



INTERNATIONAL CATHOLIC STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL CATHOLIC STEWARDSHIP

January 2023 • e-Bulletin

A STEWARDSHIP PRAYER for the New Year



Lord of new life,

Thank you for the gift of a new year.
You have entrusted us
with the coming days,
weeks and months as stewards
of your divine plan;
to live in gratitude, joy,
and an ever growing confidence
in your Kingdom to come.

We ask for the humility
to reform our lives;
the courage to commit ourselves
to you no matter the cost;
and the wisdom
to shine the light of faith
on others.

Open our hearts,
give us your Spirit
and show us how to
share your love
so that we may bring hope
to a world in need of your
justice and peace.

We pray to be a sign of your
grace in this new year
through your son, Jesus Christ,
who lives and reigns with you
and the Holy Spirit, one God,
forever and ever.

Amen



A New Year, New Beginnings for the Christian Steward

The practice of making New Year's resolutions goes back over 3000 years. The start of a New Year gives us the feeling of a fresh start, a new beginning, and new opportunities. It is a time when people feel that they can begin anew with their lives. Common New Year's resolutions are to lose weight, exercise more and eat healthier; or to spend more time with family. Still others include managing money better and being more organized.

Although there is nothing in the Bible or notable in Christian tradition about New Year's resolutions, many good stewards take advantage of this time of year to become closer to the Lord. They may re-commit themselves to pray more, to read the Bible, or to attend Mass more regularly. If you are looking for some ideas for your New Year's resolutions, here are a few to get you started:

Practice gratitude – Cultivating a grateful heart is the hallmark of a Christian steward. Every day, express thankfulness to the Lord and to others.

Encounter the Lord each day – Find time to be with the Lord each day, whether it be for an hour or ten minutes. Have a conversation with the Lord. Give your joys and worries to Him as well. Allow God's love to transform them. Our encounters will keep our eyes and ears open to the presence of Christ in our midst.

Be present to others – There is much celebration and mourning, joy and sorrow in peoples' lives. What a blessing it is to be able to share those times and not let others experience them alone. The gift of your presence to others is much more valuable than you realize.

Resist overwork – There is a pressure to produce, meet goals, be successful. But activities that lead us to overwork, constant fatigue and worry do not give glory to God. What God calls us to do we can do well. Be mindful that life requires balance, down time and letting go of unrealistic goals.

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Nurture friendships – Our friends are those we choose to be with, those with whom we spend our evenings, with whom we vacation, to whom we go to for advice. Friends are gifts from God who give us a greater appreciation of God's love for us. Friends need our time and love.

Give more – Good stewards realize that everything they have is entrusted to them as a gift to be shared. There is no better place to begin than sharing with the community that gathers around the Lord's table at Mass. Consider what you are giving to your parish and local diocese and commit to an even greater contribution as circumstances allow.

Make a difference in your parish community – Believe it or not, your parish community can use your talents. Offering your talents to your faith community is one of the most effective ways to feel useful and connected to others, and it is a potentially life-changing New Year's resolution.



Ask the Lord for guidance, strength and perseverance in achieving your resolutions.

Consider living more simply – We cannot find fulfillment in possessions. They add nothing to our self-worth. Jesus blessed the "poor in spirit" in his Sermon on the Mount; and Saint Francis of Assisi urged us to live with only what was necessary, for that is how we begin to find God.

Get healthy – Studies show that most people in North America are accelerating their own decline into premature old age, owing to poor diet and lack of physical activity. Be a good steward of your body. If necessary, plan a complete overhaul of your diet and exercise habits.

Don't give up – People give up their New Year's resolutions because of perfectionism and unrealistic expectations. So take it slow, be kind to yourself and keep trying. Resist the urge to throw your hands up and quit. You succeed through small, manageable changes over time.

Turn to the Lord – Ask the Lord for guidance, strength and perseverance in achieving your resolutions. In his letter to the Philippians, Saint Paul writes: "I can do everything through Him who gives me strength" (Phil 4:13). If God is the center of our New Year's resolutions, they have a better chance for success.

STEWARDSHIP SAINT *for January*

Saint André Bessette, C.S.C.



