



INTERNATIONAL CATHOLIC STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL CATHOLIC STEWARDSHIP

July 2023 • e-Bulletin

A STEWARDSHIP PRAYER for July

Dear Lord,

Thank You for teaching me
to be generous
as You have been generous with me.

Thank You for showing me that all
I am and have are gifts from You and
that these gifts from you, Lord,
are meant to be shared.

Show me the joys of generosity.

Help me to understand that others,
perhaps unknown to me,
depend on me for help.

Remind me that my world,
my parish, needs “Good Samaritans”
to heal the wounds of our times.

Make me a gift to others in Your name.

Amen.

Contributed by Jerry and Lois Locey



Called to be Good Stewards of the Eucharist: *The 61st Annual ICSC Conference*

“Eucharistic Stewardship” is a prominent theme in the fifth chapter of the United States Catholic bishops’ pastoral letter *Stewardship: A Disciple’s Response*. The bishops teach us that Catholics are called to make the Eucharist a priority in their communal life of prayer, worship and action. The bishops maintain that to be a follower of Jesus Christ

The spiritual energy generated at the annual ICSC conference is always inspiring!

one must be a good steward of the Eucharist each and every day. Today, more than a quarter-century after the stewardship pastoral was written, the International Catholic Stewardship Council honors the bishops’ teaching on Eucharistic stewardship at its 61st annual conference to be held from October 1-4, 2023 in Orlando, Florida.

This year, ICSC adopts as its conference image the classical painting, *Feeding of the Five Thousand* by Hendrick de Clerck, 1590, depicting the Gospel story of Jesus feeding his multitude of followers



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with five barley loaves and two fish. This is a prominent Eucharistic theme in the New Testament. We are assured that, in bringing our own gifts to the table of the Lord, no matter the size, Jesus transforms them and creates new and wondrous gifts in ways that we cannot imagine. ICSC's 61st annual conference will emphasize Eucharistic stewardship as way of life for Christian disciples as we look forward to the Bishops' Eucharistic Congress in 2024.

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Internationally recognized as the most valuable conference for those involved in Christian stewardship, the annual ICSC conference is a gathering of scores of Catholic stewards living and teaching Christian stewardship in the Catholic tradition. It offers over 80 program sessions to inform and inspire attendees through the sharing of innovative ideas, networking with peers, and providing best practices and proven strategies for inviting others in parishes and dioceses alike to become good stewards of their life in Christ.

Please note: Most of the session titles are new presentations, unless brought back by popular demand, as we strive to continually address the needs of ICSC members and the Catholic Church!

We invite you to join us in Orlando to celebrate with others and renew the call to Be Good Stewards of the Eucharist!

STEWARDSHIP SAINT *for July*



Saint Mary Magdalene, steward of Christ's ministry

Saint Mary Magdalene is one of the most revered saints in the history of the Church and her discipleship emphasizes the complementary roles of women, Saint Peter and the other disciples as witnesses to the Risen Christ.

From the New Testament, one can conclude that Mary came from Magdala, a village on the shore of the Sea of Galilee. She was a friend of Jesus of Nazareth and a leading figure among those who were his disciples.

She was one of the women who

accompanied and financially supported Jesus and the twelve apostles which suggests that the women were respectable, well-to-do members of the community.

At the time Jesus was executed on Golgotha, when the men in his company had already run away and abandoned him, Mary Magdalene is specifically identified in the Gospels as one of the women who refused to leave him. She was present at the Crucifixion and burial.

All four Gospels explicitly name her as being present at the tomb and she was the first person to preach the "Good News" of that miracle.

What is by far the most important affirmation about Mary Magdalene, however, is that she is mentioned in all five of the Resurrection narratives of the Gospel tradition (Mark 16:1-8, Matthew 28:1-10, Luke 23:55 – 24:12, John 20:1-18, and Mark 16:9-20). In the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and John, she is the primary witness to Christ's Resurrection. All four Gospels explicitly name her as being present at the tomb and she was the first person to preach the "Good News" of that miracle. From other texts of the early Christian era, Mary Magdalene's status as a disciple in the years after Jesus' death is as prominent as the twelve apostles.

