

INTERNATIONAL CATHOLIC STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL

CATHOLIC STEWARDSHIP

November 2023 • e-Bulletin

A STEWARDSHIP PRAYER *for Thanksgiving*

Gracious and loving God,

As the autumn season continues
its transformation;

and the days become shorter,
the earth cooler;

as we join family and friends
in joy and celebration

on Thanksgiving Day,
we pause to give you thanks
and praise

for the abundant blessings

You have bestowed upon us:

for life and health,

safety and comfort,

food and nourishment.

Through your Spirit, open

our hearts

so that we may be even

better stewards

of Your many blessings.

Show us how to be a blessing

for the poor, sick, lonely and

all who suffer.

And help us nurture the gift of faith,

revealed to us by your Son,

Jesus Christ,

our greatest gift,

who reigns with you and the Holy

Spirit, God forever and ever.

Amen.



Transform November into a Month of Thanksgiving

Very soon Americans will celebrate the Thanksgiving holidays; a time where so much is devoted to sumptuous meals highlighted by turkey and pumpkin pie, traveling to and from the ancestral home, enjoying family, feasting on leftovers, seeing a Thanksgiving Day parade and watching football.

For many of us, Thanksgiving Day is so full of activity that there is a tendency to forget what's at the heart of Thanksgiving, offering our thanks to God for the many gifts that have been bestowed upon us. Although sometimes the reason for the holiday is forgotten in our secular culture today, good stewards of their life and faith recognize that Thanksgiving should be directed primarily in God's direction.



Take part of a day and walk or hike down a woodland path. Express your gratitude for the beauty of God's autumn creation.

Because the "busyness" of Thanksgiving Day can easily distract us from slowing down to a pace more suitable to adequately expressing our gratitude to God, perhaps this November we might allow Thanksgiving to permeate our lives for more than just a day. How about the entire month? Expressing gratitude is at the heart of good stewardship. So, let's dedicate a little time each day in November to giving thanks for our blessings.

Begin with November 1 and 2, All Saints Day and All Souls Day. Spend a few minutes each of those days thanking God for all the people in your life who have gone before you. Then, each day thereafter, set aside a few minutes to remember all that God has given you and say "Thank you."

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Take part of a day and walk or hike down a woodland path. Express your gratitude for the beauty of God's autumn creation.

Take a minute each day to thank the people in your life who matter to you. Tell them you're thankful for them. Drop someone a note, place a short phone call or even text them! Telling people you're thankful for them will enrich your life as well as theirs.

Drop someone a note, place a short phone call or maybe a video chat in order. Telling people you're thankful for them will enrich your life as well as theirs.

Make a point to attend at least one Mass outside the regular weekend Masses. Going to Mass on Thanksgiving morning is an excellent way to enrich that holiday. As a community of faith, we know that giving glory to God in this way is an important aspect of our communal life of faith.

Transform the month of November into a month of Thanksgiving. If you do, you will find your celebration of Thanksgiving Day a more richer and fuller experience than you could have imagined. In fact, you might just discover that your overall happiness with life improves. May this month of Thanksgiving be a time when we not only say "Thank You" to God, family and neighbor, but a time when our hearts draw us much closer to the Lord.

The Great American Smokeout: A Steward's Challenge



That charismatic leader of the Catholic Worker Movement, Dorothy Day, possessed a serious addiction to cigarettes. When she gave up smoking for Lent every year, she was so difficult to deal with that the staff of the Catholic Worker prayed for her to fail.

Smoking is a tough addiction. And we all know that few smokers are happy with this habit, which is the leading preventable cause of disease and premature death in the U.S. Today, most people smoke in privacy, ashamed of their cravings but feeling helpless. As Christian stewards, we know we must be good stewards of our health, but smoking presents a great challenge. The annual American Smokeout is Thursday, November 16. It offers hope and community to inspire quitting. It's an opportunity to join with as many as one-third of the 42 million smokers in the U.S. who take this day off from smoking as it focuses attention on smoking's dangers, including cardiovascular disease and cancer.

The Smokeout also helps us acknowledge the social ills of smoking – no matter how private your smoking, you can't hide the smell and are a nuisance if not a danger to those with smoke allergies or asthma, and a danger to others through second and even third hand smoke. That's not to mention the money that goes up in smoke – literally—every day.

