

INTERNATIONAL CATHOLIC STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL CATHOLIC STEWARDSHIP

June 2021 • e-Bulletin

A STEWARDSHIP PRAYER for June

Dear Lord,

Your presence at the Eucharistic Table
is truly the source and summit of our faith.

And in the breaking of the bread your presence
is meant to impel us to reach beyond our immediate
gathering and unify us with the larger gathering
of our sisters and brothers around the globe.

If we can recognize you
in the Sacrament of the Eucharist,
we must also be able to recognize you
among those who hunger and suffer in the world.

But if our faith in your presence
under the appearance of bread and wine
does not translate into action,
we are still unbelievers.

Deepen our faith, make us good stewards
of your Eucharistic presence and help us to bear fruit
in the lives of those we encounter, especially those
most in need of your love and compassion.

Amen.



Stewardship: The Path of Discipleship



By the Most Reverend Thomas Wenski, Archbishop of Miami, excerpted from his 2019 pastoral letter "Stewardship and the Theology of the Gift." Archbishop Wenski will preside at the opening Mass of the 59th annual conference of the International Catholic Stewardship Council, Sunday, September 12, 2021.

I wish to share with you some reflections on stewardship. A proper understanding of our role as "stewards of God's varied grace" can help us truly be "missionary disciples."

Made in His own image and likeness, God made us for Himself and in his plan; he has made us stewards of his creation that we might respond to his love in kind so that, cooperating with him, we use our gifts for his greater honor and glory.



Stewardship — placing our time, talent and treasure at his disposal — is then the path of discipleship by which we grow in our friendship with God, and with one another, becoming in Christ, through the gift of the Holy Spirit, the persons that God meant for us to be.

Of course, in inviting us to "come, follow him," Jesus calls us to walk the "narrow path." As we make our life's pilgrimage through this "vale of tears," this path will take us by the Way of the Cross, the way of Jesus who sacrificed himself for us and for our salvation. In fact, the Bishops at the Second Vatican Council insisted that as human beings we can only fully realize ourselves through the sincere gift of ourselves in imitation of Christ.

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Seen in this way, stewardship is not just a “program” to increase the Sunday offertory. It is really something much more demanding. More than a “fundraising” gimmick, stewardship rightly understood is a way of life. So, it is something much more difficult than just writing a check. Becoming a disciple of Jesus Christ, given our fallen human nature, goes against the grain of our propensity for self-seeking, self-assertion and self-

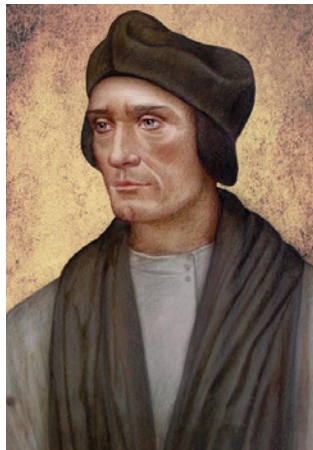


...to follow Christ, offering him in return our own gifts of time, talent and treasure, brings us joy, a joy that gives meaning and direction to our lives.

realization. (Isn't the multiplication of warehouses that rent space for “self-storage” a sad commentary on our culture of acquisitiveness?)

But a good steward accepts joyfully the risks of discipleship. To be a friend of Jesus calls us to “come out of ourselves.” However, this is not a burden imposed upon us. To be a Christian is far from being a burden, it is a gift — and, to follow Christ, offering him in return our own gifts of time, talent and treasure, brings us joy, a joy that gives meaning and direction to our lives.

STEWARDSHIP SAINT *for June*



Before Saint Thomas More, Saint John Fisher

Although Saint Thomas More was the most famous victim of King Henry VIII's persecution of Catholics who refused to accept his supremacy over the Church in England, his friend and adviser, John Fisher, was the first to protest King Henry's machinations, and suffered martyrdom because of it.

John Fisher was born in 1469, educated at Cambridge at the age of 14 and was ordained a priest at the age of 22. At age 32 he was appointed chaplain to the king's mother, Lady Margaret Beaufort, and at age 35, was appointed chancellor of Cambridge University and ordained bishop for the Diocese of Rochester. It is noted of John Fisher that he immersed himself in his pastoral responsibilities with great energy and pastoral care.

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A popular preacher who was in great demand, Fisher was chosen to preach at the funerals of King Henry VII and Lady Margaret herself. He was considered by many to be the holiest and most scholarly bishop in all Christendom during his life. Even the humanist, Erasmus, had the highest regard for Fisher, calling him “the best scholar in his nation, and its most saintly prelate.”

He began the study of Greek at the age of 48 and Hebrew at age 51. He wrote books defending the Catholic faith against the accusations of Martin Luther, which constituted the first serious refutation of Lutheran teachings in England. He also upheld the doctrines of the Real Presence and the sacrificial nature of the Mass against Protestants in various English universities.

At the same time, Fisher was also committed to church reform. He spoke out strongly against the worldliness and laxity of the clergy. However, he believed that, for the sake of unity, reform should be initiated within the Church rather than against it. His theological positions were influential at the Council of Trent.

