

INTERNATIONAL CATHOLIC STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL CATHOLIC STEWARDSHIP

April 2019 • e-Bulletin

A STEWARDSHIP PRAYER for April

Christ Our Savior,

As our Lenten journey brings us
closer to Easter,

we see with a deeper awareness
our world's desperate need
to experience
the healing power of your
justice and peace.

Make us sacraments of your mercy
and instruments of your compassion.

Show us how to be better stewards
of your people;
through our families,
our brothers and sisters
with whom we share your Eucharist,
our neighbors, and the stranger.

Show us how to carry the cross
so that by dying to ourselves
we may give new life to others.

And strengthen our faith, so that
we may proclaim your Easter triumph
more confidently,
every day,
in word and deed.

Amen.

Almsgiving: Putting Prayer into Action

Our Lenten journey is marked by ancient and time-tested exercises that help us renew our lives and bring us closer to God. The traditional practices include: prayer, fasting and almsgiving. Lent, of course, is a privileged period for prayer and many spiritual writers have encouraged us to see fasting and almsgiving as essential elements of our prayer lives. St. Augustine wrote that fasting and almsgiving are “the two wings of prayer” and that almsgiving is actually putting our prayer into action.



Of course, much attention is paid to prayer and fasting. But almsgiving gets the least attention among the three Lenten practices. Almsgiving can actually be viewed as “fasting” from our income and material possessions. It also brings us closer to Christ Jesus because it translates our prayers into acts of love for each other and for those less fortunate.

The New Testament reveals how the early Christians embraced the practice of almsgiving. For Saint Luke, almsgiving was essential to the practice of good stewardship. St. James exhorts Christians to care for the needs of their brothers or sisters, to put their faith into action with alms to those in need:

If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and in lack of daily food, and one of you says to them, ‘Go in peace, be warmed and filled,’ without giving them the things needed for the body, what does it profit? So faith, by itself, if it has no works, is dead (2:15-17).

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Almsgiving is about showing our love through sharing rather than hoarding what we have and Lent is perhaps one of the best times of the year to prayerfully discern how best we can act with generosity toward others. We might even try



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creating an Almsgiving Plan to help us prayerfully discern how best to organize our giving. Take some quiet moments to prayerfully reflect on what you have to share and write down a giving plan that includes your parish, diocese, and charities that could use your financial support.

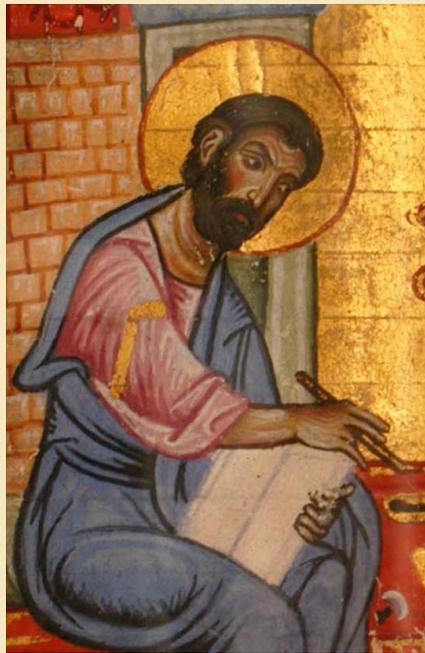
As our Lenten journey brings us closer to Easter, let us remain mindful of the importance of almsgiving in our life of faith. By putting our prayer into action in this way, we begin to “cast off” the old self within us and put on Christ in order to arrive at Easter renewed and able to say, with St. Paul: “It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.”

STEWARDSHIP SAINT *for April*

Saint Mark the Evangelist

Saint Luke’s theology of stewardship is well-documented. But it is also well-known that an understanding of Saint Mark’s theology of Christian discipleship in the second Gospel is necessary in order to understand Luke’s views on stewardship. Hence, Mark’s views on discipleship as well as his stewardship of Saint Peter’s memories, make him an important stewardship saint in his own right.

