

# INTERNATIONAL CATHOLIC STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL CATHOLIC STEWARDSHIP

October 2021 • e-Bulletin

## A STEWARDSHIP PRAYER for October



My Lord Jesus,  
As the rains hide the stars,  
as the autumn mist hides the hills,  
as the clouds veil the blue  
of the skies,  
so the dark happenings of the world  
hide the shining of your face  
from me.  
Yet, if I may hold your hand  
in the darkness,  
it is enough, since I know that,  
as the steward of your grace,  
though I may stumble on this  
journey of mine,  
you will not let me fall.  
Amen.

*Inspired by a Celtic prayer*

## 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 59<sup>th</sup> 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.

## STEWARDSHIP SAINT *for October*



### Saint Luke

Luke is the author of the third Gospel and was a companion of Saint Paul. According to reliable tradition, he was a Syrian physician from Antioch who wrote his Gospel in Achaia (Greece). Both the Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles are attributed to Luke, because he appears to be the person intended by the first-person reference in Acts. The opening of Acts refers to the Gospel and is dedicated to the same person, Theophilus.

The basic point of Luke's New Testament writings is to emphasize the love and compassion of Jesus Christ. Luke also has an interest in the reality of poverty and reveals a deep concern for the poor, the outcast, and the underprivileged throughout the Gospel.

Stewardship is a major theme in Luke's Gospel. Indeed, what emerges from Luke's writings is a sophisticated theology of stewardship that is unique to his Gospel and not addressed so profoundly by other New Testament writers. Luke defines the duty and role of a steward as a unique sort of servant who is entrusted with material possessions by a master, takes charge of them and is required to use them prudently.

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Luke believes stewards are not just a chosen or appointed few. Stewardship is the responsibility of all Christian disciples.

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Luke envisions the steward as not having any possessions or property of his own, but as taking care of his master's property and wealth until the master summons him to turn in an account of his stewardship.

There is a finiteness to stewardship. According to Luke, a steward carries out his responsibilities with alertness, knowing that the master's return may come at any time. And depending on the quality of his stewardship, there is the anticipation of a reward as a result of his stewardship. Luke believes stewards are not just a chosen or appointed few. Stewardship is the responsibility of all Christian disciples.

Luke takes his basic ideas of stewardship and applies them to the motif of material possessions as well, instructing his readers on the right use of wealth and the wrong use of wealth.

Finally, Luke's concept of almsgiving, based on his theology of stewardship, was unique and radical at the time of his writing. Almsgiving was considered an obligation of Christian disciples; imperative inside and outside the community. Luke enjoined his readers to look upon the poor with genuine sympathy and urged those with material resources to remember their identity as stewards, to distribute their wealth to the poor as alms, and to give up ownership of their own material possessions.

Luke is the patron saint of physicians, artists and butchers. His feast day is October 18.



## Fair Trade Month

### Exercising Good Stewardship of Our Pocketbooks

*His Holiness, Pope Benedict XVI, reminded us that as Christian disciples and as consumers, we have a specific social responsibility:*

"It is good for people to realize that purchasing is always a moral—and not simply—an economic act. Hence the consumer has a specific social responsibility, which goes hand-in-hand with the social responsibility of the enterprise" (Caritas in Veritate, ("Charity in Truth"), no. 66).

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Fair Trade Month is a time to educate ourselves about who and where our consumer products come from.

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October is Fair Trade Month, a month that gives the Christian steward an opportunity to prayerfully reflect more deeply into that social responsibility as a consumer and for ongoing formation about what it means to love one's neighbor and how Church teaching encourages us to show more care about living beings, about our food and about the planet.

Fair Trade Month is a time to educate ourselves about who and where our consumer products come

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from. It is a time to put the spotlight on companies that do not treat workers with dignity and a time to celebrate the farms, factories, brands and retailers that do care about the earth, its resources and their workers.

Pope Benedict's call was urgent and getting a better grasp of what Fair Trade is all about creates opportunities for us to respond to Pope Benedict's call in a small but

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Church teaching encourages us to show more care about living beings, about our food and about the planet.

