting a disease from one of his patients. He was buried at the church of Saint Julian, the construction of which he and Caterina had financed. In the 18th century, his body was finally interred at the cathedral in Lodi. Giacomo was beatified by Pope Pius XI in 1933.



Lenten reflections and prayers, one for each day of the remaining weeks in Lent

By Teresa Keogh, Advisor for Stewardship, Archdiocese of Southwark, England

1. We hold in our hearts the sorrow of those who have lost loved ones to the Coronavirus. May those who have died now rest in the presence of the Lord who suffered with them.
2. We pray for those who are feeling ill at this time and those who are caring for them. May the Lord show them his healing love and give them peace.
3. We pray for those who are using their skills in caring for those who are ill and frail. May the Lord strengthen them and give them confidence that they are doing his work in the healing of bodies, souls and spirits.
4. We place ourselves with Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane. We will watch and pray, knowing that he is with us in our uncertainty and fear. May we hear in our hearts the words from the Prophet Isaiah: 'Do not fear, for I am with you, do not be afraid, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you'.
5. We pray for those whose working lives will change as a result of the Coronavirus crisis. We pray that those who lose their jobs will find work which will fulfill their hopes and enable them to live with dignity. We pray for fairness and justice in the workplace.
6. We pray for those who lead us in government at this time. We pray for wisdom and discernment that they will do their utmost to serve their people faithfully and without self-interest.
7. We pray too for the scientists and the medical experts who are leading the response to the present crisis. May they share their knowledge and expertise with humility and integrity.

We are Easter People!

No matter what we have endured the past few weeks, let us remember that we are an Easter people. The joy of Easter is celebrated not only during the liturgical season we call Easter. It is celebrated every day of the year. The Mass is the Paschal Mystery, and every time it is celebrated, we participate in the sacrifice, death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. As St. Paul teaches, we die with Christ and rise with Him in the Holy Spirit. We are transformed into new creations. We are renewed.



Stewards of God's abundant gifts hold dear the promise of renewal and pledge themselves to the work of reconciliation, healing and proclamation of the risen Lord no matter what the cost is to themselves. For Christian stewards, each day is a new dawn for living in the light of Christ. There is much about dying and rising with Christ that we do not know; much about the Paschal Mystery we do not understand. But stewards of God's love are always open to learning more; to being called out of their fears and anxieties and into the light of faith which comes with an ever-deeper understanding of its peace and joy.

Easter is a good time to reflect on how we can rise above tensions and troubles and experience the joy of Christ's peace. It is also a time to ask ourselves how we can experience the gift of Easter each day of our lives.

Stewards of Ourselves and Our Neighbors

During these unsettling times, there can be a temptation to focus only on ourselves and our immediate loved ones to get through the current crisis. Depending on our situations, we may not have the ability or resources to do more. But for those of us who do have the ability to support others, especially the most vulnerable people in our neighborhood, parish or broader community, it's a crucial time to help them. Let's not write off the vulnerable among us. Let us reach out to them.

The National Council on Aging has offered some basic tips for helping more vulnerable people during this time. Below is an excerpt from the Council's website:

1. Health first!

The most important first step is to protect yourself.

- Stay informed—follow the latest recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and your local health departments.



- If you are in a high-risk group, if you are feeling sick, if you are self-isolating, or if you have tested positive—there are different steps you must take to protect yourself and your loved ones. Start by talking to your doctor.
- Avoid unnecessary public activities, crowds, and public transportation. Postpone non-emergency doctor appointments.

2. Practice *physical distancing* and *social connecting*

Staying at home doesn't mean we can't stay connected in other ways.



Let's not write off the vulnerable among us.
Let us reach out to them.

- Maintain a safe distance from other people—at least 3 feet, preferably 6 feet.
- Make sure to stay socially connected. Walk around your neighborhood, go out in nature, talk to friends—but keep a safe distance.
- Pick up the telephone or use Zoom, Skype, or FaceTime. The good news is many people will be home, so it can be easier to reach them.
- Use email, texts, and social media to stay connected with friends, family, and your community.

3. Reach out and educate

Be a source of accurate, trusted information for your family, friends, and neighbors.

- Don't assume that everyone knows what you know about how to protect themselves and others. Make sure they are taking proper precautions.
- Urge the younger people in your life to take this seriously.
- Reach out especially to isolated older adults you know. Check in on them. Let them know you care. See if they need help and, if they do, help them figure out how to get it.

4. Be proactive about your health

It's very important to do what you can to keep your physical health and mental well-being strong.

- Boost your immune system with exercise. Go outside in the sunshine, hydrate, eat a balanced and nutritious diet, make sure you have enough medications for at least a month.
- Do what you can to reduce stress and anxiety—don't give into fear. Now is the time to stay calm and live realistically.

5. Ask for help if you need it

You are not alone. We are all in this together.

- If you need help getting food or other essential goods and services, let people know. Don't be afraid to ask a neighbor, friend, or family member for a helping hand.
- If you're having trouble paying your bills, visit our free [BenefitsCheckUp](#) to see if you qualify for public and private benefits programs to help pay for food, medicine, and more.

We will get through this if we all support each other.