According to the *Acts of the Apostles*, Mark’s mother, Mary, owned a house in Jerusalem in which the earliest Christian community gathered. After visiting Jerusalem, Paul and Barnabas took Mark back with them to Antioch. Mark assisted them in their evangelization efforts in Cyprus, but upon their arrival by ship in Perga, he left them and returned to Jerusalem. Later, after returning to Antioch, Paul and Barnabas had an argument over Mark. Barnabas wanted to take Mark on their next missionary journey, but Paul objected on the grounds that Mark had not persevered on the previous journey. Accordingly, Barnabas took Mark back to Cyprus, and Paul set out for Syria and Cilicia with Silas.



In the letter to Philemon, Mark is mentioned among Paul’s fellow workers. When Paul was held captive in Rome, Mark was with him, giving him “comfort” (Col.4:10). In the same verse, Mark is mentioned as the cousin of Barnabas, and the Christians at Colossae are urged to offer hospitality to Mark if he should come there. Elsewhere, Timothy is asked to bring Mark to Paul, since he is useful for the apostle’s ministry. The first letter attributed to Peter, written in all likelihood from Rome, mentions Mark as the “son” of Peter, a term either of simple affection or an indication that Peter was Mark’s father in the faith. Mark’s presence in Rome with

Peter would be consistent with the tradition that Mark was the steward of Peter’s memories, taking copious notes of Peter’s reflections on Jesus’ teaching and deeds. This tradition comes from the early Christian historian Eusebius, who also wrote that Mark was Peter’s “interpreter.” Many scholars believe that Mark wrote his Gospel while in Rome, although another tradition suggests that the Gospel was written in Alexandria.

Saint Mark is the patron saint of many groups including lawyers, notaries, secretaries, painters, pharmacists and interpreters. He is also the patron saint of Venice and Egypt. His traditional symbol is that of the winged lion and his feast day is April 25.



INTERNATIONAL CATHOLIC STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL
57th Annual ICSC Conference

October 6-9 | Sheraton Grand Hotel | Chicago, Illinois

Stewards of the Church



NETWORK

The ICSC annual conference is widely recognized as the most valuable opportunity for those involved in Christian stewardship to connect with others who share their commitment to teaching stewardship as a way of life. Many say meeting others with similar experiences is the main reason they attend the ICSC conference!



LEARN

The ICSC annual conference is filled with sessions and forums that provide practical information you can take home and use immediately. You will be exposed not only to topics that offer fundamentals but also new ideas, innovations and strategies!



GROW

The ICSC annual conference is a great opportunity to get away from your busy schedule to pray, reflect on your own life of faith, listen to inspiring reflections and participate in invigorating liturgies!



The newly renovated Sheraton Grand Chicago Hotel will offer a well-appointed and comfortable experience for the 57th ICSC conference. This convention hotel is set in the heart of the downtown district, along the Chicago Riverwalk near Navy Pier and the Magnificent Mile. ICSC has reserved intuitively designed rooms which boast city, river and lake views. ICSC conference registrants may [CLICK HERE](#) to book their rooms through the ICSC conference planner, Plaza Meetings. For questions about the hotel contact Plaza Meetings directly at 518-785-3392.

REGISTER TODAY!

ICSC member Lenten-Easter Registration discount **\$499**
visit www.catholicstewardship.com

**Important Notice for
all ICSC Parish Members!**

ICSC 2019 Parish Stewardship Award Information

Has your parish developed
stewardship materials that
would help others?

Did your committee work hard
on resources you are proud of?

*Please consider applying for
one or more ICSC Parish
Awards in 2019.*

Parishes at all stages of the
stewardship journey are
encouraged to apply!

Entries will be judged by
members of the ICSC Parish
Stewardship Education and
Services Committee.

*Application Deadline is
June 30.*

All applicants will be contacted
by July 31.

Additional information, list of
awards and entry forms are
available on the ICSC website:
[catholicstewardship.com/
stewardship-awards/](http://catholicstewardship.com/stewardship-awards/)



Stewardship: Following Jesus' Way

by Leisa Anslinger, Associate Department Director for Pastoral Life,
Archdiocese of Cincinnati

Of all of the wisdom found in the United States bishops' pastoral letter, *Stewardship: A Disciple's Response*, the paragraph that always strikes me most powerfully is this: "In Jesus' teaching and life self-emptying is fundamental. Now, it might seem that self-emptying has little to do with stewardship, but in Jesus' case that is not so.



