

INTERNATIONAL CATHOLIC STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL CATHOLIC STEWARDSHIP

March 2021 • e-Bulletin

A STEWARDSHIP PRAYER for March

Lord Jesus,

We journey with you this Lenten season,
in a time of stress and uncertainty,
ever closer to Jerusalem,
ever closer to your death on the cross.

We hear your Gospel mandate:
“Deny yourself,
take up your cross
and follow me,”
but we are unsure of their meaning,
or anxious about their true intent.

Through the power of the Holy Spirit,
give us the strength
to deny the “self”
that keeps us from being good stewards
of your teachings, and of those
who need our love and compassion.

Give us a deeper awareness
of the cross in our own lives
so that we may embrace it
and join our sufferings with yours
in a world in need of your redemption.

And give us the confidence to follow you
no matter the cost;
knowing that if we die with you,
we will also live with you
and eternally rejoice in your resurrection.

We humbly ask this of you
who live and reign with the Father
and the Holy Spirit,
one God, forever and ever.

Amen.

Stewardship and Solidarity in a Time of Pandemic

Part I of a two-part series by Daniel Conway

The Year of Our Lord 2020 may go down in history as an *annus horribilis* (a horrible year) because of the devastation caused by the sudden, unexpected outbreak of the deadly COVID-19 pandemic. Not only have thousands of people lost their lives worldwide, but the economic and social implications of this modern day plague have caused serious hardships for millions in countries covering the globe.



Alone we are powerless, but united with other
members of the human family we are capable of
overcoming all obstacles.

And yet, as Pope Francis has observed, these months of trial and adversity have also been a time of grace. It's been a time for giving and sharing, a time for healing, hope and prayerful support, especially for those who are most vulnerable. In short, this is a time for stewardship, which can be defined as “taking care of and sharing all God's gifts.”

During times of crises, we are reminded that no one is an island. We are not self-sufficient. We depend on God, and on each other, for everything we have and everything we are. The pandemic we are suffering now is a wake up call, a stark reminder that unless we share our gifts and talents with all our sisters and brothers, we run the grave risk of being left alone in moments of serious need. Alone we are powerless, but united with other members of the human family we are capable of overcoming all obstacles.

Stewardship is intimately connected to the concept of “solidarity.” Vatican II's Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes*, clearly identifies the Church's proper role in human society “as a strong moral force stimulating the cooperation of all and urging the responsibilities we all have to serve the cause of human

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solidarity everywhere" (#89). The Church cannot *command* unity (even among her own members), but she can continually *call* for unity and the pursuit of the common good "that is to say, to the good of all and of each individual, because we are all really responsible for all" (*Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, On Social Concern, #38).

"Solidarity" was used by Pope St. John XXIII in his encyclical *Mater et Magistra* (Mother and Teacher, #157). According to the Holy Father, "The solidarity which binds all men together as members of a common family makes it impossible for wealthy nations to look with indifference upon the hunger, misery and poverty of other nations whose citizens are unable to enjoy even elementary



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human rights. The nations of the world are becoming more and more dependent on one another and it will not be possible to preserve a lasting peace so long as glaring economic and social imbalances persist (#157). The concepts of stewardship and solidarity also appear in many post-conciliar encyclicals and apostolic exhortations of recent popes even if the terms are not used. (*To learn more about papal teaching on stewardship and solidarity, read Part II of this article in the April stewardship ebulletin.*)

STEWARDSHIP SAINT *for March*

Saint Katharine Drexel

Katharine Drexel, the second American-born canonized saint, was born into great wealth in Philadelphia in 1858. Her mother died soon after Katharine's birth, and she was raised by her father and stepmother, both known for their philanthropy, especially their generosity to the poor.

As a young heiress, Katharine traveled extensively across the U.S. and became aware of the difficult circumstances faced by Native Americans and African Americans. After her father and stepmother died, Katharine determined to use her inherited wealth to help these groups.

Traveling in Europe in 1887, she asked Pope Leo XIII for help in sending missionaries to the many institutions she funded, including a school in South Dakota. The pope challenged the heiress to undertake the mission herself.



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After much discernment, Katharine decided to devote not just her fortune (worth more than \$200 million today), but her life to the poor. In 1889, at age thirty, she entered the Sisters of Mercy.

But Drexel continued to feel a special call to serve African and Native Americans. In 1891 she started her own religious congregation, the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament for Indians and Colored People (S.B.S). The order's first American Indian school was launched in Santa Fe, New Mexico, three years later.