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significant way every day through the choices we make as consumers. When we make the conscious choice to purchase Fair Trade items, we are putting the values of Catholic social teaching into action, and working to realize our vision of economic justice. This month helps us explore the connections between Fair Trade and the core principles of Catholic social teaching.

There is a great deal of information online about Fair Trade and Catholic social teaching. Fair Trade invites us to ask questions about our products, and to think about who and where they come from. It encourages us to be more conscious about how we steward our dollars every time we shop. In many ways, Fair Trade can help us deepen our relationship with Christ Jesus by ensuring that we are following the Gospel imperative to love our neighbor.

## Tips for Ongoing Parish Stewardship Formation

Excepted and adapted from Leisa Anslinger's *Abundant Living, Abundant Giving* (New London, CT: Twenty-Third Publications, 2020).

Helping people understand themselves and grow as Christian stewards requires an ongoing process of parish faith formation. Often, parish pastoral leaders begin to share the stewardship message with parishioners and see initial growth in their willingness to share their time, offer service and give financially, but then the stewardship messages cease, their efforts wane and there is a corresponding drop in parishioner participation. Because stewardship is a way of life, leading people to grow as faithful stewards must be sustained for the long term. This requires us to be attentive to every means of communication and faith formation possible with people at every age and state of life and faith.

One key to ongoing stewardship formation is helping parishioners make connections with the Sunday readings and liturgical seasons. The rhythm of the liturgical year provides a framework for the ways we hear and respond to the gospel call to stewardship. Making stewardship connections to the readings and sharing the stewardship message through the lens of the liturgical seasons helps to establish a pattern of ongoing reflection, discernment and action in the lives of parishioners.

As you shape your stewardship communications and practices, keep these themes in mind. Look for them in the Sunday readings and make connections through the homily, stewardship highlights and communications, faith formation, in parish meetings and during sacramental preparation. Here are some themes to consider during times of sacramental preparation or general catechesis:



- Key stewardship themes generally and for highlighting the Sacrament of Baptism: discipleship, following Jesus, conversion, blessing, grace, body of Christ, self-giving, service, compassion, justice, love.
- Key stewardship themes for highlighting the Sacrament of Confirmation: Holy Spirit, gifts, talents, inspiration, strength, discernment, outpouring, mission.
- Key stewardship themes for highlighting the Sacrament of Eucharist: Thanksgiving, presence, lifelong, sacrifice, call-response, conversion, being sent.

Wherever your parish is in stewardship formation, remember to use the communications vehicles at your disposal, make connections between stewardship and the Sunday readings and be mindful of key stewardship themes you can use in the areas of faith formation, sacramental preparation and other areas of parish catechesis. This process will help you discover even more ways to help parishioners embrace stewardship as a way of life.



# 2021 Virtual Conference



## RESTORE *our* JOY

Psalms 51:14

November 3-5  
& December 1-2, 2021

The Success of the 59<sup>th</sup> Annual ICSC Conference  
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# Stewardship and the Family

We refer to the family as the “domestic Church.” It is a phrase the Second Vatican Council brought forth from the writings of the early Church fathers and describes family life as the center of Catholic spirituality and faith. Those of us who live in a modern family, though, can attest to the incredible challenges of creating a family life that fully lives up to that image of “domestic Church” especially in the autumn of each year.

Even during these still uncertain times, busy schedules have emerged to become routine again. Family members feel as though they live as ships passing in the night. Job demands, class schedules, school



What can we do to exercise better stewardship of our families? How about starting with the family meal? Schedule a breakfast or brunch on Sunday after Mass.



events, parish activities, business trips, commute times, sports – the list goes on. Experts tell us the family dinner, a nightly event years ago, is an increasingly rare occurrence, and even when families are together under one roof, smart phones, televisions, and every imaginable screen demanding their attention keep them isolated from each other in the same house, even the same room.

