

INTERNATIONAL CATHOLIC STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL CATHOLIC STEWARDSHIP

January 2021 • 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 Stewardship Resolution in the Midst of a Pandemic: Living with Compassion

Even during this time of uncertainty and stress, January is a time for new beginnings, fresh starts. For the Christian steward, the grace of being given another day, or God willing, a whole new year, stirs our deep gratitude. But it also calls us to ask what a “resolution” should really be. Our first resolve should always be to involve ourselves more intimately in the life of Christ, and how better to do that than by embracing Christ’s call to be compassionate.



Compassion is the doorway to a more responsive
stewardship and a committed discipleship.

This past year our lives have been severely disrupted, admittedly to some more than others. But Jesus himself instructed us, “Be compassionate as your Father is compassionate” (Luke 6:36). Clearly, we strive now to live and give compassionately, as we generally understand the term. We try to be kind, considerate and understanding individuals. We share with others. But Jesus’ words challenge us to embrace a compassion that is much deeper, much more radical than our general understanding.

The word compassion, at its root, means “to suffer with.” This goes beyond merely writing a check, offering a prayer or sending a note. Suffering is not a popular notion in our society and we strive to avoid it. But now we hear Christ instructing us to “suffer with” the poor, the vulnerable, the powerless, the neglected, the weak.

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How can we possibly choose such a journey, this challenge to be truly present to those who suffer, especially at a time when we are instructed to keep our distance? All things are possible with God, and it is through a commitment to a life of discipline, a creative discipline in action and

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discipline in prayer, that we move towards the goal of true compassion. The Christian steward is committed to the Eucharistic life, and it is through this life which Christ offers us that we gain the courage and the will and even the creativity to follow him in his own example of compassion.

Compassion is the doorway to a more responsive stewardship and a committed discipleship. Through our deepening sense of compassion in 2021, may we resolve to be the kind of Christian stewards who bring Christ’s presence to a suffering world.

STEWARDSHIP SAINT for January

Ita of Killeedy, Ireland

Ita of Killeedy, Ireland, also known as Ida, is one of the two most famous women saints in Ireland, along with Brigid of Kildare. Born near present-day County Waterford, allegedly of a royal family, she was baptized as Deidre. She is said to have rejected a prestigious marriage for a life as a consecrated woman religious. She moved early in her life to Killeedy (in County Limerick), where she founded a small community of nuns and resided for the remainder of her life, in community with other consecrated women. She dedicated herself to prayer, fasting, a simplicity of life and cultivating a gift for spiritual discernment.



Ita was well known for having the gift of being able to guide people in holiness. She was much sought after as a spiritual director and confessor. During this period of Christianity, the Celtic Church was more advanced than other churches at the time in recognizing qualities of spiritual leadership in women and in encouraging women in this role. It is thought that Ita may have been abbess of a double monastery of men and women and that she was a confessor to both, giving difficult penances while maintaining a forgiving and compassionate spirit. Confessing one’s sins to a priest had not yet been established as the normal form for the Sacrament of Reconciliation, and ordained priests were not yet regarded as the only members of the Church authorized to hear confessions, forgive sins, and impose penances.

Ita was well known for having the gift of being able to guide people in holiness.

She began a school for boys, some of whose graduates became saints in their own right, the most famous of whom was Saint Brendan. She was also known as the “foster mother of the saints of Erin.” The name “Ita” (“thirst for holiness”) was conferred on her because of her saintly qualities.

She believed that the three things God most detested were a scowling face, obstinacy in wrong-doing, and too great a confidence in the power of money. Three things she believed God especially loved included a pure heart, living a simple life and great generosity inspired by gratitude for God’s gifts.

Ita died sometime around 570 and was buried in the monastery she founded. It was destroyed by Viking invaders in the ninth century. A Romanesque church was later built over its ruins, but that too failed to survive. The site, however, remains a place of pilgrimage today.

Ita’s feast day is January 15. Although not on the Roman calendar of saints, her feast is celebrated as an optional memorial in Ireland.

