



INTERNATIONAL CATHOLIC STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL CATHOLIC STEWARDSHIP

January 2022 • e-Bulletin

A STEWARDSHIP PRAYER *for the New Year*

Good and gracious God,
a new year of grace is upon us,
giving us impressions of
crisp beginnings
new goals, a fresh sense of hope
even in these uncertain times.

Though we cling to our own
expectations
for the year ahead,
we know you alone
are the sovereign of our future,
Lord of our lives, and the source
of whatever good we may do.

We thank you, O Lord,
for the gift of the days and weeks
you have entrusted to us.
Teach us to be good stewards
of our time ahead,
that we go about our days
keeping you
at the center of our lives.

In the midst of the current pandemic
and the suffering it brings,
focus our eyes on the needs of others;
help us respond with compassion
to the poor;
and open our hearts
to a suffering world.

We ask for a year of peace,
a year that brings an end
to hatred, polarization,
and the health crisis;
and a year where we find
a deeper joy
that can only be found in you.

We ask this through Christ your Son
who lives and reigns with you
and the Holy Spirit,
God, forever and ever.
Amen.

Resolve to Embrace God's Compassion in the New Year

January is traditionally the time for new beginnings, fresh starts. For the Christian steward, the grace of being given another day, or God willing, a whole new year, stirs our deep gratitude even as we are confronted with the current pandemic. But it also calls us to ask what a "resolution" should really be. Our first resolve should always be to involve ourselves more intimately in the life of Christ, and how better to do that than by embracing Christ's call to be compassionate?



Compassion is the doorway to a more responsive
stewardship and a committed discipleship.

After all, Jesus himself instructed us, "Be compassionate as your Father is compassionate" (Luke 6:36). Clearly, we strive now to live and give compassionately, as we generally understand the term. We try to be kind, considerate and understanding individuals. We share with others. But Jesus' words challenge us to embrace a compassion that is much deeper, much more radical than our general understanding.

The word compassion, at its root, means "to suffer with." This goes beyond merely writing a check, offering a prayer or sending a note. Suffering is not a popular notion in our society and we strive to avoid it. But now we hear Christ instructing us to "suffer with" the poor, the vulnerable, the powerless, the neglected and the weak.

Continued on next page



How can we possibly choose such a journey, this challenge to be truly present to those who suffer?

All things are possible with God, and it is through a commitment to a life of discipline, discipline in action and discipline in prayer, that we move towards the goal of true compassion.

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The Christian steward is committed to the Eucharistic life, and it is through this life which Christ offers us that we gain the courage and the will and even the need to follow him in his own example of compassion.

Compassion is the doorway to a more responsive stewardship and a committed discipleship. Through our deepening sense of compassion in 2022, may we resolve to be the kind of Christian stewards who bring Christ's presence more profoundly to a suffering world.

STEWARDSHIP SAINT for January



Saint Angela Merici

Angela Merici was born in a small town in the Republic of Venice around 1470. She was orphaned when she was ten years old and moved in with relatives in the city of Brescia, in northern Italy.

When Angela Merici returned to her hometown, she began to devote her life to the education of impoverished young women. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, education for women was reserved for the wealthy, and for nuns, who were the best educated.

Angela loved working with children, and she believed that education and Christian formation were especially needed for young girls. She devoted her time to teaching girls in her home, which she had converted into a school.

Angela brought together a group of unmarried women who went out into the streets to gather up the girls they saw to teach them and offer religious instruction in their homes. These women had little money, but were bound together by their dedication to education and commitment to serving Jesus Christ. She would remind her group that they had a greater need to serve the poor than the poor had of their service. She embraced a prayerful and simple lifestyle.

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Angela's group was so successful that Angela was asked to bring her innovative approach to educating young women to other cities. Her ministry impressed many, and was brought to the attention of Pope Clement VII.

In 1535, Angela Merici chose twelve young women and formally started the Company of Saint Ursula in a small house in Brescia. Although it was never a recognized religious order in her lifetime, Angela's Company of Saint Ursula, or the Ursuline nuns, was the first group of women religious to work outside of a cloister and the first teaching order of women.

Among some of the last pieces of advice she gave her fellow sisters was a stewardship message: that they should do in life what they would have wanted to do in death. She died on 27 January 1540 at seventy years of age. Her feast day is January 27.

The Challenge of Giving Back to God in Love

The following excerpt is Part I of a pastoral reflection on stewardship by the Most Reverend Charles C. Thompson, Archbishop of Indianapolis, Indiana, in his series, "Christ the Cornerstone." Part II of this reflection will be offered in the February eBulletin.



"Amen, I say to you, this poor widow put in more than all the other contributors to the treasury. For they have all contributed from their surplus wealth, but she, from her poverty, has contributed all she had, her whole livelihood" (Mk 12:43-44).