For many centuries Mary Magdalene was the symbol of Christian devotion, especially that of repentance. However, Christian traditions that came after the New Testament era erroneously equated Mary Magdalene with both the sinful woman in Luke 7 who anointed Jesus and with Mary of Bethany in John 11 and Luke 10 who also anointed Jesus. The tradition that Mary Magdalene was a repentant prostitute has been dismissed by modern biblical scholarship as almost certainly untrue.

Saint Mary Magdalene has been celebrated throughout Christian history in art and literature. There are many famous depictions of her in art such as Rembrandt's *Christ and St. Mary Magdalene at the Tomb* and Titian's *Nolo Me Tangere* (Latin: "Do not touch me"). Her feast day is July 22.

61st Annual Conference

EUCCHARISTIC Stewardship

Responding with Grateful Hearts

October 1-4, 2023 | Orlando, Florida



As a gathering of Catholic stewardship leaders and fund development professionals from across the United States, the ICSC Stewardship Conference offers creative ideas and resources to give dioceses, Catholic foundations, parishes and schools the tools, strategies and inspiration they need to serve all those with whom they encounter. **JOIN US!**

“This conference has given me the opportunity to get away from the parish for a few days and get inspired, share ideas with other attendees who are from across the country and beyond, to focus on the mission of our Church and to better serve our faith community.”

Linda Maccarone

Director of Parish Mission
St. Mary Catholic Church

“Post Pandemic, ICSC has been important to Catholic parish life as we struggle to regather our people and refresh offertory giving. We have found several insights in this regard.”

Father John Esper

Pastor
St. Vincent Ferrer Parish

2023 ICSC CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

Sunday, October 1, 2023

8:00 am – 7:00 pm Registration/Information Desk Open
2:00 pm – 3:00 pm Orientation for First Time Attendees
3:30 pm – 5:30 pm Mass of the 26th Sunday in Ordinary Time
and Opening Plenary Session
6:00 pm – 7:00 pm Welcome to Orlando Reception
with the Exhibitors

Monday, October 2, 2023

7:45 am – 9:15 am Breakfast and Plenary Session
9:30 am – Noon Morning Conference Sessions
Noon – 2:00 pm Mid-day Break – Visit the Exhibitors
2:00 pm – 4:30 pm Afternoon Conference Sessions
5:15 pm – 6:30 pm Concelebrated Liturgy

Tuesday, October 3, 2023

7:30 am – 8:30 am Continental Breakfast with the Exhibitors
8:30 am – 11:00 am Morning Conference Sessions
11:30 am – 12:30 pm Concelebrated Liturgy
12:30 pm – 2:00 pm Mid-day Break – Visit the Exhibitors
2:00 pm – 3:00 pm Afternoon Conference Sessions
3:00 pm – 3:30 pm Afternoon Break with the Exhibitors
3:30 pm – 4:30 pm Afternoon Conference Sessions
6:00 pm – 8:00 pm ICSC Strategic Partners Appreciation and
Awards Dinner

Wednesday, October 4, 2023

8:30 am – 11:00 am FOR PARISHES: Special BONUS Sessions
FOR DIOCESES: Special BONUS Sessions
Closing Prayer



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SUPER EARLY BIRD RATE EXTENDED TO JULY 15!

Stewardship of Leisure Time: Refreshing Our Spirits



In a 2016 newspaper essay titled *In Defense of the Three-Week Vacation*, the writer makes the case for longer American respites from work. Jynne Dilling argues for trips that take us away from cell phone coverage and internet, and urges relaxation that includes reflective walks at dawn and time to get lost in a foreign habitat (New York Times, 9 June 2016). Many of us have neither the time nor the resources for long overseas sojourns, but all of us can resonate with the need to really “get away” from work or the daily grind or the constant demands of social media. Good stewardship of our bodies, minds and souls obliges us to get away on a regular basis (see Luke 5:16).

Leisure is necessary for human wholeness. Leisure reconnects us to the wider mysteries of our world and our God. It helps us daydream, imagine, pray. It refreshes our spirit.