Saint Andre Bessette was born in 1845 in the village of Saint-Grégoire d'Iberville, in what is now the Archdiocese of Montreal, Canada. Baptized as Alfred, by the time he was 12 he had to work because both of his parents had died. At age 22 he moved to the United

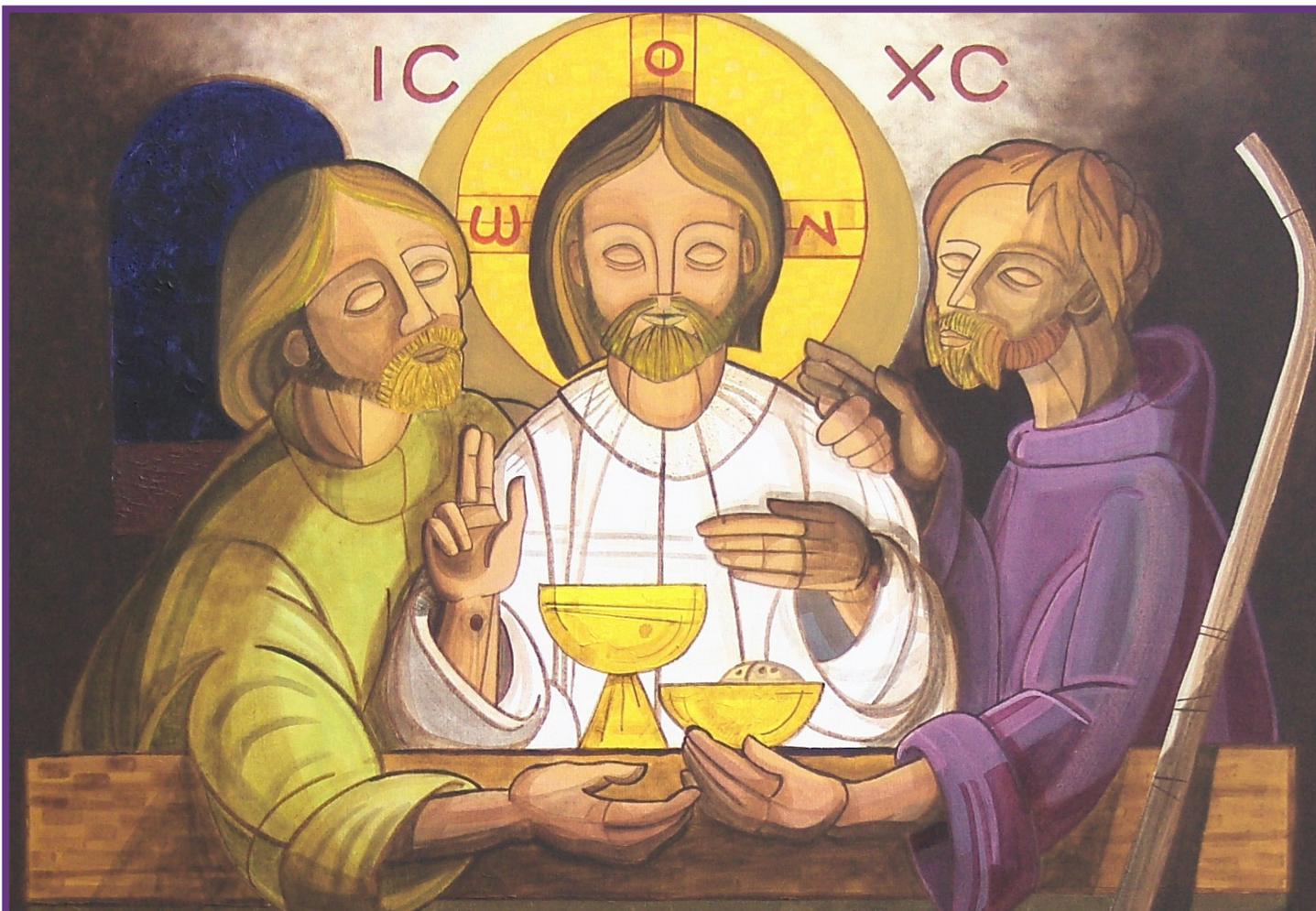
States, where he labored alternately in mills and on farms in New England. He returned to Montreal where he joined the Congregation of Holy Cross in 1870 with the encouragement of Father André Provençal, who had observed Alfred spending whole nights in prayer and sent a note with Alfred that read, "I am sending you a saint."

Alfred made his final vows in 1874 and was given the religious name of André. For some forty years Brother Andre served as janitor, porter, infirmarian, gardener, baker of the altar bread and in other capacities at the College of Our Lady of the Snows near Montreal. In 1905, at age 60, Brother Andre was transferred to Montreal.

Much attention centered on Brother André himself because of the number of cures that were attributed to him, so many, in fact, that he was called the "Miracle Man of Montreal."