To follow Jesus' way is to empty ourselves, to give beyond
what we think is possible, and to do so willingly.

How can we lead people to live as stewards who follow Jesus' self-emptying way? A number of years ago, I spoke with an editor-friend about a stewardship booklet we were developing at my parish. As he reviewed our text, he said that he would be cautious of using the word "sacrificial." In focus groups he had conducted throughout the United States, he found that people often questioned the meaning of "sacrificial." They understood the meaning of "sacrifice," but were unsure what it means to live sacrificially. The conversation stuck with me, because it seems to me this is exactly what we hope to do as stewardship leaders: help people move from an intellectual recognition of sacrifice, to embrace a life of self-giving, sacrificial love. It is a move from the head to the heart, and from the heart to the hands and feet, putting faith into action.

As we ponder the meaning of Jesus' sacrifice for us on the cross in these final weeks of Lent, let us also invite those we lead to take to heart our call as disciples who live sacrificially. Jesus shows us that God's way is the way of self-giving, sacrificial love. To follow Jesus' way is to empty ourselves, to give beyond what we think is possible, and to do so willingly. Let us challenge one another to move from head to heart to hands and feet as people who walk in Jesus' self-emptying way.

Stewardship and the Art of Sharing

By Rev. Joseph D. Creedon, pastor *emeritus*, Christ the King Parish, Providence, Rhode Island.

This excerpt is eighth in a series based on his current book.

Learning the art of sharing is a gift and a discipline that has to be developed. We learn how to share first and best from our parents. Share with your brother; share with your sister gets repeated over and over again in our formative years until finally we catch on and no longer have to be told.



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Many years ago, I was blessed to share in this experience. A mother was teaching her boys to share. She was a young mother dying of cancer. It was Holy Week and I was visiting her in the hospital. Her days were quickly running out. Her family was with her when I came to visit. Someone had given one of the boys a box of Milk Duds; his brothers wanted some of the candy. The boys knew their mother was sick but were too young to know she was dying. Their skirmish was completely incongruous with the unspoken sadness that filled the room. The young mother, even in her dying, was not going to pass up what was to be one of her last acts of parenting. While her husband and I watched she called the boys to her hospital bed. The boys climbed up on the bed. She asked for the box of candy; it was surrendered. She patiently counted out the pieces into three piles. She gave each boy his share of the candy. There was one candy left. She looked at her husband and me, said, "Sorry" and plunked the one surviving piece into her mouth. Words fail to capture the power of her selfless teaching or its example. I know that as I was driving home from that visit, it dawned on me that I had just seen Eucharist celebrated with candy.

He took the bread, blessed it and shared it with them saying, "This is my body which will be given up for you." The power of sharing was etched on my heart that day.

There is still time to give up something for Lent!

Try one of the following:

- Give up complaining
focus on gratitude.
- Give up cynicism
become an optimist.
- Give up harsh judgments
think kindly thoughts.
- Give up worry
trust in the Lord.
- Give up discouragement
become more hopeful.
- Give up bitterness
turn to forgiveness.
- Give up resentment
cultivate some humility.
- Give up negativism
be more positive.
- Give up anger
be more patient.
- Give up pettiness
become mature.
- Give up gloom
learn to smile.
- Give up jealousy
adopt a generous attitude.
- Give up gossiping
control your tongue.
- Give up tension
find more humor.
- Give up giving up
be persistent in prayer!



Christian Stewardship: Key to Renewal of the Church in the Philippines

By Mary Ann Otto, Pastoral Minister for Missionary Discipleship, St. Mary and St. Joseph Parishes, Appleton, Wisconsin

The spirituality of stewardship and the practices that give witness to its truths are changing the heart and face of the Church in the Philippines, which identifies as a Church of the Poor, and beyond. What are the truths driving this conversion? Christian stewardship is about our identity in Jesus Christ. It's about our *trust* in God's promises. It's about our *gratitude* for all God has given. It's about responding to our God in love.

