



INTERNATIONAL CATHOLIC STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL

CATHOLIC STEWARDSHIP

March 2026 • e-Bulletin

A STEWARDSHIP PRAYER for March

Lord Jesus,

We journey with you this Lenten season, through prayer, fasting and almsgiving, ever closer to Jerusalem, ever closer to your death on the cross.

We hear your words: "Deny yourself, take up your cross and follow me," but we are unsure of their meaning, or anxious about their true intent.

Through the power of your Spirit, give us the strength to deny the "self" that keeps us from being good stewards of those who need our love and compassion.

Give us a deeper awareness of the cross in our own lives so that we may embrace it and join our sufferings with yours and a world in need of your redemption.

And give us the confidence to follow you no matter the cost; knowing that if we die with you, we will also live with you and eternally rejoice in your resurrection.

We humbly ask this of you who live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, God, forever and ever.

Amen.



Be a Good Steward of the Lenten Season

The Lenten season prepares us for the celebration of Easter. It is a time for Christians to embrace prayer, fasting, and almsgiving in a more concerted way. For some it is a time of healing, an opportunity to repair their spiritual brokenness. For others it is simply a good time to cultivate their spiritual lives in a more disciplined manner. The goal of Lenten practices: to prepare ourselves to enter into the paschal mystery of Holy Week with

a more humble spirit and determination to follow Jesus Christ. This ancient triad of prayer, fasting and almsgiving offers wonderful spiritual benefits. Being a good steward of these gifts by planning ahead and following through is essential to having a fruitful Lenten experience.

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Prayer: What greater gift could we give ourselves during Lent than the gift of prayer? The fruits of developing a disciplined time of prayer are bountiful. Make plans for a prayer time each day. Do not wait until you "find time" but make a time of prayer your priority. This will involve sacrifice on your part – perhaps giving up some television viewing time, using part of your lunch hour, or getting up in the morning earlier than usual. Along the way, spend some time in extra prayer with the community: a weekday Mass, Stations of the Cross. Whatever you decide, resolve to spend more time with the Lord.

Fasting: Christian stewards understand that all they receive, including the bountiful food and drink that is often taken for granted, ultimately comes from the Lord. By denying ourselves food for a time, we are reminded in physical and emotional ways of the Lord's generosity. As we fast, thoughtlessness is replaced by gratitude and mindfulness of the needs of others. The ancient practice of fasting also conditions us for greater spiritual practices. Incorporate some aspect of fasting from food or drink into your Lenten practice, something in addition to the sacrifices we make on Ash Wednesday and the Fridays of Lent.

Almsgiving: This spiritual discipline heightens our sense of generosity. Just as an increase in prayer and fasting leads us to be more grateful for the gifts we've received, and promotes a greater awareness of others, almsgiving helps us to reach out to others in gratitude. Just as we don't "squeeze in" time to pray during Lent, we also don't scrutinize our checkbook when being generous with others. Again, make a plan and let a meaningful sense of sacrifice be your guide.

STEWARDSHIP SAINT *for March*



Saint Katharine Drexel

Katharine Drexel, the second American-born canonized saint, was born into great wealth in Philadelphia in 1858. Her mother died soon after Katharine's birth, and she was raised by her father and stepmother, both known for their philanthropy, especially their generosity to the poor.

As a young heiress, Katharine traveled extensively across the U.S. and became aware of the difficult circumstances faced by Native Americans and African

Americans. After her father and stepmother died, Katharine determined to use her inherited wealth to help these groups.

Traveling in Europe in 1887, she asked Pope Leo XIII for help in sending missionaries to the many institutions she funded, including a school in South Dakota. The pope challenged the heiress to undertake the mission herself.

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After much discernment, Katharine decided to devote not just her fortune (worth more than \$200 million today), but her life to the poor. In 1889, at age thirty, she entered the Sisters of Mercy.