From his childhood Brother Andre had a strong devotion to Saint Joseph and spent his life promoting devotion to the foster-father of Jesus. He founded and helped to build the Oratory of St. Joseph. The popularity of the oratory grew as it became a place of pilgrimage because of the many healings attributed to the intercession of Brother André and Saint Joseph. It was referred to as the "Lourdes of Canada," and became one of the most popular shrines in North America drawing millions of pilgrims to Montreal.

Much attention centered on Brother André himself because of the number of cures that were attributed to him, so many, in fact, that he was called the "Miracle Man of Montreal." Brother Andre died on January 6, 1937, at age 91. Over a million mourners processed past his casket. He was beatified by Saint John Paul II in 1982 and he was canonized a saint in 2010 by Pope Benedict XVI. His feast is on January 6.



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Leadership: Calling Others to Become Faithful Stewards

Stewarding Our Talents Together

By Leisa Anslinger

“You do realize that when I say “you need to do this” I am really saying that this needs to get done (not by you alone), don’t you?” I was a new pastoral staff member, still learning the ins and outs of parish ministry, and on this particular day I must have looked as overwhelmed as I sometimes felt. My pastor had said yet again, “you need to do this,” and I am sure my face told the tale. Interiorly, I was thinking, “I cannot do another thing!” And my pastor recognized this. His response, telling me that the details of the ministry were not for me to bear alone taught me a remarkable lesson: ministry is about applying the talents and gifts God gives to each of us. It is about learning to steward those talents together, recognizing that it will take all of us doing what we can in order to touch the world with the love of Christ.

In this life-giving way of ministry, we bring Christ’s love to life through our good and faithful stewardship.

As leaders, we often fall into the trap of thinking that if it is going to get done (whatever “it” might be), it will have to be done by us. Otherwise, we rationalize, it may not be done well, or at all, and it will certainly not be done our way. In working with parish leadership groups, I often meet people who admit that they are only serving in a particular ministry or leading an organization because Father or a staff member or friend asked them to. Often, we fill ministry roles by looking at the “slots” to fill: what needs to get done; how many people do we need; who might be willing to take this on? We rarely begin with talent, considering the particular qualities of people and inviting them to discern which ministries might be a good fit. And yet, this is the way that will lead people to serve with passion, energy, and with less burn out. Ministries flourish, as do the people who serve within them. And in this life-giving way of ministry, we bring Christ’s love to life through our good and faithful stewardship.

“Leadership is about setting a direction. It’s about creating a vision, empowering and inspiring people to want to achieve the vision, and enabling them to do so with energy and speed through an effective strategy. In its most basic sense, leadership is about mobilizing a group of people to jump into a better future.” This description of the leader from Dr. John Kotter presents much upon which we may reflect as people who desire to lead others to live as good and faithful stewards. Let us explore this description with our leadership role in mind.

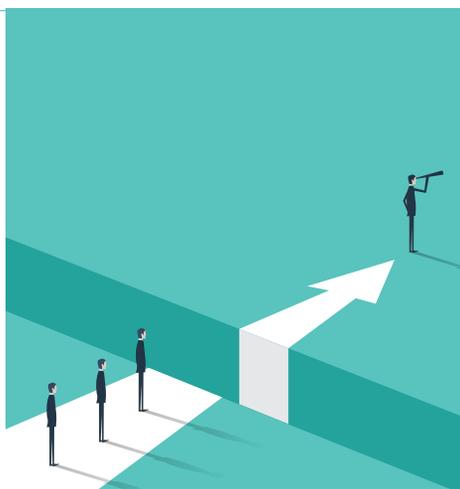
Setting a direction, creating a vision: In a certain sense, it is not we who create the vision. The vision is actually God’s, shown to us most fully in Jesus Christ. It is our responsibility and privilege to bring this vision to our parish communities, however, and this is an important aspect of what we do. We all know it is not enough to talk about stewardship once and consider the message sent! However, at times most of us feel as though we are repeating ourselves. Jesus probably felt that way, too, as he talked about love of God and love of neighbor over and over again!

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Empowering and inspiring people to want to achieve the vision: A priest once said that he had come to realize that when we animate the ministry and service of others, it is not so much about “empowerment,” since our service is not about power. Rather, we entrust ministry to one another, recognizing that each of us has something unique and powerful to contribute.

Developing an effective strategy: Many parish leaders struggle to move from reaction mode to a pro-active



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stance through careful discernment and planning. A plan creates a framework that serves as a springboard for action and response, and is a vital aspect of good leadership.

