

INTERNATIONAL CATHOLIC STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL
CATHOLIC STEWARDSHIP

September 2022 • e-Bulletin

**The 60th Annual ICSC Conference:
A Transforming Moment**

Thirty years ago, the United States Catholic bishops taught us to rediscover how stewardship can enhance our discipleship in the Lord Jesus in their pastoral letter, *Stewardship: A Disciple's Response*. Pope Francis urged each of us, as individual Catholics and parish communities, to a radical re-imagining of our life in Jesus Christ. In *The Joy of the Gospel*, the pontiff called for a complete reversal of our preoccupation with an inward, maintenance-focused church, to an outward, mission-focused church. At its 60th annual conference, the International Catholic Stewardship Council (ICSC), seeks to do just that.

A STEWARDSHIP PRAYER
for September

Heavenly Father,
September is a month that offers hope
for things to come:
our daily life has a new rhythm,
there are new beginnings
and new encounters,
and a new energy is seen in the
parish community.

In this month of accelerating activities,
keep us mindful that we live for Christ
and not for ourselves.
Give us the strength and
the wisdom to be
"Doers" of Your Word,
and not just listeners;
to be good stewards of
the Gospel each and every day.

In this month of transition
help us find a deeper spiritual
balance in our lives
that takes time for you,
listens to the promptings of your Spirit
and give us hope that
the body of Christ
has well begun the transformation of
a troubled world.
We ask this through your Son,
Jesus Christ,
who lives and reigns with you
and the Holy Spirit,
one God, forever and ever.
Amen.



The theme of this year's ICSC conference, to be held from October 2 to 5 in Anaheim, California, is *Stewardship: A Disciple's Response*, in response to the bishops and to our Holy Father's plea to form ourselves, and others, as missionary disciples of Jesus Christ. It will be a gathering of Catholic evangelization ministers and stewardship leaders from around the world. The conference has added a number of evangelization formation sessions in order to ignite a new chapter of evangelization and stewardship in the Church.

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Many past attendees have expressed amazement and sometimes being overwhelmed by the number and variety of sessions offered at the conference in both English and Spanish. Plenty of practical resources are available and speaker contact information is offered for follow up. Moreover, attending the conference has allowed participants to build relationships from like-minded Catholics in other countries and has helped many grow in their understanding of evangelization and stewardship from a global perspective.

Many have called past ICSC conferences transformative moments in their own spiritual lives.

Another reason participants return to the conference year after year is for the spiritual nourishment offered by the conference. Many have called past ICSC conferences transformative moments in their own spiritual lives. When over a thousand people eagerly gather for Mass and their voices fill a convention space, one can sense the awe-inspiring presence of Christ.

This year's conference image is that of the vestibule dome of the Presentation Chapel in Saint Peter's Basilica at the Vatican. This chapel celebrates the presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The bishops' stewardship pastoral letter pays homage to Our Lady as the model of Christian stewardship *par excellence*. ICSC is consecrated to the Blessed Mother and we continue asking for her intercessions today.

Pope Francis calls everyone in the Church, especially parishes, to be open to a "missionary conversion" and to learn how to share our lives as good stewards of the Gospel. Join us for ICSC's 60th anniversary conference and seize this opportunity to learn more about how to follow your own baptismal call to embrace stewardship as a disciple's response to Christ Jesus.



STEWARDSHIP SAINT *for September*

Saint Vincent de Paul

The feast day of Saint Vincent de Paul is September 27, the date of his passing in 1660. He was the founder of the Vincentians and the Sisters of Charity, and is the patron saint of all charitable organizations.

Born in 1581 to a peasant family in southwestern France, Vincent studied for the priesthood at a local Franciscan college and then at Toulouse University. He was ordained a priest at the age of nineteen.

Little is truly known of Vincent's early life in the priesthood except that he spent a year in Rome, perhaps studying. In 1612 he became a parish priest in a village just north of Paris and the following year became a tutor in the household of the wealthy and politically powerful Gondi family. He remained with the family for the next 12 years and spent some time as a parish priest where he attended to the needs of the sick and the poor in his parish. In 1617 he formed a group of women who ministered to the needs of these families. He established similar groups in other villages.

Around the year 1618 Vincent came to know Saint Francis de Sales, whose writings, especially the *Introduction to the Devout Life*, had a strong influence on him. That same year Vincent established a society of priests, sometimes referred to as "Vincentians," who with the financial support of Madame Gondi, would go from village to village on the Gondi estates to preach to the peasants and conduct missions. The mission work became so successful that with the approval of the archbishop of Paris and continued financial support of the Gondis, the group established a base in Paris and their community continued to grow along with their ministry.

Meanwhile the women's groups started to multiply. In 1633 Vincent began offering formal religious formation for this new group, called the Daughters of Charity. A new order of women religious was born that ministered in hospitals, orphanages, prisons and many other places. The order was formally approved by the Church in 1668.

Vincent's approach to a devout life of faith was to be simple, practical and to have confidence in God's love and mercy. He would maintain: "When you leave your prayer to care for a sick person, you leave God for God. To care for a sick person is to pray."

