



INTERNATIONAL CATHOLIC STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL CATHOLIC STEWARDSHIP

August 2021 • e-Bulletin

A STEWARDSHIP PRAYER for August

The Canticle of Mary

My soul proclaims the greatness
of the Lord;
my spirit rejoices in God my savior.
For he has looked upon his handmaid's
lowliness;
behold, from now on all ages will
call me blessed.
The mighty one has done great things
for me, and holy is his name.

His mercy is from age to age
to those who fear him.
He has shown might with his arm,
dispersed the arrogant of mind and heart.
He has thrown down the rulers
from their thrones but
lifted up the lowly.
The hungry he has filled with good things;
the rich he has sent away empty.

He has helped Israel his servant,
remembering his mercy,
according to his promise to our fathers,
to Abraham and to his descendants
forever.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit:
as it was in the beginning,
is now, and ever shall be,
world without end.

Amen.

see Luke 1:46-55
(New American Bible, rev. ed. 2011)



Stewardship: The Path to Better Discipleship in Christ



This article is Part III of a three-part series on Christian stewardship 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.

When I was a student at Sacred Heart School in Lake Worth, Florida, where I grew up, the sisters had us write JMJ on all our papers and homework assignments. JMJ stood for Jesus, Mary and Joseph. The sisters wanted us to understand that everything we do should be a prayer — the lifting up of our minds and hearts to God — even homework, and so: JMJ, Jesus, Mary and Joseph. Likewise, stewardship is born of and sustained by prayer.



**Stewardship calls us to be both committed disciples
and coherent missionaries, accountable to the Lord for
the gifts he has given us.**

The sisters also had us write AMDG — *Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam* — for the Greater Glory of God. They also wanted us to give our best effort, because you don't give God much glory unless you give your very best.

Incumbent on each one of us, then, is the need to be better disciples by growing in our personal, living relationship with Christ, and the need to be better missionaries by leading by example our fellow brothers and sisters to a new experience of holiness and abundant life in Christ. The good steward is a missionary disciple who shares God's love, by selflessly contributing his or her time, talent and treasure, and in doing so offers a future of hope to all, especially to those most in need. Stewardship calls us to be both committed disciples and coherent missionaries, accountable to the Lord for the gifts he has given us. As stewards, we

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share what we have experienced in the lived intimacy of our communion with Christ so that others may experience the joy of knowing him.

As Teresa of Avila said, "Christ has no body now but yours." Today, it is through our eyes that Christ looks with compassion on this world; it is with our feet that he walks to do good, with our hands that he blesses the entire world.

The good steward is a missionary disciple who shares God's love, by selflessly contributing his or her time, talent and treasure, and in doing so offers a future of hope to all, especially to those most in need.

If we think of stewardship as being about an annual local fundraiser or a tithing program, we sell it, and ourselves, short. Stewardship would then become a burden rather than helping us to discover the joy of giving, which again in the words of the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council, is the way, the only way, we will realize ourselves fully as human beings and thus respond to our baptismal vocation to holiness by becoming the people God meant us to be.

In the end, to be a Christian is not a burden, it is a gift; and to know Jesus Christ is the best thing that has ever happened to us; and using our time, talent and treasure to share him with others is a joy. Recalling again the words of St. Peter, consider the gifts you have received from God, and prayerfully discern how you as a missionary disciple use your gifts of time, talent and treasure to advance the mission of our Church.

I pray that your experience of stewardship will be, for you, a joy, a grace, a treasure received and shared.

STEWARDSHIP SAINT *for August*



St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross (Edith Stein)

Edith Stein was born in 1891 to a Jewish family living in Breslau, Germany. From a very young age she was intellectually curious and loved to learn. She rejected her family's Jewish piety and even God because her observation was that people acted as though they did not believe in God. She was a brilliant university student and graduated *summa cum laude* with a doctoral degree in philosophy. She became the assistant to one of the most influential philosophers of the 20th century, Edmund Husserl, who recognized and admired her intellectual gifts.

"St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross says to us all: 'Do not accept anything as the truth if it lacks love. And do not accept anything as love which lacks truth!'"

In 1921 Edith had a conversion experience. At age 30, she began reading the autobiography of St. Teresa of Avila in a friend's library and couldn't put it down. "*This is the truth!*" she exclaimed. She converted to Catholicism and was baptized on New Year's Day, 1922.

Edith soon became well regarded as a Catholic philosopher and author. She left her university appointment as Husserl's assistant and took a position teaching at a Dominican college for women teachers in Speyer, Germany. While there, she studied the philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas and published the first German translation of his treatise *The Truth*. She also lectured widely to Catholic women's groups throughout Europe.