A Steward's Way of the Cross

Why a "Steward's Way of the Cross"? Stewardship is all about receiving God's gifts gratefully and sharing them generously. But to be good stewards, we have to understand first that we have been blessed – that all we have are the gifts of our good and loving God. Only then can we make our use of those gifts an act of Thanksgiving to the God who gave them.

Our greatest single gift from God is Jesus, his life and ministry, his death on the cross and his resurrection for our salvation. It is appropriate to look at the gift of the Lord's passion, death and resurrection through the lens of stewardship; to reflect on the Stations of the Cross and consider what gifts are being given and received in each one so that we are able to receive and rejoice more fully in the gift of God in Christ.

Good and loving Father,

*we bring you praise and
thanksgiving for the gift of your
beloved Son, our Savior.*

*As we walk this way of the cross,
devoutly recalling his passion and
death, send your Spirit to open
our eyes to your gifts of grace
that we may do this and all things
in union with Christ.*

Amen.

I. Jesus is condemned to death

"Why? What evil has he done?"

The gift of this first station is **innocence**. Pilate offers Jesus up for crucifixion. Jesus says nothing, but is in fact innocent of the crimes of which he is accused. An ancient Eucharistic prayer says "Jesus, your Son, innocent and without sin, gave himself into our hands and was nailed to a cross." Through that selfless act, through his death and resurrection, we are saved.

**Save us, Savior of the world, for by
your cross and resurrection,
You have set us free.**

II. Jesus carries his cross

*...carrying the cross himself, he
went out to what is called the
Place of the Skull*

We see in this station the gift of **acceptance**. Following Jesus may

mean accepting burdens of one kind or another, and those burdens are also a gift. Saying "Yes" to the Lord means accepting the joys and sorrows that discipleship brings.

**Save us, Savior of the world, for by
your cross and resurrection,
You have set us free.**

III. Jesus falls the first time

*He himself was tested through
what he suffered...*

The gift of this station is **fortitude**. The way of the cross is long and painful, and under the weight of the cross, Jesus stumbles and falls. But he gets up and begins again – and so must we when adversity brings us to our knees, confident that our Lord is with us in our troubles.

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your cross and resurrection,
You have set us free.**

IV. Jesus meets his mother

*... he said to his mother, "Woman,
behold, your son."*

There are many gifts here – the gift of relationships, the gift of Mary to John and in that way, to the whole Church – but the most important gift of this station is **compassion**. In her anguish, Mary came out to be present to her son, and even in the pain and cruelty of the crucifixion, Jesus made sure his mother would be loved and cared for.

**Save us, Savior of the world, for by
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You have set us free.**

V. Simon helps Jesus carry his cross

*...this man they pressed into
service to carry his cross.*

The gift of this station is **service**. Big, strong, and available, Simon of Cyrene was a steward in spite of himself, putting those gifts to use in



the service of the Lord. We have gifts to share, too, and we share them best when we are “bearing one another’s burdens,” engaged in the loving service of our neighbor.

Save us, Savior of the world, for by your cross and resurrection, You have set us free.

VI. Veronica wipes the face of Jesus

“...whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.”

Loving kindness is the gift of this station. Heedless of the danger to herself in a crowd of angry men, Veronica presses forward to wipe the sweat-stained face of Jesus, her love for Him overcoming her fear. In this small, loving act, we see that no gift of ours is too small or too insignificant to be offered. It is good stewardship to “do small things with great love.”

Save us, Savior of the world, for by your cross and resurrection, You have set us free.

VII. Jesus falls the second time

...it was our pain that he bore, our sufferings he endured.

The gift here is **endurance**. Jesus falls a second time, but struggles to his feet and continues. In the Garden, He had prayed to be spared this, but rose from prayer strengthened to do the Father’s will, not his own. Following Jesus is the work of a lifetime, and to fall is not to fail. With the strength of the one who bore our burdens, we

can begin again and persevere on our Christian journey.

Save us, Savior of the world, for by your cross and resurrection, You have set us free.

VIII. Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem

These women had followed him when he was in Galilee...

These women who had faithfully followed Jesus during his ministry were drawn by their love for him into this scene of unimaginable horror. They brought emotional gifts of sympathy and concern. And, like women of every age, just by being there, they also brought the gift of **presence** to the one whose suffering they were not otherwise able to ease.

Save us, Savior of the world, for by your cross and resurrection, You have set us free.

IX. Jesus falls the third time

By his wounds we have been healed.

The gift of this station is **selflessness**. A man for others, Jesus teaches us to bear one another’s burdens, to set aside self interest and use our gifts to help the poor, the suffering, and the forgotten. Worn and weak, He summons his remaining strength to do for us what we cannot do for ourselves. Good stewards must follow His example.

Save us, Savior of the world, for by your cross and resurrection, You have set us free.

X. Jesus is stripped of his garments

“They divided my garments among them...”

Here we see true **humility**. Stripped naked on that first Good Friday, Jesus invites us to strip away the non-essentials in our lives and focus on what really matters. Good stewards know that they have nothing – even their very life is a gift – that has not come as a gift from God. And humbly acknowledging that fact, they then use their gifts for others, in thanksgiving.