At Vincent's funeral the presiding bishop said that he had "changed the face of the Church." He was canonized in 1737. In 1833, Blessed Antoine Frederic Ozanam would found the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul. In 1885 Pope Leo XIII named St. Vincent de Paul universal patron of all works of charity.



September: A Recommitment to Stewardship

Summer's end brings with it nostalgia for carefree days, long nights, lazy weekend afternoons, reunions with families, and summer road trips.

But in our parishes, autumn brings a burst of new life that makes September feel almost like spring.

Why? For the Christian steward, fall brings a renewed sense of commitment. Literally, many of us make our commitment of time and resources to our parish during September or soon after. Stewardship and ministry fairs bring a sense of excitement to parish weekends, witness talks remind us of the good work to be done, renewed calls for sign-ups for Eucharistic Adoration are issued, and kids are everywhere – in our Catholic schools and in our faith formation programs -- filling us with hope and enthusiasm for our young Church.

This is the time when we reexamine and reconfirm our stewardship. If you found yourself away from your parish this summer – either through neglect or through travel and visits to other parishes – now is the time to get reacquainted. Our parish is our primary faith community, where we build relationships based on our shared values and sacramental life, and September is a wonderful way to come “home” to that community.

Some things which will draw you closer to your faith community during September:

- Visit, or better yet help with, the ministry fair. Spend time with people you may not have seen due to summer travels, and “meet and greet” any newcomers you spot.
- Make sure you go to your parish school's Back to School night if you have kids enrolled, or visit your child's faith formation class and introduce yourself to the teacher.
- Consider a new ministry this year. Think of something that will reinvigorate you, provide the greatest service, bring out your best talents, and help you to meet more of your fellow parishioners.
- Maybe you've gotten a new pastor or associate pastor over the summer. Now's the time to introduce yourself and issue a dinner invitation.
- Find out what adult faith formation classes or presentations are offered for the fall, and commit to at least one.
- Take inventory of your financial giving. Did you sometimes neglect the parish offertory during the summer months? Find out if your parish has online giving, or automatic withdrawal, so that your year-round stewardship helps provide the parish with a stable income.
- Make Sunday Mass your top weekend priority, ahead of sports, school activities, or other temptations.

Christ and the Spirituality of Work

On the first Monday of September, the U.S. observes Labor Day, a celebration of the strength and contributions of the nation's work force. The holiday goes back many years. Congress passed an act establishing it in 1894, and it was promoted by labor unions as they grew in power. Labor unions have experienced a decline in recent years, but their ascendancy in late 19th century and early 20th century America contributed to a growing middle class and safer working conditions for all.



Work isn't separated from our spirituality, but should be a conscious part of it.

For many Americans, Labor Day weekend is a celebration of summer's finale, a last hurrah of cook-outs and recreation before vacation time ends and the reality of school, parish committees and snow shovel sales looms. But for the Christian steward, Labor Day should also be a time to pause and reflect on our own work, the work of others in our economy, and what it means for our spiritual growth and the growth of the Kingdom of God.

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part of it. The Lectionary even provides special readings for Labor Day, and one of them is from Colossians 1:24 – 2:3 in which St. Paul describes the source of his strength as Christ’s “power working within me.” Paul is able to achieve his tremendous effort by his reliance on Christ. And his endeavors were tied to his desire to serve Christ in all things. Does this ring true for our own working environment? Does Christ occupy a place in our workday, in the marketplace? Or do we sometimes feel a disconnect, as if our faith is compartmentalized into another realm of our life, not integral to our work life?

Today, in America and other parts of the world, income disparity has become an increasing fact of life. Many people in the U.S. must labor at two jobs just to keep a roof over their heads. Some of the working poor must choose between food and medication. Where are we in this shifting economy? If we are doing well, do we think of our responsibility to the poor and to promoting a fair and just system? If our work feels lifeless and without purpose, do we consider our need to strengthen our relationship with Christ by our labor? As we enjoy summer’s final fling, keep in mind that laborers should be partners in the work of God on this earth, and ask, how does my work fit into God’s plan?



Connect Parish Giving with “Great Ideals”

By Leisa Anslinger, the 2022 recipient of ICSC’s Christian Stewardship Award

“Set your stakes on great ideals, the ideals that enlarge the heart,” Pope Francis once enjoined his listeners at a papal audience. “Life is not given to us to be jealously guarded for ourselves, but is given to us so that we may give it in turn” (April 24, 2013).

We can learn much from our pontiff’s teaching, especially in light of what we are learning about trends in giving among young adults. While the studies cited below include on-going research into the giving patterns of millennial adults, here are three ideas we can consider when inviting members of our parish community to give:

- 1. Consider the Parish as a Giving Circle, or Consider Giving Circles within the Parish:** One study concluded that people give more readily when they are part of a “giving circle.” When people are involved in determining the recipients of time, financial stewardship, and giving of their time and talent, they think more strategically and are therefore more generous in their giving habits.
- 2. Consider the Impact of Giving:** People want to know that their giving will have an impact on the recipients, and on themselves as givers. Often, we focus on the call to give as a response to God’s love and as part of our responsibility as disciples of Jesus Christ. It is not that we will stop doing this, of course, yet the Pope’s urging to “set your stakes on great ideals” is a perfect example of a rallying cry that people are likely to want to follow, particularly younger adults. Show people the “great ideal” of living Christ’s mission, give them some indication of the potential impact on themselves and those to whom they give, and participation is likely to increase.
- 3. Consider How You Cultivate Relationships of Trust:** People need a personal connection with or genuine trust in the leadership of an organization in order to increase the giving of themselves and their resources. These trusting relationships are built over time, and often begin with small, one-time “micro-volunteering” opportunities.

