

INTERNATIONAL CATHOLIC STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL CATHOLIC STEWARDSHIP

October 2020 • e-Bulletin

A STEWARDSHIP PRAYER for October

On October 11, 1962, Saint Pope John XXIII prayed the following prayer to open the Second Vatican Council. Thereafter, the bishops at the Council continued to pray this prayer together before every session.

We stand before you, Holy Spirit,
conscious of our sinfulness,
but aware that we gather in your name.

Come to us, remain with us, and
enlighten our hearts.
Give us light and strength to know
your will,
to make it our own,
and to live it in our lives.
Guide us by your wisdom, support us
by your power,
for you are God, sharing the glory of
Father and Son.

You desire justice for all:
enable us to uphold the rights of others;
do not allow us to be misled
by ignorance;
or corrupted by fear or favor.

Unite us to yourself in the bond of love
and keep us faithful to all that is true.

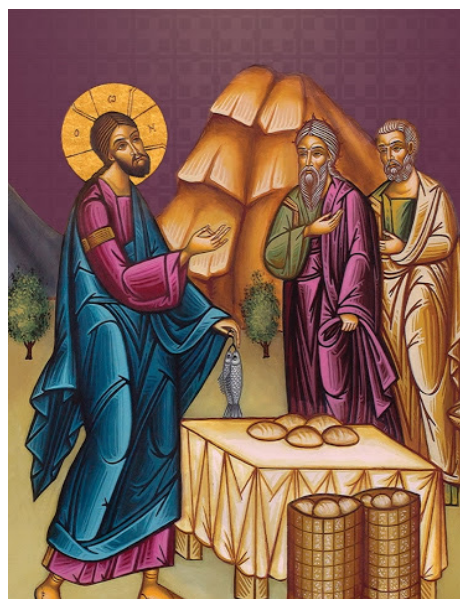
As we gather in your name
may we temper justice with love,
so that all our decisions may be
pleasing to you,
and earn the reward promised to
good and faithful servants.

You live and reign with the Father
and the Son,
one God, forever and ever.

Amen.

The ICSC Virtual Conference *An Opportunity to Deepen Our Lives in Christ*

By Leisa Anslinger, director, Center for Pastoral Vitality, Archdiocese of Cincinnati



A number of years ago, I visited with the pastoral council of a local parish. It was the first meeting of the season for the council, and the first meeting for newly appointed members. I was asked to provide a brief introduction to stewardship. After prayer, I asked the group “when I say the word ‘stewardship’ what first comes to mind?” This particular group’s sharing was insightful: God asks us to care for all that we are and all that is; stewardship is about sharing what we have; it is a faith-response to Christ; stewardship is about using well something that is really God’s. It was heartening to hear such

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understanding from this council, and encouraging that I have heard similar responses from many groups in the past few years.

No longer, it seems, is “money” the first thing that comes to everyone’s mind when they hear the word “stewardship.” This increase in understanding is the result of the hard work, dedication, and leadership of many ICSC members: bishops, clergy and lay leaders. It is borne of consistent efforts to teach stewardship as a way of life. And just as stewardship itself is an expression of discipleship, applied in the daily circumstances of our lives, forming people as stewards requires us to continue to spread the message throughout the year.

I am grateful to know that many of us will gather together for our annual ICSC conference. This is our yearly opportunity to grow as leaders and as stewards; and most especially, to deepen our lives in Christ. Like the pastoral council with whom I met, we recognize that all we are and all we have truly are God’s. Our time together to learn, explore and grow as stewardship leaders is a way of stewarding well our talents, knowledge, time, and friendship, as people who are committed to Christ’s sacrificial way. Let us take this moment to re-dedicate ourselves as stewardship leaders, trusting in the providence of our good and gracious God in whose image we are created.

STEWARDSHIP SAINT *for October*



Saint Maria Bertilla Boscardin

Maria Bertilla gave witness to Christian stewardship through her simple living and caring for others as a nurse and consecrated religious. She was born in 1888 in a village near Vicenza, in northern Italy, to a poor farming family headed by a violently abusive and alcoholic father. She lacked a normal education and was ridiculed for her seeming lack of intelligence. She worked as a house servant in her youth.

At age 16, Maria joined the Sisters of St. Dorothy in Vicenza and was assigned to work in the kitchen, laundry and bakery. Eventually she was given permission to be trained as a nurse and displayed a special gift for working with children suffering from diphtheria.

During World War I, the hospital was taken over by the Italian army to care for its wounded. Sister Bertilla became well-known to military authorities and others for her compassion, dedication and unwavering care of those who could not be moved, even in times of terror, when the hospital was under fire and subject to bombing and artillery barrages. She wrote in her diary: "Here I am, Lord, to do your will whatever comes."

When she and her patients were finally transferred to a safer area Sister Bertilla's religious superior transferred her back to the laundry. Soon thereafter, however, the mother general of the religious community countermanded that order and Sister Bertilla was reassigned to the hospital to take charge of a children's ward. Her reputation for simplicity and hard work left a deep impression on those who knew her.