Save us, Savior of the world, for by your cross and resurrection, You have set us free.

XI. Jesus is nailed to the cross

“Father, forgive them, they know not what they do.”

Forgiveness – even for his tormentors – is the gift of this station. Discipleship is not an easy road. “If you wish to come after me,” Jesus said, “you must deny yourself and take up your cross daily and follow me. For if you wish to save your life you will lose it, but if you lose your life for my sake you will save it.” And here’s the hard part... If we are truly following Jesus, we must forgive from the heart all who have hurt us in any way.

Save us, Savior of the world, for by your cross and resurrection, You have set us free.



XII. Jesus dies on the cross

"Father, into your hands I commend my spirit"

Here we see the ultimate gift – the total **self sacrifice** of Jesus. Jesus who has always given himself to the will of the Father, now gives his life as well. "There is no greater love than this, than to lay down one's life for a friend," he had told his disciples. Here on the cross as he breathes his last, he shows the depth of his love for them – and for us.

**Save us, Savior of the world, for by your cross and resurrection,
You have set us free.**

XIII. The body of Jesus is taken down from the cross

Joseph of Arimathea... came and took his body.

A tentative disciple at first, Joseph of Arimathea now braves the wrath of the authorities and asks for the body of Jesus. The gift we see in him is **faithfulness**. Once having committed to follow Jesus, he was faithful to the end, giving this last act of love and service. Good stewards are like that – always and everywhere saying "Yes" to the will of God, even when it's difficult or dangerous.

**Save us, Savior of the world, for by your cross and resurrection,
You have set us free.**

XIV. The body of Jesus is laid in the tomb

Joseph wrapped it in clean linen and laid it in his new tomb

The gift of this station is **generosity**. Joseph of Arimathea gives his own new tomb to Jesus. What a bittersweet joy he must have felt to be able to give this one last gift to the Lord. But the truth is, whenever we give generously of the gifts God has so bountifully given to us – to anyone -- we give them to the Lord. It is the duty and the blessing of good stewards to give freely, as we have freely received.

**Save us, Savior of the world, for by your cross and resurrection,
You have set us free.**



A STEWARDSHIP MOMENT

Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion Weekend of April 4/5, 2020

We are at the doorsteps of Holy Week where we stand with Jesus. The sacred scriptures reveal how Jesus has humbled himself and let go of everything, emptying himself for us. How have we joined him during this time of tension and disquiet? Have our prayers, much altered daily life, penitential practices and almsgiving moved us to humble ourselves before the Lord? Have we been able to let go of our daily preoccupations to make the ways of Christ Jesus our first priority? As disciples of the Lord and stewards of His gift of faith, it is time to evaluate our lives under his cross.

The Resurrection of the Lord – Easter Vigil April 11, 2020

In tonight's reading from Saint Paul's letter to the Romans, we are reminded that we are alive in Christ. And it is not merely once a year that we remember what Jesus did to give us this new life, forgiveness and peace. Every day good stewards remember their baptism. They remember that they are united with Jesus in his death; that daily they drown the old sinful nature, and that daily they rise to their new life in Christ. Let us be mindful every day, especially when we are troubled by life, gripped by fear or tempted by sin, that our lives are no longer about us, but about Christ's active, loving presence within us. That is our baptism. Alleluia! He is risen!

The Resurrection of the Lord – Easter Sunday April 12, 2020

The reading from the Acts of the Apostles reminds us that we, too, bear witness to the risen Lord. The presence of Christ is within us, making us new, transforming us, turning us into stewards of the Good News. There is no more time for holding grudges, disliking others, seeking vengeance, maintaining old prejudices, tolerating bias.

We are Christ's joy and instruments of his peace. Our world is reordered. Reflect on how we are called to let Christ's forgiveness, reconciliation and love permeate our lives. We are Easter people. Rejoice! He is risen! Alleluia!

Second Sunday of Easter/Divine Mercy Sunday Weekend of April 18/19, 2020

In today's first reading, the four activities of the earliest church are introduced to us as priorities of the church: devotion to the teachings of the apostles, communal fellowship, the Eucharist and prayer. The early members of the church saw themselves as devoted stewards of these activities. These were not options. They were the fruits of a genuine conversion to a life in Christ. Sharing in the Eucharist was the most intimate expression of fellowship, while the most common expression of fellowship in the New Testament was that of sharing financial resources – giving. It was not a perfect community, but one that offered evidence of God's active presence in its midst. This early community offers us an excellent example of how to better exercise stewardship in our own parish families.

Third Sunday of Easter Weekend of April 25/26, 2020

As today's Gospel reveals, the first meal shared with the risen Lord happened in a place called Emmaus. Perhaps there is no better time to reflect on this story than in those prayerful moments at Mass when we return to our place after receiving Holy Communion. Those few moments give us an opportunity to reflect on our stewardship of Christ's presence within us. We have a chance to practice hospitality by inviting Jesus into our hearts to walk and talk with us about our own Emmaus journey. We can relive once again the time when he broke bread for the disciples. And just as they did, we too can recognize Christ in this meal made to be shared with others.