Mobilizing people to jump into a better future: We know the impact of growing and living as disciples and stewards. This life of stewardship touches others and changes us. The steward's way is the better way, for individuals, for our faith communities, and for the world!



Following Jesus

We follow all sorts of people and organizations on social media. Friends. Celebrities. A favorite author, athlete, charity, or business. At times, we may think before following: do we want the additional postings or emails? Typically, following a business or celebrity does not require much of a commitment. We may or may not read every post that comes through on our feed. We might respond, or we may not. Even when we do, our response is often as simple as hitting the “like” button. Following Jesus is a very different sort of thing.

Following Jesus is the work of a lifetime. At every step forward, one is challenged to go further in accepting and loving God's will.

To follow Jesus means to enter into a relationship with him and to exercise good stewardship over that relationship. When Jesus asks us to follow him, we know that doing so is to have an impact in our lives. As with any friendship, if our relationship with Jesus is to grow, we will have to spend time with and pay attention to him. At first, this might mean taking a few moments at the beginning or end of each day for prayer.

We may be more attentive during Mass; we may pause in the midst of our day's activities to notice the beauty of creation, the blessing of family and friends, the gift of kindness and patience shared among co-workers. The best of friends also influence each other, for the better. Growing in relationship with Jesus will change us, leading us to think of others as well as ourselves, often putting the needs of others first. We learn to be mindful of those who need to know God's love through our actions, serving them, sharing forgiveness, mercy, compassion, and faith.

Following Jesus is the work of a lifetime. At every step forward, one is challenged to go further in accepting and loving God's will. Being a disciple is not just something else to do, alongside many other things suitable for Christians; it is a total way of life and requires continuing conversion (*Stewardship: A Disciple's Response*, p. 15).

How will you follow Jesus now and into the future? How will you learn from and invite him to have an impact in your life? How will your stewardship of this relationship impact the way you live?



A STEWARDSHIP MOMENT

Solemnity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of God Weekend of December 31/January 1, 2023

The encounter between God and Moses in today's first reading is awe-inspiring. 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. Perhaps it would be a good idea this week to memorize these marvelous blessings and repeat them to yourself frequently. Make them part of your morning prayer each day.

Solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord Weekend of January 7/8, 2023

In today's second reading we hear the teachings of Saint Paul to the members of the Church at Ephesus. He proclaims that he, and they, are stewards of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and therefore stewards of God's loving, unifying and inclusive grace. He also proclaims that the Holy Spirit is at work within each of them, if only they would be open to the Spirit. Today, our world races by with intolerance, violence, desperate poverty, fear and division. At the beginning of this New Year, perhaps it is appropriate to reflect on Saint Paul's words and ask ourselves how we can be good stewards of the gospel today. How will we allow the Holy Spirit to work within us? How can we be better stewards of Christ's justice and peace?

Second Sunday in Ordinary Time Weekend of January 14/15, 2023

As the prophet Isaiah proclaims in the first reading, the Lord continues to remind us that we are his servants. Imagine the Lord speaking these words to you personally: "You are my

servant. Through you I show my glory. I formed you as my servant from your mother's womb. I will make you a light so that you may shine the light of my salvation everywhere you go, and reveal my glory to everyone you encounter. I will give you the strength to do this. I will give you confidence. Heed my words, for I have spoken to you." What would your response be to the Lord? Would it be different from the response you give the Lord now?

Third Sunday in Ordinary Time Weekend of January 21/22, 2023

In today's gospel we hear Jesus calling Peter, Andrew, James and John to follow him. Following Jesus was a difficult journey for these first disciples. It is difficult for us today. Jesus wants to teach us his way of thinking, acting and encountering the world. But it is not easy for us to embrace his teaching. Good stewards of Jesus' teachings realize they are on a spiritual journey, and must learn from their experiences of being open and resistant to the gospel. They realize the need to be liberated from those actions that keep them from enjoying a closer friendship with Jesus. What is it in our lives that we need to reform? What keeps us from revealing God's glory to others?

Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time Weekend of January 28/29, 2023

In today's Gospel, Jesus begins his Sermon on the Mount with a series of blessings, the Beatitudes. The Beatitudes are a summary of the fundamental attitude of a Christian steward. This speech sets the themes and tone for Christ's public ministry. He calls for a radical change in how we respond to the human condition. Good stewards understand that conversion is a lifelong process and trying to live the Beatitudes is fundamental to this process. Make it a point to reflect on this Gospel reading during the week. Identify the blessing you relate to the most. Which one is the most challenging for you?