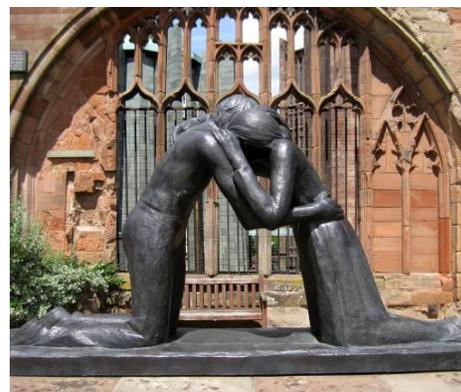
But Drexel continued to feel a special call to serve African and Native Americans. In 1891 she started her own religious congregation, the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament for Indians and Colored People (S.B.S). The order's first American Indian school was launched in Santa Fe, New Mexico, three years later.

Mother Katharine eventually created eleven more schools on Indian reservations, nearly a hundred for African Americans in rural areas and the inner cities of the South, and in 1915, established a teachers college that would eventually grow to become the first and only Catholic university for African Americans, Xavier University in New Orleans. In 1922 in Beaumont, Texas, the Ku Klux Klan threatened to tar and feather the local pastor and bomb his church if he did not close down one of Mother Drexel's schools. The sisters prayed for God's intercession to resolve the threat. Within days a tornado destroyed the Klan's headquarters. Two Klansmen died, and the Klan never bothered the sisters again.

In 1935, a severe heart attack forced Mother Katharine into prayerful retirement at her motherhouse in Philadelphia. Nevertheless, she continued to fight for, and fund, civil rights causes. During the 1950s, her sisters in Harlem and New Orleans were jeered at as "Nigger Sisters," and Mother Katharine's response was to ask the sisters if they prayed for their detractors. She died in 1955, and was beatified by Pope Saint John Paul II in 1988 and canonized in 2000. Her feast day is March 3.

Reconciliation and the Gift of Peace

The season of Lent reminds us of the need for reconciliation. If the word reconciliation means anything in our lives, it means peace; such as the peace we experience after a difficult encounter when an apology is offered and accepted. There is also the peace of sitting in a church in the presence of the Lord and proclaiming to ourselves prayerfully that we are truly forgiven.



Good stewards proclaim the Gospel, and seeking reconciliation with the Lord, others and within ourselves is such a proclamation.

Each of us experiences a drift from our ideals. We have done foolish things in the past, been neglectful, said things out of anger or resentment. Perhaps we've even done dreadful things. Maybe we recognize that we have not been good stewards of our lives. We are not at peace. But peace can come to us if we sincerely present ourselves before the Lord and know that we are accepted and forgiven.

The Lord never tells us: "First, demonstrate your worth, and then I will reach out to you." The reality is that who we are now is who the Lord loves and accepts. Indeed, there is a sacrament available to us, a gift that

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expresses our desire for reconciliation with the Lord, and with each other. It is a gift that brings peace.

Good stewards proclaim the Gospel, and seeking reconciliation with the Lord, others and within ourselves is such a proclamation. The woman who came into the dining room where Jesus was having a meal, came not to proclaim her sinfulness, but to proclaim her gratitude for having been forgiven. She brings “alms” and performs a great act of



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generosity, kindness and service. She rubs expensive, perfumed oil into Jesus’ hair (Matt. 26:11-13). The Lord’s gifts of reconciliation and peace are meant to be proclaimed and shared by our own almsgiving and acts of forgiveness.

During Lent, let’s reflect on forgiveness as a gift from the Lord that brings peace. Let’s be good stewards of this gift by taking steps to seek peace for ourselves, and by our own generosity and kindness, bring peace to others. If we imitate the woman who anointed Jesus, we will be, as the Lord said, “known as long as the Gospel is preached.” Christ’s peace can be experienced in a special way this Lenten season. We need only take the first steps.



ALMSGIVING: An Important Lenten Exercise

When we look at the three traditional “disciplines” of Lent, prayer, fasting and almsgiving, we know that almsgiving gets the least attention. Yet, the Bible places emphasis firmly on almsgiving:

Prayer and fasting are good, but better than either is almsgiving accompanied by righteousness ... It is better to give alms than to store up gold; for almsgiving saves one from death and expiates every sin. Those who regularly give alms shall enjoy a full life (Tobit 12:8-9).