Sister Bertilla had suffered for a number of years with a painful tumor, and in 1922 her health declined rapidly. After an unsuccessful surgery to remove the tumor she died on October 20, 1922. Thousands of people attended her funeral in Vicenza, Italy, and her tomb became a pilgrimage site. A plaque remains at the hospital in her honor, describing her as a "chosen soul of heroic goodness...an angelic alleviator of human suffering ..."

Family members and many former patients attended Maria Bertilla's canonization in 1961 by Saint Pope John XXIII. Her feast day is October 20.

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September 28
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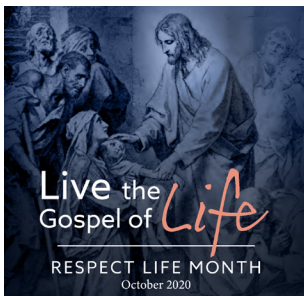
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Stewardship Expressions

For the Month of October

Every day gives new opportunities to show that we choose to live as one of Christ's disciples. Our expressions can show that we have listened to the Gospel messages, have received God's gifts gratefully, are nurturing our gifts responsibly, sharing them justly and generously and returning each with gratitude through our daily living. Reflect on how the following October events might inspire your own sense of stewardship.



October 4 Respect Life Sunday – Stewardship demonstrates respect for God's creation and Catholics believe that every human life is sacred, from the moment of conception until natural death. Every person is made in the image and likeness of God, and so each and every person has inherent dignity no matter where they live on God's earth. This is also a foundation of Catholic social teaching. Each October the Church in the United

States celebrates *Respect Life Month*, and the first Sunday of October is observed as *Respect Life Sunday*. As Catholics, we are called to cherish, defend, and protect those who are most vulnerable, from the beginning of life to its end. During the month of October, the Church asks us to reflect more deeply on the dignity of every human life.



October 18 World Mission Sunday – Organized by the Society for the Propagation of the Faith, World Mission Sunday is an important day in the life of the Church because it reminds Catholics worldwide about the importance of giving: "... as an offering made to God, in the Eucharistic celebration" and for the missionary activity of the Church (see *Redemptoris Missio* 81). We are reminded, as stewards and

disciples, that it is the Lord through His universal Church, who we are called to serve - with the same love that He gives to each of us.

October 31 "All Hallows Eve" (the night before All Saints Day) – In the annual rhythm of the Church's life of prayer and worship, the Solemnity of All Saints (Sunday, November 1) actually begins with Evening Prayer I in the Liturgy of the Hours on Saturday, October 31. We rejoice in those who celebrate the heavenly banquet with Jesus Christ and we recall the Church's rich tradition of faith-filled stewards. Keep "All Hallows Eve" from becoming "hollow" by celebrating the Christian connection to Halloween and the positive messages that stem from the holiday for the benefit of ourselves and the spiritual formation of our children. Celebrate Saturday, October 31, as a Catholic heritage of faith.

Stewardship Builds Communities of Faith

By Rev. Yaw Acheampong, pastor, Our Lady of Peace Parish, Toronto, Ontario

(Part I of a two-part excerpt from an article written for The Catholic Register, a publication of the Archdiocese of Toronto)



Have you returned to church since the reopening in June after the lockdown? How did you feel about the changes you saw?

A couple of weeks before the reopening, a parish priest friend from another diocese called to share with me the challenges he had faced in getting enough ministers (volunteers) to serve in his parish due to the

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COVID-19 safety protocols for places of worship. In fact, getting parishioners who were ready to serve during the pandemic was also our concern in Toronto. However, the reports from parishes around the archdiocese have

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indicated that the re-opening of our churches has generally gone smoothly.

As some ministers have decided that they were not ready to serve at this time, the positions that have been made necessary due to the COVID-19 safety protocols for our churches — liturgical ministers and the newly created and necessary ministry of cleaning, responsible for the cleaning and disinfection of churches before and after Mass — have been filled. The generosity of the ministers has helped the churches continue to serve the communities.

This encouraging response by our parishioners can be attributed to the awakening of the spirit of stewardship in our parishes, a fitting development with the celebration of the first Stewardship Sunday on September 20, 2020.

In 2018, as part of the Archdiocesan Pastoral Plan, Cardinal Thomas Collins, archbishop of Toronto, instituted a stewardship pilot project to help promote Christian stewardship as a way of life in our parishes. From the spring of 2018, eight parishes, including Our Lady of Peace, participated in the project. The pilot project helped us examine the many different ways to engage parishioners to share their God-given gifts of time, talent and treasure in their parish communities.

We examined and reflected on stewardship as “an expression of discipleship, with the power to change how we understand and live out our lives.” We recognized that even though our parishes already have ministers serving in various ministries, the word “stewardship” was misunderstood and a few parishioners do everything.

