



# INTERNATIONAL CATHOLIC STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL CATHOLIC STEWARDSHIP

August 2017 • e-Bulletin

## A STEWARDSHIP PRAYER for August

Lord God,

As we prepare for the transitions of August; of routines becoming regular, signs of schools beginning to emerge, and traffic patterns getting heavier, help us to appreciate the sacred rhythms in our lives.

Give us the wisdom to make our hearts be still, much as the August wind is still, so that we may listen to the gentle words you speak to us.

Help us understand that you alone are the source of every good gift, of the vast array of our universe, and the mystery of each human life.

And help us see that we are called to be good stewards of all the gifts you have entrusted to us; tending them faithfully and responsibly so they may ultimately be returned to you with increase.

In this month of August while a measure of summer's stillness remains, speak to our hearts, guide us in your Son's ways, and through your Spirit, give us the strength to proclaim your justice and peace in our every day words and deeds.

We ask this through Christ, Our Lord.

Amen.

## Pope Francis and the Call to Missionary Discipleship



Why is it that so many people, maybe even beloved relatives or friends of yours, can't seem to find that joy that comes from knowing Christ Jesus? Why perhaps, have many not even truly encountered him? Why is it that 75% of those who call themselves Catholic don't participate in the Eucharistic celebration anymore? Or much closer to home, that a number of those teens being confirmed in your parish will not go to Mass the following weekend despite the hard work of catechists and youth ministers, and the good example of faithful Catholic parents?

Responses and solutions to these questions and concerns will be explored at the 55th annual

gathering of the members of the International Catholic Stewardship Council (ICSC) from September 17 to 20 in Atlanta, Georgia. This gathering comes practically right on the heels of July's gathering of American Catholic leaders which was unique in U.S. Catholic history – the Convocation of Catholic Leaders: *The Joy of the Gospel in America*. The September conference will work to equip and re-energize its own participants to share the Gospel as missionary disciples.

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Pope Francis encourages us to embrace the vision of his pastoral letter *Evangelii Gaudium (The Joy of the Gospel)*, to take seriously the cultural challenges that face us and seize the opportunities we have to embrace our baptismal call to be and live as missionary disciples.

The Holy Father calls everyone in the Church to a “missionary conversion.” He insists that “mere administration” in our Catholic parishes and dioceses can no longer be enough (n. 25). Throughout the world, he has urged Catholics to be “permanently in a state of mission.” Over the next year, ICSC will expend its energies finding tools, resources and

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The Holy Father calls everyone in the Church to a “missionary conversion.” He insists that “mere administration” in our Catholic parishes and dioceses can no longer be enough

renewed inspiration to apply and advance *Evangelii Gaudium* and Pope Francis’ dream of a “missionary option” for all pastoral activities and ministries.

The ICSC annual conference strives to generate a strategic mindset through the over 80 opportunities to be inspired and informed, and to learn best practices for reaching out to others in a missionary spirit. This event is perfect for anyone who seeks to engage the culture, bringing the joy of the Gospel to all they encounter, whether their role is with a diocese, foundation, parish, school or ministry. Join us as we go out in a spirit of missionary discipleship! Learn more on the ICSC website at [www.catholicstewardship.com](http://www.catholicstewardship.com).

## STEWARDSHIP SAINT for August

### Saint Clare of Assisi

Clare of Assisi was a close friend of Saint Francis of Assisi and the foundress of the Poor Clares. She was born in Assisi in 1194 and at age 18 was so moved by the Lenten sermons of Francis that she renounced all of her possessions and entered a convent, much to the dissatisfaction of her family and friends, who tried very hard to dissuade her and bring her home. She was formed in the religious life at Benedictine monasteries and then accepted Francis’ offer of a small house for herself and her companions adjacent to the church of San Damiano in Assisi. At age 21, she was appointed by Francis to lead the community, much against her will. She would lead the community for the next forty years and would never leave the San Damiano convent. The community would eventually include her mother and two sisters.



Clare served the sick and washed the feet of the begging nuns. She was devoted to a life of prayer and celebration of the Eucharist.