Edith was passionate about her teaching, writing and lectures, but she yearned for a deeper relationship with God. In 1933 she entered religious formation in the Carmelite community at Cologne, Germany and made her final vows on Easter Sunday 1935, taking the name Teresa Benedicta of the Cross.

As the persecution of Jews in Germany intensified in the late 30s, Sister Teresa Benedicta was taken out of the country. On New Year's Eve 1938, she secretly crossed the border into the Netherlands where she was welcomed by the Carmelite community at Echt. There she would write her final book, *The Science of the Cross*, a study of the spirituality of St. John of the Cross.

The German Army invaded the Netherlands in 1940 and Sister Teresa's situation would again become perilous. She and her sister Rosa, also a Catholic convert, were eventually arrested and transported by cattle train to Auschwitz, where they perished in a gas chamber on August 9, 1942.

In his homily at the time of her canonization in 1998, St. John Paul II said: "St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross says to us all: 'Do not accept anything as the truth if it lacks love. And do not accept anything as love which lacks truth!'"

The feast day of Saint Teresa Benedicta of the Cross is August 9.

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Our First Christian Steward: The Blessed Virgin Mary

On August 15 we celebrate the Feast of the Assumption; the day we recall Our Blessed Mother being assumed into heaven and crowned queen. In the Gospel reading on this day we hear proclaimed once again the Canticle of Mary, recorded in the Gospel of Luke (1:46-55). It is the Virgin Mary's song of joy in response to her cousin Elizabeth's greeting (Luke 1: 41-45), and summarizes Mary's deep faith and trust in God.

This joyous song is also known as the *Magnificat*, from the opening line of scripture's Latin translation which means "My soul magnifies the Lord" ("*Magnificat anima mea Dominum*"). The *Magnificat* is a beautiful stewardship prayer used by the Church every day since the fifth century. It is a hymn at Evening Prayer in the Liturgy of the Hours.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches us that the *Magnificat*:
... is the song both of the Mother of God and of the Church; the song of the Daughter of Zion and of the new

People of God; the song of thanksgiving for the fullness of graces poured out in the economy of salvation and the song of the "poor" whose hope is met by the fulfillment... (#2619).

Among the many stewardship themes in this reading, the prayer helps

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us realize that God's stewardship plan turns the world's values upside down. God comes to the aid of the poor and lowly, to the detriment of the rich and powerful. And for those who entrust their lives to the Lord, they are filled with good things. As a young woman, humble and poor, Mary becomes an interpreter of God's plan of salvation, she reveals to us the fundamentals of good stewardship, and she becomes a prophetic witness to social justice for all future generations who "will call me



blessed" (Luke 1: 48). Mary was the first disciple, the first Christian steward of God's plan.

Take a few moments and pray this stewardship prayer. Consider its implications for your life. How do you magnify the Lord? How do you make God "bigger" in your day-to-day world? How do you bring God's compassion to the poor?

Retreat, Relationships, Conference-There is Still Time

by Mary Ann Otto, Minister of Missionary Discipleship, St. Mary Parish, Appleton, Wisconsin



It is difficult to believe that we are just weeks away from the ICSC Conference in Orlando. As we continue with our work in our parish, diocese, foundation or other ministries, there is a growing awareness that we will be stepping out of our daily routines soon and heading toward a city that is called "that magical place."

In some ways, it is like preparing to take a brief respite from what might be our own "normal" life, especially after the ordeals and uncertainty we've face the past 12 months. We have the opportunity now to step into a world that is filled with the energy of an International Conference. Experts provide pertinent workshops covering everything from the spirituality of stewardship to best practices in enhancing parish ministries, to encouraging financial generosity at the parish, school and diocesan level.

The opportunity to visit the exhibitor area and explore the latest in materials and technology is a gift. To have a one-on one, face to face, question and answer session with organizations that specialize in problem solving and enhancing parish and diocesan life is exceptional. We come to the conference with our list of needs ready to explore all the possibilities and return to our parishes and diocese with ideas and solutions so that we may be even better ambassadors of Jesus Christ.

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In the whirlwind of this conference environment we also find the beauty of a retreat atmosphere. Remembering that this is all for God's glory, the beautiful Masses, prayer services, as well as opportunities for Eucharistic Adoration and praying the Rosary affirm our motivation for attending and allow us to worship and rest in the company of other believers.



The opportunity to establish new friendships and to be reunited with known colleagues in Christ is worth the effort of attending.

Perhaps one of the most understated yet grace-filled benefits that I consider as I prepare to put my ministerial calendar in order for my absence and bring up my suitcase is in the area of relationship building. The opportunity to establish new friendships and to be reunited with known colleagues in Christ is worth the effort of attending. We know that the Holy Spirit is able to encourage, support and inspire our ministerial efforts through our relationship with others. I think our brothers and sisters of the early Church would concur.

The ICSC Conference is the complete package: Retreat, Relationships and Conference. Step out of your world for three days and experience it all. There is still time.



