



INTERNATIONAL CATHOLIC STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL  
**CATHOLIC STEWARDSHIP**

March 2022 • e-Bulletin

**A STEWARDSHIP PRAYER**  
*for March*

Merciful Lord,

As we make our journey of renewal toward the great paschal feast of Easter, teach us to be good stewards of your mercy and forgiveness, so that we may extend these gifts to others.

Give us the strength to bear witness to you at all times, even in times of stress and adversity.

And fill our hearts with love that we may be faithful to the Gospel Jesus proclaimed and ready to celebrate his resurrection.

Grant this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever.

Amen.



## Embracing the Cross of Jesus Christ



The Lenten season offers us a unique opportunity to focus more intently on the gift of the cross. Do you ever think about how you experience the cross of Jesus Christ? Do you ever think about the power of that cross in your daily life? Is the cross even relevant to your life? It is to stewards of the Lord, who recognize the hope Christ brings through the gift of his cross. They acknowledge that for them, the cross is their only hope. Being good stewards of our life in Christ is not easy, but to embrace the cross is not only countercultural, it seems absurd. Then again, we cannot avoid what Jesus said to his disciples:

*If you wish to come after me you must deny yourself and take up your cross daily and follow me. For if you wish to save your life, you will lose it; but if you lose your life for my sake you will save it (Luke 9:23-24).*

The cross is more readily embraced by people of faith who suffer, are poor, broken, or are the victims of such things as violence, oppression or natural disasters. They see the cross as the hope that no matter what has happened to them, God will see them through. The Father did it for Jesus who hung on the cross, so surely their sufferings will be redeemed by Jesus' sufferings.

Where people possess much material abundance, comfort and leisure, however, there is a tendency to de-emphasize the cross, to draw away from it. They can't touch it or feel it so they wish to "save" their lives by looking to other things: power, wealth, fame, relevance, being the center of attention. What is preached about the cross from the pulpit sounds good, but in reality something more tangible is desired.

Christ emptied himself completely in humble obedience, allowing himself to suffer and die out of compassion for the world (Philippians 2:6-11). Good stewards follow his example and work day-to-day to empty themselves and live compassionately; most noticeably by sharing their lives with others.

As we approach the climax of our liturgical year, the Easter triduum, let us ask the Holy Spirit for an even deeper awareness of the cross in our lives. Let us find hope in the cross and pray that as we embrace it, we too will experience in a special way the joy of new life in the risen Lord.

## STEWARDSHIP SAINT *for March*



### Saint Oscar Romero

Oscar Romero was born on the Feast of the Assumption, August 15, 1917, in Ciudad Barrios, a mountain village in El Salvador near the Honduran border. He was the second of seven children. Romero's father wanted him to be a carpenter and as a young man he showed considerable promise. But he felt a

strong call to the priesthood and pursued that vocation.

Romero studied in Rome and was ordained to the priesthood in 1942. He became a parish priest and later a seminary rector. He recognized the effectiveness of radio as a means of evangelizing and convinced five radio stations to broadcast his homilies and pastoral reflections. He continued to rely on the electronic pulpit throughout the remainder of his life, making it a popular platform for his ministry.

In 1970, Romero became an auxiliary bishop of the archdiocese of San Salvador, then bishop of Santiago de María in 1974, and finally, in 1977 archbishop of San Salvador.

Considered by many as a social conservative at the time of his appointment, Romero was deeply affected by the assassination of his friend Father Rutilio Grande in March 1977. His own pain prompted a spiritual conversion. From that point on Romero became an outspoken critic of the military dictatorship in El Salvador.

At the time, in a country of 5.5 million people, 57% of the arable land in El Salvador was owned by 14 families. As archbishop, Romero spoke out against the prevailing social injustice, severe economic inequality and violence amid the escalating conflict over economic reform. Romero actively denounced the recurring human rights violations of the most vulnerable people and defended the principles of protecting lives, promoting human dignity and opposing all forms of violence.

On March 24, 1980, as he was celebrating Mass in the chapel of the Carmelite Sisters' hospital for cancer patients where he lived, he was shot to death from the rear of the chapel by a paid assassin with a military assault rifle. His martyrdom was seen as strikingly similar to Saint Thomas Beckett's murder in Canterbury Cathedral.

Shortly after Romero's assassination, a civil war erupted in the country that didn't end until 1992 when a peace agreement was signed in Mexico City between the country's warring factions.

