

INTERNATIONAL CATHOLIC STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL

CATHOLIC STEWARDSHIP

April 2022 • 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.

Spiritual Housecleaning is
Good Stewardship

Spring housecleaning used to be a solemn ritual in many families. Dedicated homemakers took down heavy winter drapes and replaced them with summer's lighter fabric. Bedding was washed and aired on backyard clotheslines, storm windows lined up against the house for a thorough wash. This time of year, our grandmothers removed and cleaned everything from cupboards and closets.

Today, with most adults working outside the home, and schedules filled to overflowing, cleaning can sometimes be more piecemeal, catch-as-catch-can.



As light streams through our windows and chases away the shadows, let the Light of Christ continue to illuminate the dark spots in your own spiritual life

Nevertheless, this season often brings out the latent spring housecleaner in all of us. Who hasn't taken notice, suddenly, of late afternoon's brilliant sunshine highlighting windows streaked with winter's grime, or spotted a previously hidden layer of dust peeking out from the beneath the stove on a sun-splashed morning? The growing light and warmth makes us instinctively want to get busy.

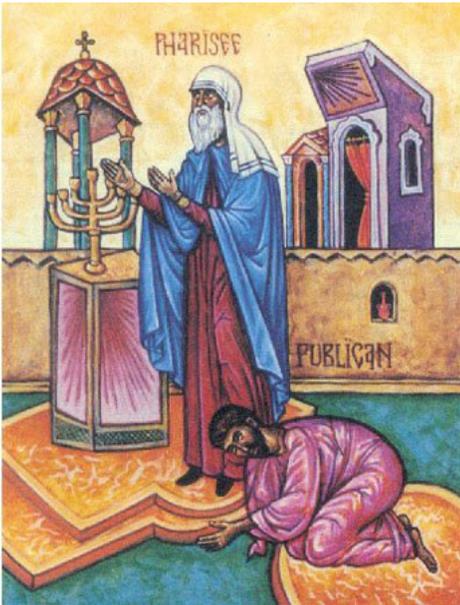
In a sense, that's what Lent was all about. For many of us, Ash Wednesday was deep in the heart of a cold and snow-packed winter. But as we journeyed through the season, we saw glimmers of a far-off spring, even as we dug out from the latest storm. Light returned, and

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Lent reminded Christian stewards of our yearning to clean the house of our interior lives - our souls. Gradually, we saw illuminated the cobwebs in our own hearts.

Times of silence, prayer, fasting and giving move us with gratitude into the beautiful liturgies of the Easter Triduum. Yet, sometimes a nagging feeling troubles us. Did our efforts match our Ash Wednesday resolve? Did we do “enough”?



If you're troubled by this question, take heart. After all, if you thought your Lent was perfect, you might be like the Pharisee Jesus spoke of in his parable of the “Pharisee and the Tax Collector” – smug and self-satisfied. “I thank you that I am not like the rest of humanity . . .” (Luke 18:11). Instead, we come before the Lord at a glorious Easter liturgy like the tax collector “. . . be merciful to me a sinner.” The Christian steward spends a lifetime asking, “How can I do more?” As light streams through our windows and chases away the shadows, let the Light of Christ continue to illuminate the dark spots in your own spiritual life, but rejoice in the forgiving God who has conquered all darkness for us.

STEWARDSHIP SAINT *for April*



Saint John Baptist de La Salle

St. John Baptist de La Salle is the patron saint of schoolteachers. He was the founder of the Brothers of the Christian Schools and is renowned for his lifelong devotion to educating the poor. John Baptist was born to a wealthy family in Reims, France, in 1651. He was a scholar, studied for the priesthood and was ordained in 1678. He earned a doctorate in theology in 1681. Although he lived a comfortable life at the cathedral in Reims, he was drawn to education early on. At the urging of a layman to open a school for poor children in Reims, John Baptist opened two schools that became very popular, even though the prevailing view in France was that children of the poor should only be taught how to perform manual labor, not to be educated.

John Baptist was born to a wealthy family in Reims, France, in 1651. He was a scholar, studied for the priesthood and was ordained in 1678.

John Baptist continued to discern the will of God in his life. He sold all that he possessed and donated the proceeds for hunger relief. He and a small group of men formed themselves into a religious community by taking a vow of obedience and adopting the name Brothers of the Christian Schools. In 1686, he opened four more schools in Reims as well as a school to train teachers. He would later establish other schools in Paris and Saint-Denis.