Mother Katharine eventually created eleven more schools on Indian reservations, nearly a hundred for African Americans in rural areas and the inner cities of the South, and in 1915, established a teachers college that would eventually grow to become the first and only Catholic university for African Americans, Xavier University in New Orleans. In 1922 in Beaumont, Texas, the Ku Klux Klan threatened to tar and feather the local pastor and bomb his church if he did not close down one of Mother Drexel's schools. The sisters prayed for God's intercession to resolve the threat. Within days a tornado destroyed the Klan's headquarters. Two Klansmen died, and the Klan never bothered the sisters again.

In 1935, a severe heart attack forced Mother Katharine into prayerful retirement at her motherhouse in Philadelphia. Nevertheless, she continued to fight for, and fund, civil rights causes. During the 1950s, her sisters in Harlem and New Orleans were jeered at as "Nigger Sisters," and Mother Katharine's response was to ask the sisters if they prayed for their detractors. She died in 1955, and was beatified by Pope Saint John Paul II in 1988 and canonized in 2000. Her feast day is March 3.

Almsgiving: An Expression of Gratitude



When we look at the three traditional “disciplines” of Lent, prayer, fasting and almsgiving, we know that almsgiving gets the least attention. Yet, the Bible places emphasis firmly on almsgiving: “Prayer and fasting are good, but better than either is almsgiving accompanied by righteousness ... It is better to give alms than to store up gold; for almsgiving saves one from death and expiates every sin. Those who regularly give alms shall enjoy a full life” (Tobit 12:8-9).

Almsgiving is simply an expression of our gratitude for all that God has given us, and a realization that as a member of a community of faith, it is never just “me and God.” For disciples of the Lord, almsgiving means much more than simply throwing a little change in the poor box. It is part of cultivating an attitude of generosity. It challenges us to examine how we are using our time,

Almsgiving opens our hearts to the realization that God blesses us through those we serve. It is here that we find the great mystery of Christian service.

abilities, and money to better the lives of those around us. It urges us to share what we have been given by God with others in love and justice. It reminds us that Jesus blesses those who seek to be “poor in spirit” (Matt. 5:3).

Almsgiving opens our hearts to the realization that God blesses us through those we serve. It is here that we find the great mystery of Christian service. We see God in the life of Jesus, and we see Jesus in all those who are in need of our care. It is especially during these uncertain times that we can look around, see those who are in need, and ask God to take away those obstacles and distractions that keep us from being generous with them. In turn, we will receive Christ’s blessing, a blessing we need to receive.

Almsgiving ideas for Lent as is appropriate and safe during this time of pandemic:

- Show an act of kindness to someone you don’t speak to often.
- Reach out to an elderly person who may be lonely.
- Reflect on the regular contributions you make to the parish. Could you do more?
- Do an extra chore for your parents one day each week during Lent.
- Go through your closet and find some clothes in good shape and offer them to a clothing bank or homeless shelter in your area.
- Write a letter or create a card for someone who is sick or might be lonely.
- Buy some cans of food to give to a food bank or soup kitchen.
- Talk with your family about eating one simple meal each week of Lent and offering the money you save for an organization that serves the poor such as Catholic Charities
- Volunteer to clean the yard or wash windows for an elderly person in your neighborhood
- Prepare a meal or baked goods for the soup kitchen or homeless shelter
- Make a gift to the diocesan annual appeal.
- Volunteer to read books and magazines to the elderly
- Donate diapers, formula, baby clothing, baby furniture, and maternity clothing to a local crisis pregnancy center.

INTERNATIONAL CATHOLIC STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL

59th Annual Conference

September 12-15, 2021 | Hyatt Regency Orlando | Florida

RESTORE *our* JOY

Psalms 51:14

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The Dream of Elijah

Philippe de Champaigne
oil on canvas, 1655
Musée de Tessenay, Le Mans, France

The 2021 ICSC Stewardship Conference offers its members and other attendees a chance to gather, develop relationships, investigate and reflect on stewardship in the Catholic Church. Participants will also be invited to prepare for our Church's transformational future in the current COVID-19 environment.

The theme for the 59th annual conference is *Restore Our Joy* which recalls the psalmist's plea to the Lord to transform his heart from sorrow to joy and renew in him a spirit of determination (Psalm 51:14).