The Gospel reading for the Thirty-second Sunday in Ordinary Time (Mk 12:38-44) tells the familiar story of what has come to be known as "the widow's mite." St. Mark tells us that Jesus "sat down opposite the treasury and observed how the crowd put money into the treasury" (Mk 12:41). As Jesus watches the people contributing money, he observes that "many rich people put in large sums. A poor widow also came and put in two small coins worth a few cents" (Mk 12:41-42).

The "two small coins" that St. Mark tells us were "worth a few cents" have been identified as bronze mites (lepta in Greek) that are together worth a quadrans, the smallest Roman coin. A mite, or lepton, was the smallest and least valuable coin in circulation in Judea at the time of Jesus, worth about six minutes of an average daily wage. This is certainly not a substantial financial contribution, but as Jesus tells his disciples, the widow's gift is worth far more than the large sums contributed by the wealthy.

Jesus does not disparage the large gifts from wealthy donors, but he does praise the widow's sacrificial gift of two small coins. Why? Because "she, from her poverty, has contributed all she had, her whole livelihood" (Mk 12:44). The widow has made a substantive, sacrificial gift. After contributing her two small coins, she has nothing left. The wealthy donors have made significant large gifts that, presumably, will make a difference in the operations of the Temple. But their gifts come from surplus, not substance. In effect, they are giving what is left over after all their other needs are met.

Who is the good steward here? The wealthy who have lots to give and share their wealth generously? Or the poor woman whose small coins are practically worthless? The answer is obvious, but the reasons behind this answer are not always so clear. After all, stewardship is not about money. It's about giving from the heart.

Helping Your Parish Enhance Its Life of Stewardship in the New Year

By Leisa Anslinger

As parishes continue to recover from nearly two years of the pandemic, turning the page to a new year offers us the opportunity to review time that has passed, parishioners that have not returned to Mass, and ministerial activities that have been deferred. It is a time to look forward to newness of life and ministry in the year to come.

As individuals, we recognize our many blessings, give thanks for God's merciful love, and re-commit ourselves to living as disciples and



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stewards, with resolutions to solidify our commitment to Christ and one another. In our parishes, we can do the same: look back on the year that has just passed while looking toward the one to come. While the reflection itself may lead to enhanced pastoral life, a more focused examination of past and current practice will bear great fruit. I suggest we do so by using what has become a popular strategic planning and time management phrase: name it, claim it, aim it!

Continued on next page

Continued from previous page

Name it: In what ways has your parish helped people to understand the meaning and spiritual underpinnings of stewardship as a way of life? What annual rhythm of stewardship education, lay witnesses, homily connections, and invitation to commitment has been established? How do you help people recognize stewardship as a disciple's response, by pointing their attention to Christ's way of self-giving love?

Claim it: List the practices you already have in place. Where is there room for growth? Are there aspects of your stewardship formation that have become stale or have never quite taken hold? What might you learn from effective practices, yours or someone else's, in order to address these areas of potential growth?

As individuals, we recognize our many blessings, give thanks for God's merciful love, and re-commit ourselves to living as disciples and stewards

Aim it: Gather your parish advisory group (committee, commission, task group) to reflect and discuss. Invite members to tell their stories of stewardship insights and challenges in living as a disciple and steward, especially during the last 22 months. Together, give thanks to God for what has been, and ask for guidance, insight, blessing and strength as you discern future possibilities; celebrate the year that has been; acknowledge the areas in need of attention; plan new or enhanced strategies for calling people to grow as good stewards in the year that is just beginning. Your parish will grow in response to God's grace and blessing, and you and all with whom you minister will grow as servant leaders, stewards of the mysteries of God.



ICSC Celebrates Its 60th Anniversary at the 2022 Stewardship Conference

Members of the International Catholic Stewardship Council (ICSC) family will celebrate ICSC's 60th anniversary from October 2 to 5, 2022 at the Hilton Hotel in Anaheim, California. The theme for this 60th anniversary conference is ***Stewardship: A Disciple's Response*** which is the title of the pastoral letter issued by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops in 1992. The year 2022 is also the pastoral letter's 30th anniversary. The 2022 ICSC Stewardship Conference offers its members and other attendees a chance to gather and reflect on stewardship in the Catholic Church and to continue to prepare for its transformational future in light of our current COVID-19 environment.

The 60th anniversary of the Second Vatican Council will be celebrated in 2022 as well. This great Council of the Catholic Church first convened on October 11, 1962. We remember the Second Vatican Council as an extraordinary moment of renewal for the Church and the inspiration behind the establishment of ICSC.