Leadership from the Pulpit... and from the Pews

This is the third in a series of articles by Dr. Dan R. Ebener on leading stewardship and evangelization in the Catholic Church. They are based on his book, Pastoral Leadership: How to Lead in a Catholic Parish, published by Paulist Press and the Villanova University Center for Church Management. Dr. Ebener teaches at St. Ambrose University in Davenport, Iowa.

Some people figure that only those with titles and positions can be leaders. Pope Francis believes that everyone can be a leader – pastors and deacons, women and men, young and old, parish council and finance council. For the past century, each pope has elevated the role of the laity in the mission of the Church.

With the Great Commission (Matt 28:19), Jesus calls all disciples to become apostles. Disciples are those who follow in the footsteps of Jesus. Apostles are those who go out and make other disciples. Jesus calls us to live as disciples and to lead like apostles. He commissions every one of us to lead at some point.

Vibrant parishes recruit new people into ministry roles and encourage them to take the initiative.

Parishes grow when people rotate in and out of leadership. Vibrant parishes recruit new people into ministry roles and encourage them to take the initiative. These parishes score higher on measures of engagement, which means people are inspired to live as disciples of Jesus.

Anyone can lead change in the Church – if they choose to lead. Leadership is not a position. It is a choice! You can lead when you see that change is necessary and you decide to influence others to change with you. You can lead with or without positional authority.

Those without authority cannot sit back and blame those in charge for the decline in active engagement in the Church. We all need to go out and model the change we want to see and lead others into this life with Jesus. We all need to live as stewards and evangelizers.

Stewards are those who respond to the call to discipleship and live in Jesus. Evangelizers are those who go out and invite others into that life of discipleship. Leaders are those who engage others in a voluntary, interactive process that intends real change.



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A STEWARDSHIP MOMENT

Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time Weekend of July 31, August 1, 2021

In today's Gospel we hear Jesus proclaiming that he is "the bread of life." He then offers an invitation to come to him. For us, the invitation is to live the Eucharistic life in Christ. What does it mean for our parish family to live together in the Eucharist? What does it mean for us to share the Eucharist together, to participate in the "bread of life" together? Does it mean we love each other, support our community of faith, work together? Do we carry each other's burdens? Celebrate our joys? What are the practical implications of being good stewards of our Eucharistic life together?

Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time Weekend of August 7-8, 2021

The Letter to the Ephesians urges us to be mindful that part of our life together in the Eucharist means being kind to one another, compassionate and forgiving, just as Christ has forgiven us. What can we do this week to show our kindness, compassion and forgiving attitude toward others in our family of faith? How can we be even better stewards of our faith community as, what St. Paul refers to as "Imitators of God?"

The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary Weekend of August 14-15, 2021

In today's Gospel we hear Mary's cousin, Elizabeth, bestow the gift of two blessings on Mary when she greets her. Elizabeth blesses Mary not only because she believes that Mary is the mother of the Lord, but also because she recognizes that Mary has complete faith in God's promise. When Elizabeth prophetically pronounces Mary "blessed ... among women" and proclaims that the fruit of Mary's womb is blessed, she uses the same term that Jesus uses to bless people in the Beatitudes. Good stewards recognize the Spirit-driven love and courage that inspired Elizabeth's

hospitality toward a young, unmarried, pregnant woman and the honor Elizabeth bestowed upon Mary who would ordinarily be shamed for bearing this child. In what ways can we extend the blessings we receive in the Eucharistic celebration to others in order to honor them and offer them God's hospitality?

Twenty-first Sunday in Ordinary Time Weekend of August 21-22, 2021

In today's Gospel, we hear that a number of Jesus' followers left him because his message was too difficult for them to accept. In essence, they did not believe in him. He then asked the Twelve if they wished to leave as well. Peter responds by making a profound profession of faith in Jesus as Lord and Savior. The Twelve made a choice and stood by their choice, remaining loyal to their commitment to Jesus. A good question for our reflection might be this: Are we satisfied with the stewardship we exercise over our baptismal commitment? Are we just "along for the ride?" Are we keeping Christ in front of us as we make decisions about our daily activities, our relationships, our parish, issues in the workplace, issues such as peace and justice? What is the quality of our stewardship?

Twenty-second Sunday in Ordinary Time Weekend 28-29, 2021

In the reading from the letter of St. James we are urged to be "doers" of the Gospel, not just listeners. Being a "steward" of God's Word is a matter of listening to the Good News, embracing the Good News and putting the Good News into action in our day-to-day lives. And whenever we are uncertain as to what decisions to make or actions to take as good stewards of the Gospel, St. James reminds us: We can never go wrong if we resist popular values that are not compatible with the Gospel, and we come to the aid of those who are burdened, distressed and poor.