The conference image is the colorful, inspirational painting, **The Dream of Elijah**, by Philippe de Champaigne (c1655). This painting depicts the great prophet Elijah, fleeing from the death warrant of Queen Jezebel, falling down in exhaustion and grief and asking the Lord to let him die. He is rescued by the Lord's angel, who gives him sustenance, renewed stamina, courage and hope to continue his flight, and ultimately his prophetic destiny.

The ICSC conference takes place September 12-15, 2021 at the Hyatt Regency Orlando Hotel in Orlando, Florida. As a gathering of Catholic stewardship leaders and fund development professionals from the United States and around the world, the conference is searching for ways to give Catholics in dioceses and parishes the most current tools and strategies as well as the inspiration needed to summon courage, hope and a renewed spirit. We hope you will join us in Orlando, Florida, and in 2021 let us *Restore Our Joy*!

RESTORE *Our* JOY

Psalm 51:14

Theme for the 59th Annual ICSC Conference

The International Catholic Stewardship Council now invites you to register for its 59th annual conference to be held "in-person" in Orlando, Florida, from September 12 to 15, 2021.

ICSC is committed to its important role of moving the stewardship community forward and we believe in coming together – both in-person and, at a later date, virtually. We have been inspired by approximately 200 stewardship leaders who have registered early and the positive feedback that has been received.

ICSC is at its best when the entire Catholic stewardship community has the opportunity to participate, and during these uncertain times, much consideration is being made to make this conference as safe and healthy for all conference participants.



A STEWARDSHIP MOMENT

Third Sunday of Lent **Weekend of March 6/7, 2021**

In this weekend's Gospel reading, you may hear the story of Jesus' cleansing of the Temple, a familiar story. The prophets Jeremiah, Zechariah and Malachi prophesied that when the Kingdom of God was at hand, the Temple would be cleansed of all activities unworthy of an encounter with God. Christians are often referred to as "Temples of the Lord." As stewards of a "Holy Temple" God has entrusted to each one of us, what are we doing to be cleansed of activities unworthy of an encounter with the Lord? This week, reflect on one thing you can do to cleanse the Temple God has given you so that it becomes a more inviting home for Christ Jesus.

Fourth Sunday of Lent **Weekend of March 13/14, 2021**

This weekend's Gospel reading gives us the encounter between Jesus and Nicodemus, a Pharisee and leader of the Jews who comes to Jesus by night, recognizing Jesus as a teacher from God, but coming in secret for fear of being put out of the synagogue. Jesus rebukes him for his lack of understanding. Good stewards realize that for the sake of this world, God gives his most cherished beloved son. And so they are willing to confess Jesus as their Lord and savior in a public way. They do not keep their faith to themselves, in darkness. The Gospel reading challenges us to profess our faith in word and deed publicly, not to hide it away. Are we willing to accept the Gospel's challenge? Are we willing to get out of our personal "comfort zone" and confess our faith in Christ Jesus in an open, tangible way?

Fifth Sunday of Lent **Weekend of March 20/21, 2021**

Proclaimed this weekend is the Gospel story of Jesus inviting his disciples into a great mystery with curious pronouncements: Those who love their lives just as they are will lose them. If a grain of wheat dies, it will bear much fruit...What does Jesus mean? The climactic event of Jesus' passion and death is drawing closer; a time when the great confrontation between Jesus and the powers of darkness take place. When Jesus is lifted up, he will draw all to himself. The Christian steward knows life can't be lived in complacency. We are called to die to self, bear more fruit, be raised up with Jesus. Jesus brings discomfort to those who are comfortable. Jesus urges us to give witness in his name. How will we respond?

Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion **Weekend of March 27/28, 2021**

This weekend we participate in the proclamation of the passion and death of Jesus according to the Gospel of Mark. In the extended version of this weekend's Gospel reading, Jesus is at Gethsemane, praying to his Father, in much emotional distress. He knows he can save himself. He can escape over the Mount of Olives in the dead of night and make his way safely into the Judean desert. Instead, Jesus chooses obedience to his Father and waits for his persecutors. As Saint Paul puts it in the second reading, Jesus is "obedient to the point of death." Jesus' obedience is a lesson for those who are good stewards of their life in Christ. Let us reflect on how we might be more obedient to the will of God instead of our own will.



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.

Save us, Savior of the world, for by 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 your cross and resurrection,
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.

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