

Stewardship and the Joy of Opening Our Hearts to Christ



Excerpt from a homily by the Most Reverend Thomas Wenski, archbishop of Miami, at the Eucharistic celebration to open the 59th annual conference of the International Catholic Stewardship Council in Orlando, Florida, on September 12, 2021.

In Saint Mark's Gospel we have witnessed the beginning of Jesus' ministry when he gathered a group of disciples to himself, and he went about Galilee doing good through some remarkable miracles.

As I remind the priests in the Archdiocese of Miami, Jesus didn't start off talking about the cross. He started off by first making friends, establishing relationships with people; people whom he met at their level, speaking their language.

I think this is perhaps the genius of Pope Francis. He understands that evangelization is first about an encounter. "Come and see," Jesus tells those first disciples. They

come, they spend time with him and they follow him because his personality, his words, his deeds are attractive. In a word, they experience the joy of the Gospel.

"Restore our Joy!" This is a wonderful theme for the ICSC conference this week, especially as you prepare for a transformational future beyond this current Coronavirus environment. But I would be remiss if I did not thank you, not only in my name, but also in the name of all the bishops for gathering together to pray, reflect and strengthen each other for the task ahead and for all that you do for the Church to promote stewardship.

All of our parishes and dioceses have experienced some financial pain during these past several months in which the normality of our lives has been disrupted. Our diocesan stewardship offices around the country have done great work in encouraging people to give online, not only to help our parishes but to help our people who also were hurting financially because of this virus. Even if it did not infect all of us, it certainly has affected every one of us.

Of course, stewardship is not about increasing the Sunday offertory collection. It is not about fundraising. Stewardship is not a program. It is a way of life. It is the way of life for those who have opened wide the doors of their hearts to Christ.

The road map towards a transformational future and the restoration of our joy lies in presenting Christ as he really is. For to be a Christian is not a burden but a gift, having encountered him is the best thing that has happened to us and to share him with others by the gifts of our time, talent and treasure, even at the cost of our very selves, is good stewardship. And it brings us joy.