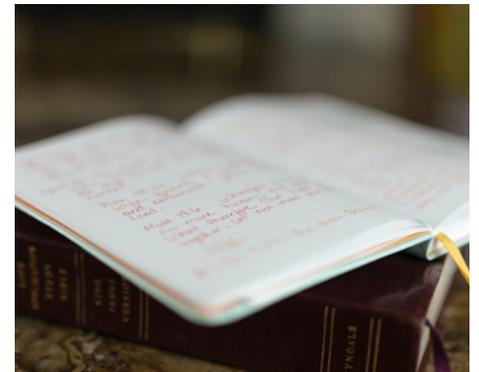
Oscar Romero's tomb in San Salvador's cathedral crypt draws thousands of visitors each year. In 2015, Pope Francis officially recognized him as a martyr for the Catholic faith. He was elevated to sainthood in 2018 and the Vatican is now giving consideration to proclaiming Romero a Doctor of the Church because of his faithful adherence to Catholic teachings on social justice and preferential option for the poor.

His feast day is March 24.



## Being Better Stewards of Spiritual Disciplines during Lent

The Lenten season is an ideal time to strengthen your relationship with God by employing some traditional spiritual disciplines such as prayer and fasting.



Everyone knows that prayer is communication with God. If you don't pray on a regular basis, (at least daily) then this Lenten season is a good time to start. If you do have a regular prayer routine, this might be a good time to add a new type of prayer to your routine, or to explore new avenues of prayer and reflection. Some things you might want to consider are:

- scripture study
- meditating on the life of Christ
- prayer journaling
- praying the rosary
- novenas

Look through prayer books and find a prayer that speaks to you. Read a psalm a day during Lent. Or, just sit quietly and listen for the Holy Spirit to speak to your heart.

Fasting is another discipline to be considered. What exactly is fasting? This is giving up something in order to gain a control over yourself. Most

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people are familiar with fasting from food, but fasting can be much more. You may choose to fast from television, or suggestive music, or R rated movies. Many people fast from smoking or drinking during Lent. You may choose to fast from bad habits like procrastination or junk food.



If you do have a regular prayer routine, this might be a good time to add a new type of prayer to your routine, or to explore new avenues of prayer and reflection.

It is usually a good idea to choose something over which you feel you have very little control. In this way you can become stronger with each day that you can do without it. Each day, as you fast from your chosen thing, remember to offer each instance when you might have done that thing as a prayer to God of your love for Him.

A spiritual discipline means challenging yourself. You may slip, but if you truly are doing it out of your love for God, then you can pick yourself back up and start again. So, get moving. Spend these forty days committed to being a better steward of your relationship with God, turning back toward God. Open new ways of communicating with Him, and strip away all of those bad habits that keep you from fully experiencing God's love.

## Parish Stewardship: Engaging People in the Life of the Church

*by Leisa Anslinger, Associate director, Center for Pastoral Vitality, Archdiocese of Cincinnati*

From the outset of the US bishops' pastoral letter, *Stewardship: A Disciple's Response*, we are asked to look honestly at the challenge of teaching stewardship and the choices those who walk the stewardship path must face. They name many of the "isms" of contemporary society, and speak of the temptation to be "of" the world, prioritizing the things valued by our surrounding Western culture. Additionally, the bishops name the challenge of trying to build up the Christian community in a time that prizes individualism: "For example, although religious people often speak about community, individualism infects the religious experience of many persons. Parishes, dioceses, and church institutions appear impersonal and alienating in the eyes of many. Evangelization is not the priority it should be. How to use people's gifts and charisms, how to empower the laity, how to recognize the role of women, how to affirm racial, cultural, and ethnic minorities, how to overcome poverty and oppression—these and countless other issues remain vexing questions, as well as opportunities." (SDR, Introduction) The challenges the bishops named 30 years ago remain "vexing questions," and if anything, even more pressing now than when the pastoral letter was first published.



Engaging people of differing cultures, races and talents as stewards in the community has a lasting impact on individuals and the parish or diocese

Many parish and diocesan leaders have recognized the importance of building up the community of faith, in ways that embrace the tremendous diversity of men and women of differing cultures, races and gifts and talents as expressions of the magnificence of God who is the creator and redeemer of all. These communities have found that an engaging community that celebrates and builds on the unique persons the members are, also compel people toward Christ by living as Christian people in the world. Engaging people as stewards in community has lasting impact on individuals and the parish or diocese, as well as those who are served in the local community and in the world. How is your community engaging people in the life of the Church by celebrating and drawing on their unique talents and gifts? In what ways does your diocese or parish help people to recognize and respond in gratitude to the many gifts and blessings in their lives?