Every smoker knows there are a hundred good reasons to quit and not one good reason to smoke. The American Cancer Society wants to help. Its website provides information and strategies for quitting, and shows nonsmoking friends and family members how to be supportive.

At one point, Dorothy Day's spiritual director told her that she was not to give up smoking anymore, but rather to pray, "Dear God, help me to stop smoking." She adopted this prayer not only during Lent, but every day of the rest of the year. Finally one day, the desire to smoke was completely gone. She never smoked again. Remember to reach out to your friends and loved ones addicted to smoking on November 16.

STEWARDSHIP SAINT *for November*



Saint Albert the Great

Saint Albert the Great was a 13th-century German Dominican priest, considered one of the most extraordinary men of his age alongside Peter Lombard, Roger Bacon and Saint Thomas Aquinas. His stewardship of the intellectual life, his students and our life of faith is profound.

For a time Albert was the pope's personal theologian, and in 1260 was appointed bishop of Regensburg, Germany, against his will. He remained for only three years before returning his time and energy to teaching and writing in Cologne. He enhanced his reputation for humility by refusing to ride horses. Instead, he

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Born in 1200, near Ulm, Albert was the eldest son of a powerful and wealthy German family. He was educated in the liberal arts at the University of Padua, Italy, and against his family's wishes, joined the Dominican Order in 1223.

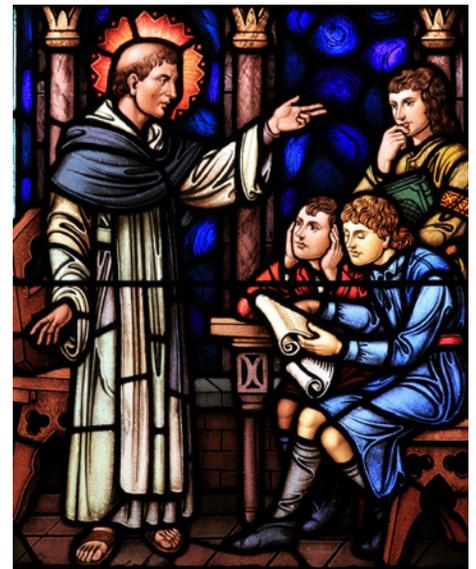
He earned his doctorate at the University of Paris and taught theology with much success in a number of medieval German universities, including Cologne.

walked back and forth across his huge diocese, keeping with the rules of the Dominican order.

Albert's influence on scholars is substantial. His fame is due in part to being the forerunner, spiritual guide and teacher of Saint Thomas Aquinas. But he also composed an encyclopedia containing treatises on almost every branch of learning known at the time. His work fills thirty-eight volumes and covers

subjects ranging from astronomy and chemistry to geography and philosophy. His knowledge of science was considerable, and for the age remarkably accurate. He also displayed an insight into nature and a knowledge of theology that surprised his contemporaries, who named him "Magnus" ("the Great") to recognize his genius. Albert even inspired a mystical school of theology among fellow Dominicans such as Meister Eckhart.

Albert participated in the Second Council of Lyons, France, in 1274, the fourteenth of the Catholic Church's 21 great councils (Vatican II was the twenty-first). On his way to the council, he was shocked to learn of Aquinas' death at age 49, and he publicly defended his former student



against attacks on the Catholicity of his writings.

After suffering from what is now thought to be Alzheimer's disease, Albert died in Cologne on November 15, 1280. He was declared a Doctor of the Church in 1931, one of only 33 individuals bestowed that honor. His tomb is in the crypt of the Dominican church in Cologne, and his relics are in the Cologne Cathedral. His feast day is November 15.

Psalms of Praise and Thanksgiving



The Thanksgiving holiday is an excellent time to rediscover the psalms of praise and thanksgiving.