As parish leaders, let us set our stakes on great ideals, and invite our parish members to do so as well. In this way we have an even greater chance of helping them see themselves as good stewards of the many and varied gifts of God.

60 YEARS

THE 2022 ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Anaheim, California | October 2-5, 2022

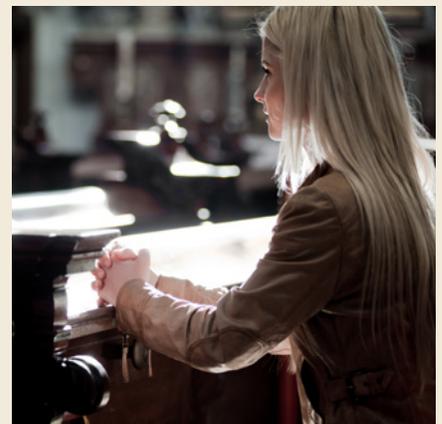


Interested in involving more young adults in parish life?

If you are looking for a place to network with those who have successfully engaged their young adults, and for sessions containing ideas to help you reach out to this important group in our Church, then you will certainly find what you are looking for at the 60th annual conference of the International Catholic Stewardship Council!

Over 80 sessions, keynotes and plenary sessions are scheduled, with many themes directly addressing our young adult population, such as:

- Engaging Young Adults
- Effectively Introducing Stewardship to Your Parish's Young Hispanics
- The Building Blocks to Creating Good Disciples in Each Generation
- Promoting Vocations: A Parish Priority
- Intentional Invitations: Welcoming All Catholics in Our Faith
- *And many others!*



CLICK
HERE

TO REGISTER TODAY!



A STEWARDSHIP MOMENT

Twenty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time Weekend of September 3/4 2022

At the conclusion of today's Gospel, we hear Jesus tell a "great crowd" that "...anyone of you who does not renounce all his possessions cannot be my disciple." A few of Jesus' immediate disciples, such as Peter, John and James, did just that: They responded to Jesus' call, renouncing everything to follow him. How do modern disciples of Jesus respond when confronted with this apparently harsh command of Jesus? Surely the renunciation of possessions need not mean literally giving all one's possessions away, does it? Questions we might ponder this week though: Do our possessions keep us from encountering Christ at Mass? Do they distract us from our parish family? Do our possessions interfere with our relationships? Do they make us insensitive to those less fortunate?

Twenty-fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time Weekend of September 10/11 2022

Among the primary themes in today's Gospel when we hear Jesus' well-known parable of the Prodigal Son is forgiveness and the need to repent. But from a stewardship point of view what is also interesting is one of the secondary themes: the failure to use responsibly the gifts that have been so generously bestowed. The youngest son who demanded his inheritance and left home broke no laws or religious commandments. His wrongdoing was that he wasted his inherited wealth, the abundant gifts given to him. His sin was in his extravagant living; squandering his gifts in pursuit of selfish pleasures. Good stewards acknowledge that everything they have comes from God, and they are required to cultivate these gifts responsibly. What are our God-given gifts? Do we use them responsibly? Do we exercise good stewardship over them?

Twenty-fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time Weekend of September 17/18 2022

In Jesus' parable of the Unjust Steward, we encounter a financial manager who has wasted his master's wealth and faces dismissal from his position. To overcome the crisis confronting him, the steward reduces some very considerable debts owed by poor neighbors to his master in order to help them out. Though the steward has sinned against God and his master by squandering what belongs to someone else, both the prudent way in which he goes about resolving the crisis coupled with relieving people who are in need can be seen as a way to better steward the gifts entrusted to us by God. Although good stewards today acknowledge that they may never use their God-given gifts in a way that completely conforms to the demands of the Gospel, a commitment to using their gifts with prudence and for the purpose of helping their neighbors wins God's favor.

Twenty-sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time Weekend of September 24/25 2022

In today's Gospel Jesus offers a warning about living selfishly in his parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus. The Rich Man holds sumptuous feasts and dresses in fine clothes. But despite his affluence he does nothing to relieve the painful hunger and debilitating condition of his neighbor Lazarus. He neglects to love his neighbor as he loves himself and is sent to hell for his lifestyle and desire for self-gratification. The Rich Man represents those who spend their money on their own personal pleasures with no regard for sharing their material possessions with the poor and needy in their own neighborhood. Good stewards realize the practical implications of not only loving God, but loving their neighbor as they would love themselves. Who are the less fortunate in our neighborhood? Do we share a portion of our own blessings with them?