The way of life in the new community was marked by poverty and austerity, and sustained itself entirely from charitable contributions. The Poor Clares observed almost complete silence unless spoken to or in order to perform a work of charity. They went barefoot, slept on the ground and ate no meat. In later years, Clare urged her nuns to moderate their own austerities

and offer Christ “reasonable service and sacrifice seasoned with the salt of prudence.” The greatest emphasis, of course, was on gospel poverty. They owned no property.

Clare served the sick and washed the feet of the begging nuns. She was devoted to a life of prayer and celebration of the Eucharist. She was first up in the morning to ring the choir bell and light the candles.

Clare sought to imitate Francis’ virtues and way of life so much so that she was sometimes called “another Francis.” She played a significant role in encouraging and aiding Francis, whom she saw as a spiritual father figure. She took care of him during his final illness.

From the time Francis died in 1226 until her own death 27 years later, Clare suffered various illnesses and was often bedridden. All the while, she lived a simple but dedicated religious life, performing such menial tasks as sewing altar linens for local parishes. Twice when the town of Assisi was under attack, Clare prayed before the Blessed Sacrament and the armies were said to have ended their siege and fled.

Clare’s nuns soon spread to other countries in Europe, including Spain, Italy, Germany, France and England. Today, they are also established in the Middle East, Asia, Africa, Oceania, and the Americas. She passed away on August 11, 1253 and was canonized two years later. Her feast day is August 11.



# INTERNATIONAL CATHOLIC STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL 2017 ANNUAL CONFERENCE

**REGISTER TODAY! \$499 Early Bird Rate** (before August 4, 2017)

The 2017 ICSC Annual Conference, September 17-20, in Atlanta, Georgia, offers something for everyone whether you are a priest, deacon, religious, parish life administrator, stewardship and evangelization coordinator or committee member, foundation staff or board member, parish business manager, youth minister, ministry leader, principal or school advancement professional, or a faithful parishioner feeling called to do more. A sample of the conference's many sessions includes:



- Engaging Young Adults
- Helping Your Catholic School Find Resources to Advance its Mission
- Re-animating the Latino Community
- How to Get Participation of Parishioners Beyond Sunday
- Ministering to Families through Stewardship
- Clergy-to-Clergy Sessions for Priests
- Understanding Why Hospitality is Essential at Masses
- Helping Parishioners Become More Generous
- Evangelizing through Digital Communications
- Making New Disciples Through Stewardship Formation
- Numerous how-to workshops in Spanish
- Exclusive sessions for diocesan staff working with stewardship, development and Catholic foundations
- And many, many more...



## How does stewardship equip us to go forth in the world to proclaim and live the joy of the Gospel?

Join us September 17-20 as we unite as good stewards to share our gifts in the spirit of missionary disciples!



More details and online registration available at [www.catholicstewardship.com](http://www.catholicstewardship.com) or call 1.800.352.3452, or e-mail us at [register@catholicstewardship.org](mailto:register@catholicstewardship.org).

The International Catholic Stewardship Council has named a landmark hotel, the Hyatt Regency Atlanta, as the headquarters hotel for the 2017 annual conference. The hotel is blocks away from the city's major attractions including the College Football Hall of Fame, the World of Coca-Cola, Georgia Aquarium, Center for Civil and Human Rights, Georgia World Congress Center, and the Georgia Dome.

**Make your hotel reservations online**  
<https://www.plazameetings.com/icsc/>



# Our Vocation: Responding to Christ's Call

by Leisa Anslinger, author and co-founder of Catholic Strengths and Engagement Community (CSEC).

We all have a vocation. But as Catholics, we often use the word “vocation” narrowly, speaking of vocation to the priesthood or religious life, especially when we speak with children and teens about discerning their vocation. The root of the word “vocation,” however, is “vocare,” which means, “to call.” When considered in this light, discerning one’s vocation is about hearing and responding to the call of the Lord with our lives.