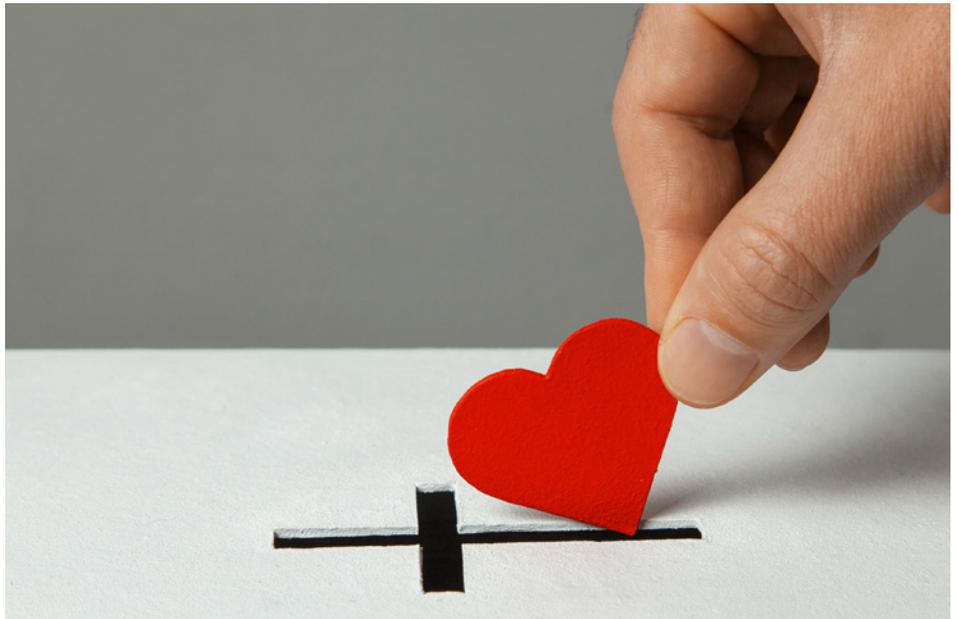
When you find a quiet moment, sit and relax with your Bible. Think of a time when awe and gratitude overwhelmed you. Maybe it was a sunrise, or children playing in a park, an inspirational hymn at Mass, a family gathering, or a walk in the woods. Remember how you appreciated that special moment. Then, open your Bible to one of the psalms of thanksgiving and recite it to yourself. Take Psalm 118 for instance:

Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love endures forever.

Listen to the words. Close your eyes. Let the psalm speak to you.

Other psalms of praise and thanksgiving you might consider include Psalms 92, 95, 98, 100, 103, 104, 105, 107, 111, 117, 145, and 147.

Whatever psalm you choose for that quiet moment, thank God for that special time of awe as well as all the good things in your life, and praise God for his glorious deeds.



November: A Month to Reflect on Gratitude and Giving

Towards the end of each year, it is easy for us to become distracted with the busyness and planning for the upcoming holidays, starting with Thanksgiving. As Christian stewards, it is an important aspect of our faith to live each day in gratitude and to prayerfully discern and reflect on what we are giving back to God through our parish, diocese and other charitable institutions in the coming year. Now is a good time to reflect on what priority we will give to God in our spending.

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Christian stewards acknowledge with gratitude that even our financial resources, our material wealth ultimately come from God. Exercising good stewardship over the money one makes, manages, spends and offers back to God is a tangible measure of their gratitude to God and their spiritual health.

Giving generously to their parish, dioceses and institutions of the universal Church is second nature to good stewards. They prayerfully reflect on their ability to give and return the “first fruits” of their financial resources back to God (Leviticus 23:10). The good steward’s desire is to put God first among his or her spending priorities. They take seriously the psalmist’s question: “What return shall I make to the Lord for all the good He has done for me?” (Psalm 116:12).

The best way to respond to God’s loving generosity is by reflecting that generosity day by day. What God does in Jesus’ human life is a much magnified version of what happens when we take time to pray, offer our time and talents to our parish family or when family budgets and spending habits are reprioritized to conform more devotedly to the Gospel. The stewardship question is not, “Should I do these things?” but rather, “How much should I do?” Take time during this month of November to reflect prayerfully on God’s generosity toward you, on the quality of your own life of gratitude and what you are doing and can do to further God’s kingdom by your own giving patterns in the coming year.