A central part of our faith is the practice of almsgiving. It is a practice described in our Catholic Catechism thusly:

The foundational call of Christians to charity is a frequent theme of the Gospels. During Lent, we are asked to focus more intently on “almsgiving,” which means donating money or goods to the poor and performing other acts of charity. As one of the three pillars of Lenten practice, almsgiving is “a witness to fraternal charity” and “a work of justice pleasing to God.” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 2462).

To be a Christian steward includes having compassion towards others, especially the most vulnerable in our society. Almsgiving is an act where we imitate the love and mercy that God has for these people by providing for their most basic and fundamental needs.

Almsgiving challenges us to examine how we are using our time, abilities, and money to better the lives of those around us.

Almsgiving is also an expression of our gratitude for all that God has given us, and a realization that as a member of a community of faith, it is never just about “me and God.” It is fundamental to being a good steward of our community. For disciples of the Lord, almsgiving means much more than simply throwing a little change in the poor box. It is an attitude of generosity. It challenges us to examine how we are using our time, abilities, and money to better the lives of those around us. It urges us to share what we have been given by God with others in love and justice. It reminds us that Jesus blesses those who seek to be “poor in spirit” (Matthew 5:3).

Almsgiving opens our hearts to the realization that God blesses us through those we serve. We see God in the life of Jesus, and we see Jesus in all those who are in need of our care. Look around, see those who are in need, and ask God to take away those obstacles and distractions that keep us from being generous with them. In turn, we will receive God’s blessing in ways we cannot even imagine.

Stewardship: Shining the Light of Christ for All to See (Mt 5:16)

**Special themes of interest for both parish
and diocesan leaders!**

Discover how to:

- Engage the average parishioner through unique stewardship strategies
- Inspire young adults with the stewardship message
- Evangelize through Social Media
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- Effectively promote stewardship to the next generation of Catholics
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A Stewardship Parish Is More Than Stewards in a Parish

Part I in a two-part series by Rev. C. Jarrod Lies, Vicar for Evangelization, Discipleship and Stewardship, Diocese of Wichita

If a parish desires to grow into a stewardship parish, the starting point is not a plan, a program, or a pledge card. It is an interior posture. It is peace.

From the beginning, one truth must be firmly held: there is no parish that does not already have stewards. No parish anywhere is without faithful lay men and women who, in communion with their pastor, quietly carry the daily responsibilities of parish family life. In every parish there are those who pray, serve, give, sacrifice, and remain steadfast. No community begins from absence. What already exists is giftedness.

And yet, simply having stewards in a parish does not, by itself, make a stewardship parish.

A stewardship parish is more than a gathering of generous individuals. It is more than isolated acts of service or personal devotion. Stewardship concerns not only who is doing the work, but how the parish as a whole recognizes, invites, forms, and coordinates the giftedness God has already entrusted to His people.

So, what, then, is a stewardship parish?

A stewardship parish is one with intentional structures, clear leadership, and a coherent articulation of mission that create genuine pathways of invitation and participation for all its members. These pathways allow parishioners to do what St. Paul describes so beautifully: to “carry one another’s burdens” (Gal 6:2).



A stewardship parish is marked by a culture that recognizes God’s gifts in its people, receives them with gratitude, and actively encourages those gifts to be shared in love of God and neighbor.

The Coming of Spring: A Time for Hope

This year the spring season begins on Friday, March 20. One of the first readings of the spring season gives us hope, for it reminds us of the Lord’s return. Just as the earth shows an early sign of renewal, the prophet Hosea pledges that the Lord will return to

understanding of the reason for the sacrifice, clouds their memory of Lent. Perhaps for some Catholics, thoughts of the terrible suffering and death of Jesus overshadows and depresses their Lenten observance. For some, after a purposeful march to the altar to

that once again, the light and color of spring are returning.

