

INTERNATIONAL CATHOLIC STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL CATHOLIC STEWARDSHIP

September 2020 • e-Bulletin

A STEWARDSHIP PRAYER for September

Heavenly Father,

Even during this time of pandemic, September is a month that offers hope for things to come: our daily life has a new rhythm, there are new beginnings and a new energy.

In this month of accelerating activities, keep us mindful that we live for Christ and not for ourselves, and that to be good stewards of his Gospel should be our goal each and every day.

In this month of transition help us find a deeper spiritual balance in our lives that takes time for you and listens to the promptings of your Spirit.

And in a time when we are discouraged from physically embracing one another, help us find ways to manifest your loving embrace to our neighbors.

We ask this through your Son, Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.

ENCOUNTER!

Meeting Jesus on Higher Ground.



Is it possible to grow spiritually in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic? The simple answer is yes. But, our rhythms of prayer, what we're praying for, how we lift up our neighbors and how we live the Gospel will need to be transformed. Come and experience the practical ways we can deepen our relationship with Jesus during these disquieting times by joining us for the 2020 Virtual Stewardship Conference hosted by the International Catholic Stewardship Council (ICSC).

The Sermon on the Mount calls everyone in the Church to be open to meeting Jesus on "higher ground" and to learn how to be better stewards of his Gospel.

The theme of this year's ICSC virtual conference is "ENCOUNTER! Meeting Jesus on Higher Ground." This year's conference image is the colorful, inspirational painting of the *Sermon on the Mount* by Fra Angelico. In a time when the world seems to have turned upside down because of the pandemic, perhaps it is an appropriate time to experience a new encounter with the Lord through the Gospel of Matthew. Reading and reflecting more prayerfully on the apostle's account of the Sermon on the Mount can lead us, as Saint Augustine maintained, to a more perfect Christian life.

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There is nothing like the teachings in Jesus' Sermon anywhere else in the New Testament. In the Sermon, Jesus walks up the mountain, takes his listeners to "higher ground" and turns the values of his day upside down. He urges his listeners to realize that God is a God of perfect love and that love should be the center of all thoughts

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and actions. Indeed, the love of Christ and each other is fundamental to the good steward's understanding of what it means to put the Eucharist into action.

We know Jesus' teachings in the Sermon make hard demands on us. Few of us can fulfill these demands of love unless we allow the risen Lord to fulfill them within our hearts. But a fundamental stewardship question is this: can we allow Jesus to enter? Saint Paul maintained that it is very difficult to have the same attitude as Christ Jesus when dealing with others (see Phil. 2:5-7). But disciples know that working at opening their hearts to the Lord and praying for an ongoing conversion of their attitudes is necessary in order that we may allow the Lord to enter and transform us.

The Sermon on the Mount calls everyone in the Church to be open to meeting Jesus on "higher ground" and to learn how to be better stewards of his Gospel. It is worth our time to read the Sermon prayerfully and to experience a meaningful encounter with Jesus while doing so. Join us for ICSC's 58th annual conference and seize the opportunity to engage others who are seeking the same encounter and can help us be better stewards and followers of Christ Jesus.

STEWARDSHIP SAINT *for September*

Saint Teresa of Calcutta gave us an extraordinary example of Christian discipleship and stewardship by her faith, simplicity and service to women and men without considering their race, religion or nationality. She was born Agnes Bojaxhiu in Albania on August 26, 1910, and at age 18 went to Ireland to join the Sisters of Loreto following what she discerned to be a call to become a missionary.

She was sent to India in 1929, and began her novitiate in Darjeeling near the Himalayan mountains. Eight years later she made her solemn vows and took the name Teresa after Saint Thérèse of Lisieux, the patron saint of missionaries. From there she taught at the Loreto convent school in Calcutta for almost twenty years. Though a dedicated educator, she was increasingly disturbed by the desperate poverty in Calcutta.

On September 10, 1946, Sister Teresa had an extraordinary conversion experience, what she later described as "the call within the call." While traveling by train from Calcutta to the Loreto convent in Darjeeling she experienced interior visions that led her to the conviction that Christ was calling her to serve "the poorest of the poor."