When King Henry VIII contemplated divorce and remarriage, it was John Fisher who argued for the validity and indissolubility of his first marriage. Fisher later protested Henry's new title as “Supreme Head of the Church of England,” which ultimately led to his arrest as a traitor, imprisonment in the Tower of London and death sentence.

John Fisher was beheaded on June 22, 1534 at age 66. At his execution, he retained his dignity, pardoning his executioner and declaring that he was dying for the faith of Christ's Church. He asked for the spectators' prayers, recited the Te Deum and then a psalm. He was a great source of inspiration and strength for fellow martyr St. Thomas More, who followed Fisher's lead in standing against King Henry. John Fisher was canonized in 1935. His feast day is the same day as Saint Thomas More, June 22.

Welcoming People Back to Mass: A Key to Good Stewardship



The COVID pandemic may not be over yet, but there are many hopeful signs we see all around us for a return to some sense of normalcy. One indicator is that more people are returning to the weekend Masses. We could see a return of parishioners and visitors to our parish for weekend liturgies as people begin to relax and travel in the summer months. The creative way we greet and provide hospitality for our guests during these times of social distancing says a lot about our practice of good stewardship.

Extending hospitality is especially important when it comes to welcoming visitors who may be attending Mass at our parish for the first time.

Providing hospitality to parishioners and strangers alike is a hallmark of Christian stewardship. In the Gospel of Matthew good stewards were commended for their hospitality: “I was a stranger and you welcomed me” (Matt. 25:35). Saint Benedict directed his followers to receive guests and travelers as if they were Christ. Extending hospitality is especially important when it comes to welcoming visitors who may be attending Mass at our parish for the first time.

There is significant anecdotal evidence suggesting that the ability of a person to have a meaningful experience of Christ in the liturgy is directly impacted by the warmth of the welcome extended by the local worshipping community. When people say hello, the worship experience is enhanced. A warm welcome is part of evangelization, work necessary in a church’s mission to help people discover or renew their faith in Christ.

How do we treat the unknown person who walks by us in church, or who sits next to us at Mass? Do we ignore them? Talk around them? Look at them and say nothing? Do we take the initiative to greet them, smile and extend a warm welcome?

Remember, we are Christ’s ambassadors (2 Corinthians 5:20). Our actions and reactions toward returning parishioners and new visitors at Mass communicate who we are and who we represent. Let us take time to welcome others to our parish this summer. Welcoming gestures, however small, will not only have a positive impact on fellow parishioners and visitors, they will make us more hospitable ambassadors of Christ.



A Day We Celebrate as the Body of Christ

On the weekend of June 5 and 6, Catholics in the United States celebrate the Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ. We used to call it the Feast of Corpus Christi (“Body of Christ”), a feast that celebrates Jesus’ gift of himself in the Eucharist.

The feast originated in France in the mid-thirteenth century and was extended to the whole Church by Pope Urban IV in 1264. In much of the world, it is celebrated on the Thursday following the Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity. In the United States it is celebrated on the Sunday following Trinity Sunday.

There are two major themes to this feast: the Body of Christ that is the Holy Eucharist and the Body of Christ that is our communion of faith, the Church. The Church is called the Body of Christ because of the intimate communion which Jesus shares with us, his disciples. It is expressed in the New Testament by using the metaphor of a body in which Christ Jesus is the head. This image helps keep in focus both the unity and the rich diversity of our family of faith.

When we gather for the Liturgy of the Eucharist, we become one with

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Christ, transformed by his loving gift. We become one with Christ in the person we may not know sitting next to us in the pew; in the crowds walking in Eucharistic processions in the Philippines; in the victims of parish bombings while at Mass in Nigeria; in the young Polish students getting ready for World Youth Day; and in the Peruvian children receiving Holy Communion for the first time, singing “Somos el Cuerpo de Cristo”/“We Are the Body of Christ.”

When we gather for the Liturgy of the Eucharist, we become one with Christ, transformed by his loving gift.

The feast encourages us to embrace the Eucharistic reality that although we may be strangers sharing the one Lord's table wherever we are, we are one, just as the many grains of wheat make up one loaf of bread, and the many grapes make up the shared wine in the Lord's cup of blessing.

There should be a genuine connection between what we do in the Eucharistic celebration and the attitudes we embrace and the actions we take in our public and private lives. In the Eucharist, Christ has given us a share of God's mercy and hospitality. Let us pray that God will show us the way to unity through our devotion to Christ in the Eucharist so that we can offer a more genuinely compelling and fruitful witness to a world in need of God's love and compassion.

ALL GLORY AND HONOR TO GOD!

A Stewardship Letter to a Parish Family

Excerpted from a letter by Mary Ann Otto, Minister for Missionary Discipleship, St. Mary Parish, Appleton, Wisconsin

PHEW!!! We made it! We made it through the sleepy world of winter to the spring alive with color and the promise of the sun on our faces. We made it through the worst of the isolation to the hope of gathering with loved ones found in the gift of the vaccination. We made it through being a virtual church family to masking up and slowly returning to look into each other's eyes in joy and understanding of the mutual experience of the past year. God's grace is everywhere!