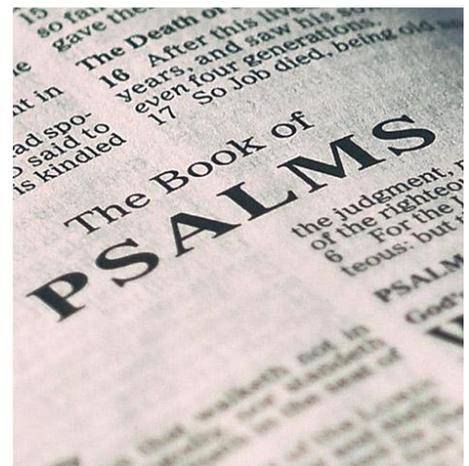
As Christian stewards, we aren’t just encouraged but obligated to consider how we approach our stewardship of leisure time. Stewards are aware of their need to be busy doing God’s work, but often forget that downtime is equally important to spiritual growth. Leisure time, whether it’s our evenings, our weekends, or our vacation, provides spiritual, physical, mental and emotional recharging. Leisure is necessary for human wholeness. Leisure reconnects us to the wider mysteries of our world and our God. It helps us daydream, imagine, pray. It refreshes our spirit.

Today, connectivity has become almost an obsession. People check their emails, their messages and calls with alarming repetitiveness. Accidents, both pedestrian and automobile, happen because people can’t put down their phones. Employers expect their workers to be available for evening emails. The lines between work and free time increasingly blur, as do the lines between solitude and always being present “online.” We can’t imagine putting aside screens for a two-week vacation. But we must give ourselves time to renew and recharge, not just two weeks of the year, but each day and each week.

July offers an opportunity to reconnect with the rhythms of God and nature. We need to take time off from screens and phones, and practice giving undivided attention to the things before us. When we pray, we commit time and silence. When we enjoy time with our friends and family, we practice being totally present. When we sit on the patio or at the beach, we give ourselves wholly to the wind or the waves. Be a good steward of your body, mind and soul. Don’t overschedule your time off. Listen to the quiet whisper of God encouraging you to relax.

An Ancient Psalmist Calls Us to Gratitude

If you are looking for some Biblical wisdom during these summer months, you might try the Book of Psalms. Historically, the psalms are so closely linked to King David that many believe some of them were written by him. They provide prayers for every aspect of the life of the Israelites, and today they reveal a spiritual wisdom that can draw the Christian steward into a deeper intimacy with God, especially through the fundamental notion of gratitude.



Keeping in mind that all we have is from God, and remains God’s, Christian stewards awake each morning to say with humility,
“Thank you.”

Psalm 50 provides an insightful look at gratitude. The psalmist felt so strongly about the call to thankfulness to the Lord that he even chose to speak with the Lord’s voice, assuring the people that God did not need their burnt offerings: “I shall take no young bull out of your house nor male goats out of your folds. For every beast of the forest is Mine. The cattle

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on a thousand hills. I know every bird of the mountains, and everything that moves in the field is Mine." No, God tells the people, everything is already God's, so your cattle and birds and young bulls need not be offered to their Creator.

So what does God want from us? The psalmist urges us to "offer to God a sacrifice of Thanksgiving."

Keeping in mind that all we have is from God, and remains God's, Christian stewards awake each morning to say with humility, "Thank you." The ancient psalmist's words make sense to a modern Christian, because the God who gave us free will does not possess our thankfulness until we freely give it. And we're asked for more than a



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perfunctory show of gratitude. The God who already possesses cattle on a thousand hills and every bird of the mountain is calling us to a deep sense of conversion, a sense that we stand before the God who has gifted us with everything we possess.

Go to your Bible this month. Take some quiet time to pray some of the psalms. And remember to be thankful for what he has done for us.

Eucharist and the Spirituality of Stewardship

Part I of a four-part series by author and lecturer, Reverend Joseph D. Creedon from his 2018 book, *Stewardship: A Life-Giving Spirituality*.



Baptism makes us disciples with a mission and a ministry; Confirmation seals us with the seven-fold gifts of the Holy Spirit. Eucharist feeds our body, mind and spirit to help us live our faith to its fullness. We eat the bread and drink the wine to make sure that we do not forget the love that motivated Jesus to suffer and die for us; to make sure that we never forget that his love was rewarded when his father called him back

to life and changed human history forever! Eucharist is the Stewardship sacrament *par excellence*.

Without a grateful heart, Eucharist cannot be fully experienced. As all of us are painfully aware, attendance at Sunday Mass is at an all-time low. The explanations for the scandalous decline in Mass attendance are many and it is doubtful that any one explanation can explain fully why participation in the Eucharist on Sunday fails to motivate so many people.