So, how do we inspire our parishioners to participate in fruitful stewardship? (*Read Part II of this article in the November stewardship ebulletin to learn more*).



STEWARDSHIP AND PUBLIC LIFE: *Bringing the Good News to all Creation*

With the presidential election upon us, it is more important than ever for mature Catholics to be mindful of their responsibilities to exercise good stewardship over their neighborhoods, communities and society by participation in the public life of our country.

Jesus said that we, his disciples, are the light of the world. We must not hide that light under a bushel basket (see Matthew 5:16) or in the privacy of our homes or in a church building. We must let it shine so that all men and women can see it. Stewards understand that living out their faith in public life is part of their responsibility to go into the world and proclaim the Gospel to all creation (Mark 16:15); and that their relationship with Jesus Christ and their desire to please him should inform all of their moral decisions, including how they participate in public life and how they vote.

Stewards strive to make prudent choices, vote and encourage others to vote. These are just a few of the ways stewards can help bring the Good News to all creation.

How should stewards exercise their responsibilities as citizens? One way of course, is to inform themselves of the political issues of the day and to vote. Voting is literally the least one can do to promote Gospel values in our communities, state and nation. Stewards are not found wanting in



this vital area of their stewardship. The teachings of the church help us understand our responsibility to make informed choices about issues that concern our society and world, especially as it relates to peace and justice and the most vulnerable of our sisters and brothers.

The bishops of the United States have again provided important guidance through their statement:

Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship: A Call to Political Responsibility from the Catholic Bishops of the United States. Developed by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, this document continues a tradition by the bishops of encouraging

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Catholics to use the values of their faith to shape their participation in political life. It focuses on helping Catholics form their consciences so they can make sound moral judgments about public choices. (See www.faithfulcitizenship.org)

Stewards commit to prayer, reflection and discussion among others in their community of faith about how to bring the Gospel to public life. They believe in continued conscience formation and conversion, take the teachings of the Church seriously, and keep themselves informed on the political issues of the day. Stewards also strive to make prudent choices, vote and encourage others to vote. These are just a few of the ways stewards can help bring the Good News to all creation.

CIVILIZE IT
★ ★ ★
DIGNITY BEYOND THE DEBATE
===== 2020 =====

Civilize It

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) has launched a campaign inviting Catholics to model civility and love for neighbor throughout the year. *Civilize It: Dignity Beyond the Debate* will ask Catholics to pledge civility, clarity, and compassion in their families, communities, and parishes, and call on others to do so as well. Find out more information and resources to share with your community at www.civilizeit.org

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A STEWARDSHIP MOMENT

Twenty-seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time Weekend of October 3/4, 2020

This weekend's Gospel reading poses some challenging stewardship questions, particularly at a time when so many people are becoming disengaged from their faith communities. When Christ returns, will we be found working diligently in the Lord's "vineyard;" converting our own hearts into a rich harvest of love and compassion? Calling those outside our vineyard to enter into the joy of the Lord? Or will we just be living off of what the Lord has given us, but not sharing God's love with others? Jesus' parable suggests that if we are not good stewards of the gifts we've been given then the gifts will be taken away, and we will be called to give an account for our failures. We have all we need for a bountiful harvest, even during these disquieting times. What will our Lord find when He returns and asks us to give an account?

Twenty-eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time Weekend of October 10/11, 2020

There are a number of Bible verses Christians have memorized. One of them is in Saint Paul's letter to the Philippians found in this weekend's second reading: "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (4:13). Most people define themselves either by their problems or their possibilities. Fearful people wake up each morning ensnared by their problems. Christian stewards wake up reflecting on their possibilities with confidence and hope. Some stewardship reflection questions for the week: What challenges do you back away from because you doubt that you are up to them? What would you attempt tomorrow if you were sure God would help you?

Twenty-ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time Weekend of October 17/18, 2020

Jesus offers us a profound teaching on stewardship in this weekend's reading: What belongs to Caesar? What belongs to God? Christian stewards recognize that everything they have belongs to God. God created them, and God has claims on every part of their existence. They also realize that the sovereign is an institution whose nature and purpose is to promote the common good and protect the welfare of its citizenry. As long as it accomplishes this mission while treating every single person with deep respect, justice and compassion, it merits the steward's support and cooperation. Christian stewards know what belongs to the Lord, and they are better citizens when they live their lives according to his Gospel.

Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time Weekend of October 24/25, 2020

There is one command that summarizes this weekend's Gospel: to love. For Jesus there is no distinction between these two commands of loving God and neighbor. One naturally flows from the other. In fact, for Jesus, these commands constitute a way of life for Christian stewards; a unique approach to life and to their relationship with others. Our neighbors include everyone with whom we come into contact: family members, friends, people we don't like, strangers and particularly those most in need of our love and compassion. Love calls us to open our hearts and do more to help others grow closer to the Lord. How might we follow Christ's love command more fervently?