In 1948 after a few months of medical training, Sister Teresa ventured out into the slums to tend to the needs of the destitute and starving. Her first year was very difficult. She had no income and had to resort to begging for food and supplies. She experienced loneliness, doubt and the temptation to return to the comfort of convent life. But at the beginning of 1949 she was joined by a group of young women who wished to be a part of her ministry.

In 1950 "Mother" Teresa's community was formally recognized by the Vatican. Its mission was to care for, in her own words, "the hungry, the naked, the homeless, the crippled, the blind, the lepers, all those people who feel unwanted, unloved, uncared for throughout society, people that have become a burden to the society and are shunned by everyone." In 1952, she opened a hospice for the poor. Then she established several leprosy clinics throughout Calcutta, providing medication, bandages and food. In 1955, she created a home for orphans and homeless youth.

The Missionaries of Charity soon began to attract both recruits and charitable donations, and by the 1960s had opened hospices, orphanages and leper homes all over India. Mother Teresa then went global. Her first mission outside of India was in Venezuela in 1965, then in Rome, Tanzania and Austria. During the 1970s the congregation started missions in dozens of countries in Asia, Africa, Europe and the United States. In 1979, she was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

Mother Teresa died on September 5, 1997, departing a religious community with over 4,000 sisters operating 610 missions in 123 countries and aided by more than one million co-workers. Former U.N. Secretary-General, Javier Pérez de Cuéllar, said of Saint Teresa: "She is the United Nations. She is peace in the world."

Saint Teresa of Calcutta was canonized on September 4, 2016 by Pope Francis. Her feast day is September 5.



Stewarding the Senior Members of Our Parishes

We are told that one of the COVID-19 high-risk groups are people who are 60 years old and older. The members of this group are constantly being warned to take the appropriate precautions to protect themselves. Now that we are adjusting to new “social distancing” guidelines to prevent the spread of COVID-19, we can all think more creatively about keeping our older parishioners engaged in the parish.

The COVID-19 pandemic makes ministry to our older parishioners challenging and many parishes are investing in technology to stay connected with parishioners. For seniors with internet access, for example, helping them set up what they need to view livestreamed Masses and other parish services is ideal for staying connected.



But while technology can make it easier to connect in some ways, it is not always easier for everyone. Consider those members of your parish who might not have the technical ability to watch a livestreamed Mass. The simplicity of a handwritten note or phone call for the senior members of our community can be an important ministry. A short call or note can go a long way and make a lasting memory.

Other ways to let the senior members of the parish know they are not forgotten is by establishing a parish group to call senior adults on a weekly basis to check in or pray with them, or by mailing the parish bulletin, Bible study materials or other parish communications to them.

Offering a helping hand to our senior parishioners is an important service ministry as well. Go to the grocery store or pharmacy for them. Take out their trash and recycle for them. Make it a family project to do yard work or wash their car.

Many retirees have time on their hands and giving them some creative opportunity to serve would be very beneficial for them and for the parish. If you find your parish has a number of active seniors, connect with them and let them be a resource for the parish in some way.

In this time of anxiety and uncertainty about the future, let's keep thinking about how we can serve the older members of our parish, stay in contact with them and keep them engaged. Your ideas don't have to be complex or overly-produced. Just let seniors know that the parish is there for them, wants to reach out to them and show them what it means to be an integral part of the Body of Christ.



Stewardship of Our Parish: *Continue to Give Generously*

As COVID-19 continues to change the way the world interacts, we see parishes across North America responding creatively and finding new ways to minister. As parishioners who are charged with exercising good stewardship of our parishes, how are we supporting the ministries of our parish communities? More succinctly, how are we responding to our parishes with our giving practices?

We've all experienced the joy of giving, the excitement of presenting an unsolicited gift or a particularly generous one. We enjoy witnessing the joy our gift brings.

We have a need to give, a need that is expressed through our love for Christ and his Church. Jesus sets the standard. His life is our greatest lesson about love. He identified love as the path to salvation. Love goes beyond well-wishing to action. He laid down his life for his community of disciples. Jesus saved us through giving. He gave us himself.

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an unsolicited gift or a particularly generous one. We enjoy witnessing the joy our gift brings. Parents experience this when they give to young children. We all experience it when we give to a friend, a neighbor, a charity, a stranger.