Exercising Good Stewardship at the Grocery Store

What is your experience of a trip to the grocery store? Is the grocery store a place where you just run to grab what you need, or is it a place where you pause and take time to exercise good stewardship? We've all been there. A long day at work, rush hour traffic, and then the thought: "What am I preparing the family for dinner?" We detour to the supermarket, make a mad dash, grab whatever looks easy and filling. Then, we rush out, preoccupied with what's happening elsewhere in our lives.

But the experience of shopping at the grocery store can be one where good stewards know the rewards of exercising their stewardship of God's many gifts. Think about a stewardship resolution for the month of November, with its emphasis on food and gratitude. Resolve to go to the grocery store with a steward's grateful heart.

- Visit the grocery store when you are not rushed.
- Lift a prayer of gratitude before you go to the grocery store, gratitude

that you are able to meet your loved ones' needs in this way. Those who work with refugee populations tell us the thing that amazes the new arrivals most is the opulence and abundance of a First World supermarket. Pray for those who do not have the choices you have today.

- Be aware of your fellow shoppers, the elderly individual slowly taking up the center of the aisle or the mom struggling to control her unruly children. Say a prayer for the people you encounter. Have patience and smile generously.
- Observe the vibrant colors in the produce department, and think of those workers near and far who have labored in the fields and the warehouses, all with the intention of supporting their own families. Say a prayer for them that they may receive wages that are fair, and that they not work in conditions you would not tolerate for a loved one working in similar circumstances.

- Each week, plan to make a sacrifice out of your family's food budget, and buy something for your parish's food drive or a local pantry. Perhaps it means you purchase a less expensive version of your favorite beverage, do without the best ice cream or plan one vegetarian, low-cost meal. Use the savings to share with the hungry.
- Be present to the cashier who rings up your order. Think of the difficulty of a job spent standing all day, greeting customers both cheerful and surly. Thank her with a smile.
- Keep an ongoing grocery list during the week. Plot out your meals, plan your excursion. Experts tell us one trip a week to the grocery is not only economical, but a much better use of time.
- Recite a thanksgiving prayer from the heart at dinner. Be grateful to the God who has given you so much to meet your needs and to share.



A STEWARDSHIP MOMENT

Thirty-First Sunday in Ordinary Time Weekend of November 4/5, 2023

In today's Gospel Jesus lays judgment on the scribes and Pharisees for the hypocritical way they lived out their faith. The criticisms he levies are all about the ways righteousness turns into self-righteousness, and how religious belief could turn into something that was more about elevating themselves than about what they could do for God or their neighbor. Good stewards know that discipleship means finding ways to serve, and searching for ways to be a servant—to live as a servant of Christ. When faith is authentically lived out in community everyone is enriched, and God is glorified. Reflect this week on how you live out your faith.

Thirty-Second Sunday in Ordinary Time Weekend of November 11/12, 2023

Jesus' parable of the ten virgins, some prepared, others unprepared, is directed at those who profess to be believers in Christ and await his return. His teaching is not directed to unbelievers. The stewardship issue turns on spiritual preparedness for the Lord's return. Good stewards prepare for Christ's return daily, in their life of prayer, worship, and acts of compassion and generosity. A stewardship reflection for the week: Are we preparing ourselves for the Lord? Are we open to the Holy Spirit's work within us? Are we ready?

Thirty-Third Sunday in Ordinary Time Weekend of November 18/19, 2023

In today's Gospel, Jesus delivers the parable of the talents; using the example of money rather than abilities or skills. It is a story about investments, risks and returns. Stewards understand that God has given them an abundance of spiritual gifts. They know God doesn't want them to simply receive these blessings and bury them in fear, but to multiply them; to use these gifts to serve Him and others; to spread Christ's Good News; to go and make disciples of others. Good stewards invest what God has given them in the service of others and are prepared to render an account when the Lord returns.

Feast of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe Weekend of November 25/26, 2023

In today's Gospel, Saint Matthew offers a compelling vision of the end-time, when the people of all nations are brought before the Lord to give an account of their lives and actions. Interestingly, the sheep, the righteous ones, are rewarded for having acted with love and compassion without having recognized the face of Christ in others. Good stewards recognize those in need of their care as gifts from God. They know that they are instruments of Christ's active, loving presence in the world. How will we treat others this week: our family members, neighbors, customers, strangers? What accounting will we make to the Lord for their care?