Stewardship in the New Year: *Making New Commitments to the Lord*

We have suffered through a long and stressful year. It is a year that has heaped upon us many distractions. But as we look toward 2021 with hope, let us remember to get back to the fundamentals of being good stewards of our life in Christ. Stewardship is a commitment of mind and heart to the Lord; a way of life that needs constant renewal and transformation. This time of year has always been one of looking forward to a new year, reflecting on the changes we need to make in our lives and resolving to follow through on those changes. Perhaps those who



seek to make resolutions to be better stewards might find inspiration in one or more of the following areas of Christian stewardship:

Stewardship of Prayer: Resolve to strengthen your relationship with the Lord through prayer. Notice how often you pray and what hinders you from praying. If you are a beginner, commit to short, daily prayer times.

Stewardship of Family: Resolve to set aside more time to stay connected with your family even if it is through digital technology. Eat dinner together, schedule regular dates with your spouse, plan family outings, and go to Mass together if that is possible at this time. Practice patience and forgiveness.

Stewardship of Health: Resolve to get those medical and dental checkups when it becomes safe. Adopt healthier eating habits. Add exercise and other physical activity to your daily routine.

Stewardship of Possessions: Resolve to possess a little more “lightly” this year. Consider ways you can reduce the amount of all that stuff you own. Distinguish between those items that are necessary and those that are considered luxurious and unnecessary.

tasks and offer them up to the Lord. Cultivate your skills. Deepen your knowledge. Be mindful of how you are building the Kingdom of God.

Stewardship of Mind: Resolve to keep your mind active. Commit to being more informed on the issues of the day. Read your Bible. Become even more familiar with Catholic social teaching.

Stewardship of Neighbor: Realizing the need for social distancing, resolve to be a person of hospitality

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Stewardship of the Parish Family: Resolve to serve your faith community in creative way given the new limitations on some parish activities. Is it time to enhance your generosity to the parish?

Stewardship of Money: Resolve to render sacred your annual budget. Reprioritize your financial goals to ensure that the Lord comes first in your spending. Take positive steps to improve your financial health

Stewardship of Work: Even if you are working remotely, resolve to be faithful to your daily, work-related

and mercy. Make time and space for others who enter your life. Be more aware of those times when a neighbor, co-worker, fellow parishioner or stranger, needs a moment of kindness, a little attention or an affirming gesture on your part.

Stewardship of the Poor: Resolve to live with more compassion and in solidarity with those less fortunate. Remember the poor in prayer, and commit to helping relieve in some way the plight of those who are impoverished or marginalized.



Embracing a Steward's Mindset for the New Year

During these uncertain times, it is especially important for Christian stewards to have a mindset that the greeting "Happy New Year" really should 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? Even as we await a post-pandemic era to arrive, 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!" When 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 2020 to the history books, let's approach 2021 with renewed vigor. Let us see the days, weeks and months ahead for the God-given gifts they truly are: **"Happy New Year!"**

Epiphany: To Find Our Meaning in Christ

On January 3, 2021 we celebrate the Solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord. Epiphany! What a wonderful word. Even its secular definition is thrilling: "a sudden realization about the nature or meaning of something." It brings all sorts of images to mind: a light bulb suddenly turning on, shedding brilliant illumination; a revelation that brings a gasp; an idea so vivid we pause and give thanks; a truth so powerful we fall to our knees.



The feast of Epiphany brings us to the last week of our liturgical celebration of Christmas. But for the Christian steward, Epiphany is not an end but a beginning.

The feast of the Epiphany is all of those things and more. We celebrate the mysterious appearance at Jesus' birthplace of three men from the East. They had set off on a most quixotic journey, seeking what they would find at the end of a star's dazzling rays. What, we wonder, did they make of the epiphany with which their journey ended? Did they spend the rest of their lives trying to discern what their discovery of the baby meant, or did the Christ Child gift them with "a sudden realization" of His nature?

What more could they – or we – want of a life's journey, than to find, in our epiphany, the Christ waiting for us?