The conference image is that of the vestibule dome of Our Lady's Presentation Chapel in Saint Peter's Basilica at the Vatican. This chapel celebrates the presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary. At the opening of the Council, the bishops processed by this altar dedicated to Mary and asked for her prayers and intercessions. The United States bishops' pastoral letter pays homage to Our Lady as the model of Christian stewardship par excellence. ICSC is consecrated to the Blessed Mother and ICSC members continue asking for her intercessions today.

As a gathering of Catholic stewardship leaders and fund development professionals from across North America and beyond, the ICSC Stewardship Conference continues to support all those looking for creative ways to bring people closer to Jesus Christ through their evangelizing and stewardship formation efforts. ICSC attendees also come together to pray, experience a more profound Catholic collegiality and be inspired. The ICSC family invites pastors, parish pastoral staff, Catholic school leaders and Catholic stewardship and development professionals to join them to embrace the Gospel imperative of Stewardship: A Disciple's Response.

60 YEARS

THE 2022 ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Stewardship: A Disciple's Response

Anaheim, California
October 2-5, 2022

60th Anniversary of the Second Vatican Council

| 60th Anniversary of the International Catholic Stewardship Council

30th Anniversary of the United States Catholic Conference of Bishops' pastoral letter *Stewardship: A Disciple's Response*

ADVENT/CHRISTMAS DISCOUNT!

Register now for \$399.

Limited to the first 100 registrants!



Hurry! Rates increase January 7, 2022
[CLICK HERE](#) to register today!



A STEWARDSHIP MOMENT

Solemnity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of God Saturday, January 1, 2022

In today's first reading, God bestows three blessings upon Moses and directs him to extend those blessings to others: The Lord blesses you and keeps you. The Lord lets his face shine upon you and be gracious to you. The Lord looks upon you kindly and gives you peace. Good stewards realize these blessings are showered upon them in a unique and special way each time they receive the Eucharist, and exercising good stewardship of the Lord's blessings in this sacrament begins by receiving these gifts with profound gratitude. Take time this week to memorize these marvelous blessings and repeat them to yourself frequently. Make them part of your morning prayer each day.

The Epiphany of the Lord Sunday, January 2, 2022

In today's second reading we hear Saint Paul teach the community at Ephesus that God's revelation had come, not just to their community, but to others as well; that a broader community of believers was being allowed to exercise stewardship over the Good News. Good stewards recognize that it is in our life together as a Eucharistic community that we find ever new vistas and insights into God's vast universe of love and mercy. If we take time to listen to one another, we discover stories of faith beyond our own. Pause this week to converse with others, listen to their prayers, and observe acts of kindness and generosity. See if you can gain an understanding of God and the world that you have not experienced or known before.

The Baptism of the Lord Weekend of January 8/9, 2022

In today's reading from the Gospel of Luke we hear the proclamation of the baptism of Jesus with "all the people." Indeed, "heaven was opened," and the Father announced his special favor. Whenever we partake of the body and blood of Christ, heed his call in our daily lives, share his Good News, become instruments of his transforming justice and peace, heaven is opened to us, and through the Holy Spirit, the Lord announces his special favor on us as well. A good stewardship reflection this week might be this: How, or in what ways, have we personally experienced God's special favor in our lives?

Second Sunday in Ordinary Time Weekend of January 15/16, 2022

In today's second reading, Saint Paul makes a list of gifts dispensed to members of the Christian community by the Holy Spirit. Each gift bestowed has a specific purpose for the person for whom it is intended: wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, mighty deeds, prophecy, discernment, tongues, and interpretation. Good stewards know these gifts are not meant to be kept hidden by the recipient but to be shared with the community and beyond. As we begin a new year, let us reflect on the gift the Holy Spirit has given to each of us. Do we recognize this gift? How was it intended that we use this gift? Are we being good stewards of this gift?

Third Sunday in Ordinary Time Weekend of January 22/23, 2022

Today's reading from the Gospel of Luke offers us the first words of Jesus as he begins his public ministry. The words reflect his understanding of his Spirit-anointed mission. His words are his "Mission Statement." Good stewards rejoice in being followers of Jesus. They realize that Jesus' commission is their commission as well. They embrace it and adopt it as their own. We, too, have "glad tidings" to bring to a suffering world. This year, how will we fulfill Christ's commission in the world in which he has placed us, using the gifts he has entrusted to us?

Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time Weekend of January 29/30, 2022

In today's second reading we find one of the most beautiful and familiar passages in the Bible; a recitation of fifteen characteristics of Christian love typically read at weddings and anniversary celebrations. Of course, this was not what Saint Paul had in mind when he was chastising the Christian community at Corinth for its lack of love. He admonished the members of the community to exercise better stewardship of Christian love. The practice of patience, humility, joy, truth, peace, affirmation, and hope are ways good stewards put love into action. Might there be one or two of these attributes we can work on in order to grow in our love for God and others?