However, the warm feeling that accompanies giving is the least important part of the experience. The truth is we need to give because we grow in Christ by giving. The world would have us believe that we grow by getting: the more I have, the more I am. In this view, persons are defined by things. Personal possessions count

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more than personal qualities, like character and virtue. But a fast car or expensive clothes are a poor means of self-expression. In order to express ourselves, we need to share our uniqueness with others, to create and to give.

Giving also affords us the opportunity to grow socially. We need relationships and relationships are enriched by giving.

We sometimes hold back our giving because of fear. If I volunteer my time and give my money, will I have enough left for me? Am I willing to risk sacrifice? Giving and sacrifice strengthen relationships.

We all have a need to continue giving faithfully to our parish community. Our gift continues to enrich the people who gather around the Eucharistic table, even if virtually. Our need is rooted in our commitment to the Gospel and our love for Christ, our community and our neighbor. When we give, we obey the first commandment, we practice the greatest virtue, and we reveal ourselves as Christian stewards.



LABOR DAY DRAWING!

Register NOW for the 2020 Virtual Conference for a chance to **WIN**

**A FREE 2021 ICSC
CONFERENCE REGISTRATION
and
THREE NIGHTS FREE
at the Hyatt Regency Orlando**



Three winners will each win one (1) free registration to the 2021 ICSC Orlando Conference and three (3) nights at the Hyatt Regency Orlando from September 12 to 15, 2021.

Every 2020 ICSC Virtual Conference registrant who has registered between October 2019 and before Saturday, September 5, 2020 will be entered into the drawing.

Winners of the drawing will be selected at random on Monday, September 7, 2020. ICSC's selection shall be final and nontransferable.

Terms and conditions of the drawing can be found [HERE](#)

This offer is void where prohibited.

[CLICK HERE TO REGISTER NOW!](#)



A STEWARDSHIP MOMENT

Twenty-Third Sunday in Ordinary Time Weekend of September 5/6, 2020

In Saint Paul's letter to the Romans he suggests that God lavishes his love upon us through Jesus Christ, who calls us to the kind of loving relationship, if we so choose it, that demands accountability. It is like, in Saint Paul's vocabulary, a kind of "debt" that we can never "pay-in-full." But we begin to repay by following the direction of one of the most familiar statements in the Bible: "Love your neighbor as yourself." Good stewards realize that God does not call them just to love those who are easy to love, but to love the unloved and the hard-to-love people in this world as well. This week, remind yourself: "I am put here as an ambassador of God's love."

Twenty-Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time Weekend of September 12/13, 2020

Today's Gospel reading continues Jesus' instructions on being good stewards of others – the direction that if we love Jesus Christ, we must forgive an individual 77 times. The reading compels us to consider one of the most difficult practices of Christian discipleship. Forgiveness is the way of Jesus, the way of the cross. Vengeance, bitterness and hatred seem so much easier and certainly more desirable. Forgiveness is a hard road to travel, but it is the only road that leads to life in Christ. Consider this week who you need to forgive.

Twenty-Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time Weekend of September 19/20, 2020

From an early age, we tend to distort the concept of "fairness": "I am good. I deserve good things. I am not receiving good things. Something must be wrong. Who's going to fix it?" We also know the age-old expression: "Who ever said life was fair?" Jesus knew this expression when he offered his parable in today's Gospel reading. Christian stewards acknowledge, with humility, that they receive good things from the Lord in abundance; even if these gifts are not the ones they think they need when they need them. Consider which servants you identify with most in the Gospel reading, the ones who demand "fairness", or that final servant who, seemingly, deserves the least.

Twenty-Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time Weekend of September 26/27, 2020

Saint Augustine, a doctor of the church, once wrote that the first, second, and third most important attitude in Christianity is humility. In today's second reading, Saint Paul is concerned with how we conduct ourselves in our community of faith. He urges us to let our conduct be worthy of the Gospel we say that we believe; and that it all begins with humility. He asks us to consider others better than ourselves, and to serve them by looking out for their best interest, not ours. Consider how Saint Paul's appeal to imitating Christ's humility can enhance your relationships.