The Christmas season has now led us to this place, where Gentiles from afar have discovered Christ, thereby revealing that He came for everyone, for each one of us throughout history, and not just for the Jewish people to whom he was born. The feast of Epiphany brings us to the last week of our liturgical celebration of Christmas. But for the Christian steward, Epiphany is not an end but a beginning. This feast reminds us that the New Year beckons us to openness about the epiphanies to which God leads us if we but keep an open, prayerful heart, a heart full of deep, awed gratitude.

The year ahead brings promise of an eventual "post-pandemic" season. Let us pray not to become numbed by our experiences of 2020 that we cannot see new epiphanies of Christ working in our lives. If we could resolve to keep only one New Year's resolution, let it be this: to pay attention to the epiphanies God places before us.

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A STEWARDSHIP MOMENT

The Solemnity of Mary, the Holy Mother of God January 1, 2021

In today's Gospel we again hear the story of the nativity from Saint Luke; of the motherhood of Mary, the vessel who brought forth our savior in a dark corner of the world and reflected on this sacred revelation in her heart. Christian stewards are also the vessels by which Christ is carried out into the world. They continually seek ways to reveal Jesus in the world's dark corners. In this new year, let us ask God to give us the courage to bring forth Christ to those who are strangers to us, who think differently than we do or who may not believe that Christ can make a difference in their lives.

Feast of the Epiphany of the Lord For the weekend of January 2/3, 2021

Today's Gospel reading reveals the story of the magi who come from the east to pay homage to Jesus, the newborn king. The story of the magi teaches Christian stewards three Christmas truths: God, in the person of Jesus Christ, is present and active in the world, and good stewards strive daily to follow his star. Second, each of us, no matter our circumstances or station in life, has a gift to bring to the Lord. And finally, our life's journey always leads to Christ, even when at times we do not know where the road is taking us.

Feast of the Baptism of the Lord For the weekend of January 9/10, 2021

On this first weekend after the Feast of the Epiphany, the Gospel reading reminds us of Jesus' baptism. It gives meaning to our own baptism into Christ Jesus. Jesus' baptism is a reminder that he is not only our Lord but also our brother. He was baptized, just as we are. He shares in our humanity. Good stewards recognize that their baptisms call them to conform their daily lives to Jesus' teachings, and to live their lives as Jesus did. Through their baptism, they have been given the necessary gifts to share with others the new creation that Christ brings. The stewardship question is whether we can recognize our own baptismal gifts, and like Jesus, use those gifts to bring the hope of Christ to the lives of others.

Second Sunday in Ordinary Time Weekend of January 16/17, 2021

Christian stewardship begins with the call to discipleship and in today's Gospel we discover those first individuals who sought out Jesus and wanted to listen to him, learn from him and stay with him. Today, Christian stewards search out the hidden presence of Jesus in their own lives every day. They know Christ is the "Messiah" who will one day bring about a perfect restoration to a troubled world. They further understand that they are sacraments of his hidden presence in the world. Their task is to make that reality known through their own words and actions. What is one thing we can do to be better stewards of Christ's life in us?

Third Sunday in Ordinary Time Weekend of January 23/24, 2021

The first disciples of Jesus in today's Gospel left their work and their daily routines to follow him. They abandoned their livelihoods, familiar surroundings and the lives to which they had become accustomed to be closer to him. The good steward finds ways to be removed from what may be a comfortable existence or daily routine in order to serve the Lord more faithfully. All too often, out of fear, insecurity or even selfishness, we refuse to leave the safety of the little world we have created for ourselves in order to hear the Lord's call and be challenged by his Gospel. Perhaps we should reflect on what comforts we need to sacrifice in order to be better stewards of God's mercy, compassion and hospitality he planted within us.

Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time Weekend of January 30/31, 2021

In today's Gospel we hear proclaimed the beginning of Jesus' public ministry. He teaches. He heals. And all are amazed. By their baptism, Christian stewards realize they are called to do the same in their lives. They are called to be the light of Christ each day. As we bring closure to the beginning of this new year, now is a good time to ask the Lord to fill our hearts with courage and faith, so that we too may publicly minister in his name. Let us ask that we may be liberated from our insecurities and fear so that we can share the Gospel authoritatively and work to heal at least one wounded relationship in the coming months ahead.