What can we do to make sacred the “domestic Church” within our homes? What can we do to exercise

better stewardship of our families? How about starting with the family meal? Schedule a breakfast or brunch on Sunday after Mass. The table celebration could include everyone’s favorite food. Make it a family event from beginning through clean-up. Keep a large, visible calendar on which everyone’s schedule is noted, so that a family dinner can be planned and prioritized. That meal should be a social occasion, not the time to check if Bobby passed his science test or scold Suzy because she wouldn’t get out of bed that morning. It is a time for pleasant conversation, no electronic devices permitted. And don’t worry if it’s not roast beef – pizza out of a box and a salad can be just as fun.

Then, create a plan to work on family prayer time. Besides going to Sunday Mass together, how about a time in the evening when everyone stops what they’re doing and gathers for just a few moments before bedtime for prayer? Perhaps

use commute times – the trip to the soccer field or the morning drive to school – to share a brief and heartfelt prayer with your children. Do your children see you pray with Scripture? Let children see you make prayer a priority. Saint John Paul II stressed the importance of prayer as a family. “Prayer makes the Son of God present among us,” he wrote.

What else might you do to elevate the sacredness of your own domestic Church? Do your children see you honor special time with your spouse? Do you make quality time with each child individually? Do you listen to them when they speak, or are you checking your cell phone texts as they talk? Communicate the idea that family comes first and they will catch on. As a steward of your family, prioritize your own sense of family stewardship. If our children grow up with the idea that “church” is indelibly linked to “family,” their faith will grow stronger.



## A STEWARDSHIP MOMENT

### **Twenty-seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time Weekend of October 2/3, 2021**

In today's Gospel Jesus teaches us about the sacredness of marriage; a covenant that is a gift from God. Our relationships with our spouses, family, friends, coworkers, and those in our community of faith are all gifts from God. Jesus reminds us today that it is the hardened heart that damages or breaks up relationships. Good stewards understand the holiness of relationships and pray for the love, patience, understanding and kindness necessary to sustain those relationships. Take time out to prayerfully reflect on your relationships this week. Is your stewardship of these relationships as God intended? What relationships need to be healed and reconciled?

### **Twenty-eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time Weekend of October 9/10, 2021**

Jesus offers a hard lesson regarding wealth and possessions in today's Gospel. The rich man whom he encountered could not part with his possessions as a condition to becoming a disciple of Jesus. Would our response be the same as the rich man? Do we place our trust in our money and possessions instead of trusting in God's generosity? Do we seek security in our possessions? Good stewards realize that their possessions must not possess them, lest those possessions block their relationship with the Lord.

### **Twenty-ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time Weekend of October 16/17, 2021**

In today's Gospel Jesus teaches his disciples that whoever wishes to be great among them must be a servant, just as he came to be a servant. Good stewards know that their "greatness" is found in God, and is affirmed by a serving heart, a Spirit-filled life, a humble walk and a commitment

to acting in ways that glorify God. The "greatness" we feel about ourselves is rooted in a proper view of God in our lives and a proper view of our place in creation. It is from here that we derive our sense of identity and our belief that human life is particularly valuable. Not to be a servant of the Gospel and others would be poor stewardship. In what ways do we serve the Gospel in our daily lives?

### **Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time Weekend of October 23/24, 2021**

After healing the blind man in today's Gospel Jesus told him to go, to be on his way. But the man chose to follow Jesus. Being a disciple of Jesus is a choice. The stewardship way of life likewise involves a choice, in fact many choices. We choose to be grateful, we choose to live generously, and we choose to trust that God will always provide for our needs. These are three choices central to the stewardship way of life. What choices will we make this week that give witness to our decision to follow Jesus Christ?

### **Thirty-first Sunday in Ordinary Time For the weekend of October 30/31, 2021**

In today's Gospel Jesus said: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." It was not meant to be a suggestion or an option. He didn't say we shall love our neighbor when it fits into our day or suits our schedule, or after we've completed our various recreations. It is a requirement for Christians; to exercise good stewardship over the neighbors entrusted to us by God. It is a requirement often ignored when we put up barriers of anger, fear, or intolerance for a neighbor. How can we look beyond our own personal difficulties to see what we can do to love the person who lives next door, works next to us, or who sits next to us in the church pew?