60 YEARS

THE 2022 ANNUAL CONFERENCE  
*Stewardship: A Disciple's Response*

Anaheim, California  
October 2-5, 2022

60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Second Vatican Council

| 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the International Catholic Stewardship Council

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

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# Lent is a Time to Practice the Gifts of Patience and Perseverance

By Daniel Conway

In his 2022 Lenten Message, Pope Francis reminds us that the season of Lent is a time for personal and communal renewal. It is an exercise in the virtues of patience and perseverance that prepares us for the joy of Easter. Quoting St. Paul's letter to the Galatians, the Holy Father speaks of Lent as an opportune moment (kairos) for "sowing goodness in view of a future harvest."

Lent 2022 is taking place during a special time of preparation for the 2023 Synod of Bishops whose theme is synodality itself: Communion, Participation and Mission. Pope Francis has asked Catholics throughout the Universal Church in all regions of the world to commit to a threefold process of 1) listening to God's Word and to one another, 2) encountering Jesus in prayer, reception of the sacraments, and service to others, especially those



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who are most in need of our help, and 3) discerning God's will for our Church. Lent is indeed an opportune time to practice synodality, to listen prayerfully, to encounter Jesus, and to discern God's will—if only we can "seize the moment" and allow the Holy Spirit to guide and empower us with his sevenfold gifts.

The pope also tells us that "Lent invites us to conversion, to a change in mindset, so that life's truth and beauty may be found not so much in possessing as in giving, not so much in accumulating as in sowing and sharing goodness." This is why we pray, fast, and give alms during Lent—to renew our minds and hearts so that we can rediscover the meaning of life in the sowing and sharing of goodness.

"Let us never grow tired of doing good," St. Paul writes in his letter to the Galatians (6:9-10), "for in due time we shall reap our harvest, if we do not give up. So then, while we have the opportunity, let us do good to all." During Lent, fasting and abstinence are important because they are forms of spiritual discipline that prepare us for the foretaste

of joy that we will experience at Easter when we celebrate Christ's resurrection and His decisive victory over sin and death. At the same time, "doing good" (active charity towards our neighbors) is also central to our observance of Lent.

Through patience and perseverance, we can overcome our reluctance and indifference and become zealous in our commitment to sowing and sharing goodness. With the guidance and the support of the Holy Spirit, we can make this Lent a blessed time and a "foretaste of joy." May the gifts of the Holy Spirit give us the courage, wisdom, and fortitude we require to persevere in avoiding evil and doing good—during this Lenten season and always.



## A STEWARDSHIP MOMENT

### **First Sunday of Lent Weekend of March 5/6, 2022**

The second reading from Saint Paul to the Romans is a favorite of those involved in the ministry of evangelization. There are no “secret” disciples of the Lord. Those who exercise good stewardship of their faith realize that publicly identifying themselves as followers of Christ has a cleansing effect on their lives. Openly confessing Christ makes them more conscious of how they live their daily lives. Are we content to privatize our faith or are we good stewards of a faith that we share, make public, and regularly identify as a life in Christ?

### **Second Sunday of Lent Weekend of March 12/13, 2022**

In today’s second reading we learn that one of Saint Paul’s principles of Christian living is to watch and imitate other followers of Christ. There is a pattern for Christian living that Saint Paul wants others to discover and then imitate. This pattern includes a life of prayer, selflessness, sacrifice, and caring for others, including our family of faith. Good stewards choose their friends wisely. They cultivate friendships with other Christian stewards, spend time with them, observe how they live, ask questions about their faith and learn from them. Who are your friends? Are they good stewards of their faith? Are they those who can help you on your own journey of faith?

### **Third Sunday of Lent Weekend of March 19/20, 2022**

In today’s Gospel Jesus offers his parable about last chances. The fig tree will have one last chance to bear fruit before it is cut down and destroyed. Good stewards realize that, like the fig tree, they are endowed with God-given gifts that are meant to “bear fruit” for God and neighbor. God has legitimate expectations of them. They also realize they do not know how much time they have left before the gardener returns for an accounting of their fruitfulness. How are we using our God-given gifts? How might we use our gifts to bear more fruit? The answer requires some urgency.

### **Fourth Sunday of Lent Weekend of March 26/27, 2022**

Today we hear one of the most beloved stories in the Gospel of Luke, Jesus’ parable of the Prodigal Son. Reconciliation is a prominent theme. Seeing the younger son returning to him, the son who left the family and squandered his inheritance, the compassionate father runs to embrace him. Jesus offers us a vision of a loving God who is merciful and forgiving when we, through our own sinfulness, leave his presence, and then through repentance, return to him. The remainder of the Lenten season offers us an opportunity to reflect on God’s compassion and our need for reconciliation. If you have not done so already, consider celebrating the sacrament of reconciliation and experience God’s loving embrace and forgiveness.