**Our role as stewardship leaders is to help people to recognize the grace and call of God in their lives.**

Certainly, a life vocation must be discerned prayerfully, yet there is more to consider. The U.S. bishops, in their pastoral letter, *Stewardship: A Disciple's Response*, speak of vocation as the way in which each is called to hear and to respond to God's will as a disciple:

*Refracted through the prisms of countless individual vocations, this way of life embodies and expresses the one mission of Christ: to do God's will, to proclaim the Good News of salvation, to heal the afflicted, to care for one's sisters and brothers, to give life — life to the full — as Jesus did (SDR, 14).*

Each of us must continually discern how we will hear and respond to Christ's call within the life vocation that is ours, and each will do so differently, in response to our individual gifts and blessings. “Every person should walk unhesitatingly according to his own personal gifts and duties in the path of a living faith which arouses hope and works through charity” (LG, 41).

As disciples of Jesus Christ all of us have something to contribute. Each will do so by stewarding his or her gifts and talents, resources, time, and presence — within the faith community and beyond it — at home, work or school, the local city or town, and the world. Our role as stewardship leaders is to help people to recognize the grace and call of God in their lives and to respond to it in their daily decisions and actions. As the bishops' letter offered: “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” (SDR, 15).



## Cultivating Good Stewardship in Farmers' Markets

Of all of summer's pleasures, few can top that early morning trip to the farmers' market. And nothing can top the farmers' market for health, nutrition, freshness and taste. This year, August 6 to 12 is National Farmers' Market Week. Let's celebrate by counting all the great reasons to grab a reusable cloth bag and head to the market.

Nutrition is high on the list. Fresh produce that makes its way from the field to the table in short order means more vitamins and minerals for your family. And of course, freshness means better taste, the tastiest produce of the year.

Farmers' markets are said to promote child health and reduce childhood obesity by increasing children's access to affordable and convenient fruits and vegetables. And farmers' markets increasingly support anti-hunger initiatives through donations of unsold food to feeding programs for those in need.

There are also great ecological reasons to shop the farmers' market. Today, food at the grocery averages about 1,500 miles to get from the producer to your plate. Transportation

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of food contributes to our carbon footprint in a huge way. Buying from the producer in your local area cuts down on transportation drastically. Moreover, these local producers play a key role in developing regional foodsheds which also benefits the environment.

Here's something else: sometimes we forget about the cycles of growth and production when we visit a supermarket in snowy February to buy an eggplant. The farmers' market restores your connection to the natural cycles in your area.

You will also be surprised by the variety of produce at the market. Maybe you'll try a vegetable you've never tasted before. And the meat and eggs you purchase are produced in environments that treat animals humanely.

And let's face it: what is more energizing than walking through your local market, meeting area farmers, greeting your neighbors, maybe picking up a locally grown bouquet of flowers or a fresh muffin and feeling like you are part of a vibrant community.

Farmers' markets are as old and as American as apple pie. And the apple in that pie is locally sourced, higher in nutrition and great for small business. Make the farmers' market a weekly summer adventure and be a steward of good food, nutrition, health and the community.

## Stewardship of Our Sisters and Brothers "On the Street"

A few months ago, Pope Francis made one of his off-the-cuff comments that stirred hearts but left a few puzzled. In an interview about refugees, the topic turned to giving to individuals begging on the street. To Christian stewards, especially urban dwellers, this is a common sight: the man at the busy intersection with the sign, the person near the coffee shop jingling change in a cup. Do we give? No matter our response, we are left with a sense of unease, and perhaps even guilt. Pope Francis told the interviewer that it "is always right" to give to the asker, and encouraged us to give with respect and compassion. "Tossing money and not looking into their eyes" is not the behavior of a Christian, he added.

Some responded with rather legalist, but none-the-less practical counter-arguments. How do we know they won't buy alcohol or tobacco? Shouldn't we give instead to charities which assist those on the street?



In his typical thoughtful way, Pope Francis addressed these concerns. We all use our money for some guilty pleasures, he said. There's yesterday's pastry, or last night's extra glass of wine. In words we remember Pope Francis speaking on another occasion, "Who am I to judge?" Essentially, giving should come without judgement.