If you are unsure, ask the more than 200 delegates to the first ICSC-SPI Asian Pacific Stewardship Conference. In a written resolution following the conference, they determined that *Christian stewardship is key to the renewal of persons, communities, churches and the natural world.*



Christian stewardship is about our identity in Jesus Christ. It's about our trust in God's promises. It's about our gratitude for all God has given. It's about responding to our God in love.



There is no doubt that the Holy Spirit is moving in the stewardship efforts of the Church of the Philippines.

The conference, sponsored by the International Catholic Stewardship Council and its Asian partner, Socio-Pastoral Institute, was held February 4 to 7, 2019 at the St. Paul Center for Renewal in Alfonso, Cavite, Philippines. Attendees included 68 priests and 12 bishops from

27 dioceses. Major funding and coordination of the conference came about through the efforts of Mila Glodava, director of stewardship and administration at St. Vincent De Paul Parish in Denver, Colorado, Jose Clemente of SPI and Michael Murphy of ICSC.

There is no doubt that the Holy Spirit is moving in the stewardship efforts of the Church of the Philippines. The solemn declaration from the first Asian Pacific Conference is urgent:

Let us build a Catholic Church that is imbued with the spirituality of stewardship. Let us build a Church that makes disciples who dare to go to the margins of society to proclaim the Good News. Let us build a Church that lifts the poor from poverty and is marked by preferential love for the least and lost. Let us participate in breaking in of the Lord's Kingdom by sharing our blessings with one another, one gift at a time!



In this beautiful declaration, and the stewardship practices that it embodies, we are reminded of the first disciples and the early Church. We remember the practices that brought the Christian Church to over two billion members today and it gives us hope. We thank the Church of the Philippines for their courage in saying "yes" and their willingness to do the hard work of making disciples who respond with the heart of Christian stewards. They are a model for us all.



A STEWARDSHIP MOMENT

Fifth Sunday of Lent **Weekend of April 6/7, 2019**

Strong words come from Saint Paul in today's second reading. He reveals in no uncertain terms that life in Christ is our goal. Everything else, he maintains, is "rubbish." Junk. Trash. Garbage. Is that true? Is everything else "rubbish" compared to deepening our relationship with the Lord? What about putting recreational activities ahead of attending Mass? Or preferring uninterrupted hours playing the latest video games or watching TV to spending time in a bible study group, choir practice or serving in a soup kitchen? Or keeping late hours at work over sharing the gospel with friends and neighbors? To what extent do we exercise stewardship over our relationship with Christ?

Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord **Weekend of April 13/14, 2019**

In the prelude to today's great Passion Narrative, Saint Paul reminds us that we find our hope in the "emptiness" and "humility" of Christ Jesus; a life that led to the cross, but through the cross, to glory and exaltation. The way is not easy. Good stewards know that it requires a willingness to lay aside all rights of personal privilege; emptying ourselves in the service of others; embracing values different from the values of the world. It requires an understanding that to be "in Christ" means to be a servant because Christ came into the world, not as Lord but as servant. What crosses are we willing to carry? What worldly values are we willing to forego in order to share Christ's glory?

Easter Sunday **April 21, 2019**

In today's first reading from the Acts of the Apostles, Peter boldly offers his testimony to the risen Christ. He shared with the crowds what he himself witnessed: Jesus' friendship, healing and forgiveness. Peter proclaims a resurrected life that brings hope. The Christian life is, indeed, a resurrected life. It is new life, one of truth, inner joy and genuine fulfillment. God has transformed our lives for all eternity, and that transformation is what it means to be a Christian. Do you know the resurrected life? Have you genuinely experienced it? Good stewards have, and in their joy, they are committed, like Peter, to offering their own witness. It is time to rejoice.

Christ the Lord is risen today! Alleluia!

Second Sunday of Easter (Divine Mercy Sunday) **Weekend of April 27/28, 2019**

In today's first reading from the Acts of the Apostles we hear it proclaimed that many "signs and wonders" were performed in public by Christ's followers, a demonstration that produced two results. First, the people of Jerusalem outside the Christian community were awed by what the disciples were performing. And in the midst of all this amazement, many were being converted. Good stewards know of the evangelizing power emanating from their daily acts of love, compassion, kindness and generosity. They believe that if they stay focused on Christ each day, every act has the power to transform a broken world. What "signs and wonders" will we perform today?