In the midst of our Lenten discipline, the prophet means to comfort us. Just as the spring rains begin to fall, the promise of Easter’s joy will soon be upon us. It is



heal us, bind our wounds, revive and renew us. “He will come to us like the rain, like the spring rain that waters the earth” (Hosea 6:1-6).

For some people, Lent is a gloomy time. Perhaps a childhood memory of deprivation, with no real

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receive ashes on Ash Wednesday, the discipline of Lent fades.

Not so for the Christian steward. Good stewards remain faithful to the discipline of the Lenten season, but they also remain hopeful with a deep sense of joy. After all, what is Lent but a reminder of our salvation? What is Lent but the harbinger of the Life that conquered all death? It’s not an accident that Lent occurs just as we begin to realize, at least for those of us in the Northern Hemisphere,

indeed a time of hope as the prophet encourages us to return to the Lord as well (Hos 6:1).

As Lent begins, we may struggle through cold and ice, in our world and in our hearts. But as Easter nears, the delicate leaves of crocuses and daffodils speak of Resurrection. Lent demands discipline, but it also inspires hope. As faithful stewards of the Gospel message, we know how the story ends!



A STEWARDSHIP MOMENT

Second Sunday of Lent **Weekend of February 28 and March 1, 2026**

In today's second reading, Timothy is issued a strong directive: "Bear your share of hardship for the gospel with the strength that comes from God." For the early Christians this could mean torture and execution. For most Christians today enduring hardship for the Gospel might include accepting ridicule or mockery, or the suggestion that we lack sophistication. Nevertheless, in his letters, Saint Paul is adamant that we should not be ashamed of being followers of Christ. Good stewards are not ashamed of their allegiance to Christ. They do not hide their faith. Reflect on this question: Are you willing to speak about following Christ Jesus no matter who your listeners happen to be?

Third Sunday of Lent **Weekend of March 7/8, 2026**

Jesus' longest-recorded conversation with anyone is the one he has with the Samaritan woman at the well. She discovers she can be honest with Jesus and goes and tells others about him. She gives witness. She's not the most certain, thorough or even convincing witness. But her witness is enough. It is inviting, humble, non-judgmental and sincere. What is the quality of our witness? How do our words and actions give daily testimony on behalf of Christ? During this season of Lent, how might we do a better job at proclaiming the risen Lord in word and deed?

Fourth Sunday of Lent **Weekend of March 14/15, 2026**

Saint Paul gives us a wakeup call. As stewards of the light of Christ, we are to reflect that light with the help of the Holy Spirit. If Christ's work has transformed and illuminated our lives, there should be a change. The light

of Christ's active presence should be at work in us. And as the light shines within us, we take on the properties of that light and we shine too. We are used by God to shine the light of Christ in the lives of others. A challenging Lenten reflection: Is the light of Christ shining in our hearts? Is the light of Christ reflecting out from us to others?

Fifth Sunday of Lent **Weekend of March 21/22, 2026**

Jesus called to his friend from the dead, "Lazarus, come out!" It is the same call our Lord makes to us unceasingly: "Come out!" Jesus calls us from our tomb of doubt and unbelief, from the darkness of our fear and anxieties; from the depths of our weaknesses and lack of hope. Christian stewards pray for an open heart so that they may hear the voice of the Lord, heed the continuous call to come away from their former way of living and reprioritize their lives in the light of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Do we believe Christ has the power to transform our lives? Do we take time to listen for his call?

Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion **Weekend of March 28/29, 2026**

We are at the doorsteps of Holy Week where we remember Christ's passion. Jesus humbled himself and let go of everything, emptying himself for us. During this time of Lent, how have we joined the Lord? Has our prayer, penitential practices and almsgiving moved us to humble ourselves before the Lord? Have we let go of things that keep us from being authentic stewards for Christ Jesus? How have we "emptied" ourselves so that when we do approach the table of the Lord, we can be nourished by His body and blood? As disciples of the Lord Jesus and stewards of His gift of faith, it is time to evaluate our lives under the cross.