But Pope Francis isn't issuing rules, but speaking to our attitude. The person begging for our help is just that: a person, with a need for human dignity. And we too have a need, the urge to respond with love to the God who has given us everything. We don't give because we see the beneficial outcome before our eyes. We give because we have a need to give, because God placed that need in our hearts. Almsgiving is an ancient and inherent part of the Judeo-Christian tradition.

If we offer money, or perhaps a bag of snacks which many carry in their cars for such an occasion, do we smile and look someone in the eye? Do we ever stop to chat? Have we offered, not just a donation, but a brief encounter, perhaps offering our first name and asking theirs? Do we treat the poor we encounter as equals, or do we avert our eyes as we pass? Do we understand our own need to give? Christian stewards keep Pope Francis' words in mind: "In the shoes of the other, we learn to have a great capacity for understanding, for getting to know difficult situations."



## A STEWARDSHIP MOMENT

### **Feast of the Transfiguration of the Lord Weekend of August 5/6, 2017**

Today we celebrate the Feast of the Transfiguration of the Lord, and in today's Gospel reading we hear it proclaimed that on Mount Tabor, Peter, James, and John caught a glimpse of Jesus' divinity strong enough to strike fear into their hearts. The event took place shortly after Peter's confession of faith that Jesus was, indeed, the Messiah. In today's second reading from Peter, we hear his personal testimony. This comes from a man who spent more than three years with Jesus. Peter witnessed his humanity. He saw Jesus hungry, tired, and finally, rejected and crucified. But he also saw Jesus feed the 5,000, walk on water, heal the sick, and raise the dead. He saw Jesus in his glory when he was transfigured. He saw Jesus risen from the dead and ascend into heaven with the promise that he is coming again in power and glory. How strong is the stewardship of our own faith? Do we accept Peter's apostolic witness to Jesus as Christ? Does this testimony help us acknowledge and trust Christ Jesus as our Lord and savior?

### **Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time Weekend of August 12/13, 2017**

Today's Gospel reveals what miraculous things can happen when one embraces a single-minded faith in Jesus Christ. Peter gets out of a wind-tossed boat when the Lord calls him. His faith is tested by his obedience to Jesus who is calling him out onto the water. In the midst of the waves and the wind, Peter gets out of the boat and walks toward Jesus. Good stewards heed Christ's call to them. Sometimes that call directs them to take on seemingly impossible challenges. This week, reflect on how the Lord could be calling you out of the safety of your own "boat" to take on the impossible.

### **Feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary Tuesday, August 15, 2017**

Today we celebrate the Feast of the Assumption; the day we recall Our Blessed Mother being assumed into heaven and crowned queen. In the Gospel reading we hear proclaimed

once again the Canticum of Mary, recorded in the Gospel of Luke (1:46-55). It is the Virgin Mary's song of joy in response to her cousin Elizabeth's greeting (Luke 1:41-45), and summarizes Mary's deep faith and trust in God. "My soul magnifies the Lord..." Take a few moments and pray this stewardship prayer. Consider its implications for your life. How do you magnify the Lord? How do you make God "bigger" in your day-to-day world? How do you share God's compassion with others, especially the poor?

### **Twentieth Sunday in Ordinary Time Weekend of August 19/20, 2017**

In today's first reading, the Lord speaks through the prophet Isaiah during a time of political dissolution and moral decline. The prophet had warned of God's judgment against people for the feelings of self-importance they found in their possessions, and condemned them for various forms of economic injustice such as exploiting the poor and immigrants. Good stewards know that Isaiah's message is as compelling today as it was in the time of the kingdom of Judah: Do the right thing. Offer justice and compassion toward others. Be honest in all your dealings. And remember to observe the day of the Lord.

### **Twenty-First Sunday in Ordinary Time Weekend of Aug 26/27, 2017**

Saint Paul reminds us in today's second reading that the ultimate origin of everything is God. Since everything comes from God, we are God's own. We can never put God in our debt. There is absolutely no negotiating with God. Every breath we take is a gift. Every good deed we perform is grace.

Good stewards realize they are created and called to make the beauty, greatness, compassion and justice of God and his gifts known throughout the world. The stewardship question for us is whether we are willing to embrace this call, acknowledge our dependence on God and give our lives over to him completely for this purpose.