There are some who believe that when the liturgy was no longer celebrated in Latin that we lost our sense of mystery. Once the mystery was gone, people began to drift away. While it cannot be disputed that the beginning of the drop in attendance at Sunday Mass began about the same time that English was introduced most would agree that the relationship is coincidental rather than causal.

Others believe that the drop in Mass attendance is the result of secularism. When I was a young boy all of Sunday, but especially Sunday morning, was reserved for church. There was no shopping because all the stores were closed. There were no Sunday morning road races, no soccer matches and no football games. Sunday morning was for Church. Obviously this is no longer the case. For too many folks Sunday is the only day they do not work. Sunday is now seen as personal time for those who work too long and too hard. Religion now has to compete with an ever-increasing number of opportunities on Sunday and we are not winning the battle.

Some folks were driven away from Church as a reaction to the sexual abuse scandal that is ongoing in our Church. Some think that as believers get better educated their need for church wanes. Still others insist that the new English translation of the Mass, which is certainly new but certainly not English, has added to the problem of declining participation in Sunday Mass. In addition to all of these contributing factors is the reality that more and more people do not believe that missing Mass on Sunday is a sin. Whatever the real reason or reasons, no one can deny that we have a problem and we need to find a solution. I firmly believe, though, that the spirituality of stewardship is the best solution to the problem of declining Sunday Mass attendance. (See Part II in the August ICSC eBulletin).



A STEWARDSHIP MOMENT

Thirteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time Weekend of July 1/2, 2023

In today's gospel reading the Twelve hear Jesus speak these words: "Whoever does not take up his cross and follow after me is not worthy of me." This is the first time Matthew mentions the word "cross" in his gospel, and it is not in direct reference to Jesus' crucifixion but as a prerequisite to following him. Good stewards recognize that the call to discipleship requires them to "take up the cross" and align their goals in life and their fate with that of Jesus, that is, with suffering, opposition, resistance and even death. Reflect this week on the crosses you need to take up daily in order to comprehend the way of Jesus Christ.

Fourteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time Weekend of July 8/9, 2023

One of the most well known and beloved passages in scripture is the gentle invitation of our Lord in today's Gospel reading: "Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest." When we need physical rest, we sleep or take a nap. When we need emotional rest, we take a break, go for a walk, or when the opportunity presents itself, take a few days off. But how do we find spiritual rest? How do we discover Christ's peace as we grapple with this time of uncertainty and its complex issues deep in our hearts? Good stewards find their rest in the Lord. Reflect this week on what you do to welcome the peace of Christ into your heart.

Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time Weekend of July 15/16 2023

In today's second reading, Saint Paul gives us reason to hope for a wondrous future beyond our imagination. He preaches this hope amidst the suffering of the early Christian communities. "Brothers and sisters: I consider that the sufferings of this present time are as nothing

compared with the glory to be revealed for us" (Romans 8:18). Good stewards realize that by remaining faithful to the Gospel with persistence, fervor and endurance, our hope in the promises of Christ Jesus will be rewarded. Reflect this week on concrete ways you can remain faithful to the Gospel during these challenging times.

Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time Weekend of July 22/23, 2023

In today's second reading, Saint Paul bids us to take comfort in knowing that when God invites us to pray to him, he knows our true needs, even if we do not. The Holy Spirit intercedes and prays for us even if we can't come up with appropriate words; even when we don't have a clue what to ask for. We are not left alone. Good stewards know that prayer is an important part of living a life in Christ. The important thing is to make space for God. Do we let God into our hearts? Do we make room for the Holy Spirit to pray within us?

Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time Weekend of July 29/30, 2023

A profound stewardship prayer is offered by the young King Solomon in today's first reading. He asks the Lord to give him an understanding heart, compassion towards God's people and the insight to distinguish right from wrong. An understanding heart, or wisdom, is a gift from God. It is a gift that enables us to make good decisions and prudent choices. Cultivating and sharing this gift is essential, especially when poor decisions and lack of compassion have consequences that affect the lives of others. During these disquieting times, are we asking God for an understanding heart? Are we exercising good stewardship over the gift of wisdom? Are we sharing our compassionate hearts with others?