Our parish family has made it as well! It began with the parish team on a Sunday evening from their respective

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homes learning how to use Zoom. That story could be a comedy routine but it eventually lead to the possibility to hold all parish committee meetings and even virtual groups. We made it as we struggled through the technology for livestreaming our Masses and the patience we learned relying on that elusive thing called the internet. We made it as we walked with our families in the midst of a full-blown pandemic. God's blessings were upon us!

Through the generosity of our parish family, we were able to keep our Ministry Team employed not only to “hold down the fort” but also to stay connected with our most vulnerable. We were able to continue to plan for our post-COVID time by moving forward with our new Mission and Vision and planning for our Parish Synod. Though our weekly giving is down due to decline in Mass attendance, we truly hope our parish family will return to the generous giving of the past, God has allowed us to keep moving forward and we are grateful!

The pandemic has taught us a vital lesson about the importance of communication technology, especially in the area of worship. Perhaps you and your family found comfort in the opportunity to celebrate Mass and our important seasons like Advent, Christmas, Lent and Easter with our pastor in a familiar setting. Maybe seeing the faces of friends as well as sharing your life and Jesus in a virtual group made the isolation a little more tolerable.

We believe the Holy Spirit works through the technology of every generation to bring the love and message of Jesus to our parish family and all those we encounter. In the end as a community of disciples, sharing Jesus is what matters most. It is our call and our privilege.

Yes, we made it! Let's continue to express our gratitude!

ALL GLORY AND HONOR TO GOD!



INTERNATIONAL CATHOLIC STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL

59th Annual Conference

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

CLERGY TO CLERGY

Be inspired by the words of wisdom from those who preach and promote stewardship as a way of life enriched by the Holy Spirit!



**Most Reverend
Thomas Wenski**
Archbishop of Miami



Rev. Robert Kantor
Pastor
St. Agnes Catholic Church
Naples, FL
*Recipient of the ICSC Archbishop
Murphy Parish Stewardship Award*



Rev. Michael Renninger
Pastor
St. Mary's Catholic Church
Richmond, VA



Rev. John Piderit
Retired Moderator of the Curia/
Vicar for Administration
Archdiocese of San Francisco

*Let's Share our Common Reality
and Vision for the Future
of our Church!*



The Dream of Elijah
Philippe de Champaigne
oil on canvas, 1655
Musée de Tessenay, Le Mans, France

RESTORE
our JOY

Psalm 51:14



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A STEWARDSHIP MOMENT

Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ Weekend of June 5/6, 2021

Today's Gospel gives St. Mark's account of Jesus gathering his disciples for a last supper, revealing to them a new covenant established through his own blood that would be poured out as a sacrifice from them. Every time we participate in the Eucharist, we make a pledge to renew and deepen our participation in Christ's covenant in practical ways. For those who exercise stewardship of Christ's covenant, that means making daily, personal sacrifices to strengthen this covenant relationship such as deepening our relationship with the Lord in prayer, supporting our parish, and giving comfort to the poor and those who suffer. As we begin to see our way out of the COVID pandemic, it is a good time to reflect on how we might renew and strengthen our covenant with the Lord and our community in practical ways.

Eleventh Sunday in Ordinary Time Weekend of June 12/13, 2021

In today's Gospel, Jesus compares the beginning of God's kingdom to a mustard seed. This tiny seed, which fits in the palm of a hand, can grow to fifteen feet with sprawling branches. Like the mustard seed, the Christian community had a tiny, seemingly insignificant beginning. The church, which began with about 120 followers, added three thousand people on Pentecost Day following the descent of the Holy Spirit. Since then, the number of Christ's disciples has grown incalculably and continues to grow throughout the world. Good stewards go about God's business of "planting seeds" among all those they encounter. What will we do this week to "plant seeds" and add to God's kingdom?

Twelfth Sunday in Ordinary Time Weekend of June 19/20, 2021

In today's Gospel we listen to Jesus' disciples crying out in fear of a great storm. Their cry echoes the cries of people around the world during the pandemic. It is the ultimate cry of fear, doubt and abandonment. It is a parable of the situation of all of us when cast adrift in the storms of our lives, seemingly without God's presence and care. But God is with us. Jesus does calm the storm for his disciples. Good stewards have faith that they do not live in a world where they should live in fear and chaos, seeing themselves alone and abandoned by God. Reflect this week on your own faith in the promises of Jesus. Do you believe Jesus is in our midst and can calm the storms in our lives?

Thirteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time Weekend of June 26/27, 2021

In today's second reading, St. Paul teaches the community at Corinth about a spirituality of giving. He urges them to give and helps them understand that through their generosity, they will in turn be recipients of a spiritual abundance. They will receive from those who are the beneficiaries of their own giving a reciprocal gift that amounts to an equality of giving that deepens their relationship with Christ Jesus. A good reflection this week would be to think of the ways your own life has been enriched by your generosity. How might you have reaped a spiritual abundance through your own generous behavior?