Although his religious community was not yet approved by the Church, in 1694 John Baptist and twelve of his community members took perpetual vows, committing themselves to providing free education to the poor for the rest of their lives. John Baptist's educational theories and practices became standard including classroom instruction instead of one-on-one instruction, teaching in the native language instead of in Latin and integrating faith formation into a curriculum.

St. John Baptist de LaSalle died on Good Friday, April 7, 1719. He was canonized in 1900 and his feast is celebrated on April 7.

60 YEARS

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Let's Be Good Stewards of the Earth!

April 22 marks the celebration of Earth Day 2022. This annual event, which began in 1970 and launched the modern environmental movement, reminds us all that the care and protection of our earth and natural environment is of urgent concern. Indeed, caring for the earth and its resources is a moral obligation, one in which Christian stewards must play their part as stewards of God's creation.

**We are called to be good stewards of the earth.
Let us celebrate Earth Day 2022 by making changes to
the way we treat God's creation.**

We have listened carefully to recent pontiffs sounding the clarion call for the safeguarding of God's creation. Pope Benedict XVI was sometimes called "the first green pope" for his continued plea that we respect the environment. Under his direction, solar panels were installed at the Vatican, and Vatican City signed up for a project that offset carbon-dioxide emissions.

Our Holy Father, Pope Francis, who took the name of St. Francis of Assisi, patron saint of ecology, has frequently spoken about protecting the environment. In his first Mass as pope, Francis called on us to be "protectors of creation, protectors of God's plan inscribed in nature, protectors of one another and of the environment." Stewardship of the environment has become an ever-deepening part of our spiritual consciousness.

For the Christian steward, caring for our earth and its resources is not an academic subject but a personal and practical one. There are a number of ways we can celebrate Earth Day and demonstrate our commitment to protecting our environment. Even small actions can have great consequences! Pick up litter, recycle, turn off the water when you brush your teeth, switch to online bill payments, use public transportation, turn down your water heater, install energy efficient lights. If we stop to think about it, there are dozens of ways we can lighten the tremendous burden we place on our environment in order to promote a healthy ecosystem; especially those of us in North America who use such a high percentage of the world's resources.

The challenge of maintaining a clean environment is a matter of urgency, as the results of climate change can be seen regularly now. We are called to be good stewards of the earth. Let us celebrate Earth Day 2022 by making changes to the way we treat God's creation. Let us establish a cleaner, healthier earth that will be sustained for generations to come.

The Experience of Easter



We are an Easter people. The joy of Easter is celebrated not only during the liturgical season we call Easter. It is celebrated every day of the year. The Mass is the Paschal Mystery, and every time it is celebrated, we participate in the sacrifice, death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. As St. Paul teaches, we die with Christ and rise with Him in the Holy Spirit. We are transformed into new creations. We are renewed.

**For Christian stewards, each
day is a new dawn for living
in the light of Christ.**

Stewards of God's abundant gifts hold dear the promise of renewal and pledge themselves to the work of reconciliation, healing and proclamation of the risen Lord. There is much about dying and rising with Christ that we do not know; much about the Paschal Mystery we do not understand. But stewards of God's love are always open to learning more; to being called out of their ignorance and into the light of faith which comes with an ever-deeper understanding of its peace and joy.

Easter is a good time to reflect on how we experience the joy of Christ's peace. It is also a time to ask ourselves how we can experience the gift of Easter each day of our lives.

Put Your Prayer into Action through Almsgiving

As our Lenten journey brings us closer to Easter, let's be mindful of those 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.



Easter is almost upon us. Let us act now to integrate almsgiving into our life of faith.

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).

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 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.

Easter is almost upon us. Let us act now to integrate almsgiving into 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."

Let us Focus on Being Easter People by choosing at least one of the following:

Embrace an attitude of gratitude.

Give up complaining.

Become an optimist.

Think kind thoughts.

Become more hopeful.

Turn to forgiveness.

Cultivate humility.

Be more positive.

Be more patient.

Be a better steward.

Learn to smile.

Adopt a generous heart.

Control your tongue.

Find more humor.

Be persistent in prayer.

Trust in the Lord!





A STEWARDSHIP MOMENT

Fifth Sunday of Lent Weekend of April 2/3, 2022

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 9/10, 2022

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 we are willing to forego in order to share Christ's glory?

The Holy Night of the Easter Vigil April 16, 2022

Alive in Christ! That's what we are. Among the many readings of Easter, Saint Paul reflects on this "newness of life" in his letter to the Romans. The Christian life is 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 commitment to the Lord, they know what it means to be alive in Christ. It is time to rejoice. He is risen! Alleluia!

Second Sunday of Easter (Divine Mercy Sunday) Weekend of April 23/24, 2022

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?