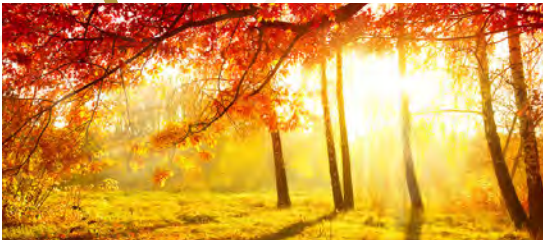


INTERNATIONAL CATHOLIC STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL
CATHOLIC STEWARDSHIP

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A STEWARDSHIP PRAYER
for October

Lord Jesus Christ,

We serve in your name
as did your apostles before us.
And we live, as they did, in anxious times,
painfully aware of sin's presence in the world;
a world in need of your Father's mercy.

As your disciples, we also live in hope,
confident that your light is breaking through
the changing moods of life –
healing, embracing and transforming
as your presence moves deep within us.

Help us see every hour of our lives
as a moment of grace:
A time when we open our hearts
to you in prayer,
discover your Truth in our work and leisure
and live each moment as blessings
to one another.

Make us better stewards of the great wealth
of gifts you have bestowed upon us.
And show us how to teach others
to open their hearts to those who hunger,
thirst or who are strangers.

Refresh our minds,
renew our faith, and
inspire us to proclaim your Gospel
with a new energy in word and in deed
for you live and reign with the Father
and the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.

Amen.

An Opportunity to Deepen Our Lives in Christ

A long-time member and contributor to ICSC, Leisa Anslinger, tells the story of having visited the pastoral council of a parish in her diocese. It was the first meeting of the season for the council, and the first meeting for newly appointed members. She was asked to provide a brief introduction to stewardship. After prayer, she asked the group “when I say the word ‘stewardship’ what first comes to mind?” She says she has used this opening for many years. She says it helps her get a quick glimpse into the group’s perceptions about stewardship and provides a springboard for the presentation that would follow. This particular group’s sharing was insightful to Leisa: God asks us to care for all that we are and all



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that is; stewardship is about sharing what we have; it is a faith-response to Christ; stewardship is about using well something that is really God's. Leisa said it was heartening to hear such understanding from this council, and encouraging that she has heard similar responses from many groups in the past few years. No longer, it seems, is “money” the first thing that comes to everyone’s mind when they hear the word “stewardship.”

This increase in understanding is the result of the hard work, dedication, and leadership of many ICSC members: bishops, priests and lay leaders alike. It is borne of consistent efforts to teach stewardship as

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a way of life. And just as stewardship itself is an expression of discipleship, applied in the daily circumstances of our lives, forming people as stewards requires us to continue to spread the message throughout the year, in all ways possible, in the daily and weekly circumstances of the life of our faith communities. Leisa has played a prominent role in the stewardship movement, working tirelessly to form Christian stewards. For her devoted ministry, ICSC is extending to Leisa one of its highest honors at this year's 60th anniversary conference, the Christian Stewardship Award.

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Leisa says that she is always grateful to know that so many stewards will gather annually for the ICSC conference. It offers an opportunity for all of us to grow as leaders and as stewards; and most especially, to deepen our lives in Christ. Like the pastoral council in Leisa's story, we, too, recognize that all we are and all we have are truly God's. Our time together to learn, explore and grow as stewardship leaders is a way of stewarding well our talents, knowledge, time, and friendship, as people who are committed to serving others. This is a time when stewardship leaders in parishes and dioceses will pause and re-dedicate themselves as stewardship leaders, trusting in the providence of a good and gracious God in whose image we are created. Leisa Anslinger has been a tremendous leader in what our bishops have called a movement in the footsteps of Christ Jesus.

STEWARDSHIP SAINT *for October*

Saint Luke

Luke is the author of the third Gospel and was a companion of Saint Paul. According to reliable tradition, he was a Syrian physician from Antioch who wrote his Gospel in Achaia (Greece). Both the Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles are attributed to Luke, because he appears to be the person intended by the first-person reference in Acts. The opening of Acts refers to the Gospel and is dedicated to the same person, Theophilus.



The basic point of Luke's New Testament writings is to emphasize the love and compassion of Jesus Christ. Luke also has an interest in the reality of poverty and reveals a deep concern for the poor, the outcast, and the underprivileged throughout the Gospel.

Stewardship is a major theme in Luke's Gospel. As a matter of fact, what emerges from Luke's writings is a sophisticated theology of stewardship that is unique to his Gospel and not addressed so profoundly by other New Testament writers. Luke defines the duty and role of a steward as a unique sort of

servant who is entrusted with material possessions by a master, takes charge of them and is required to use them prudently.

Luke envisions the steward as not having any possessions or property of his own, but as taking care of his master's property and wealth until the master summons him to turn in an account of his stewardship.

Luke defines the duty and role of a steward as a unique sort of servant who is entrusted with material possessions by a master, takes charge of them and is required to use them prudently.

There is a finiteness to stewardship. According to Luke, a steward carries out his responsibilities with alertness, knowing that the master's return may come at any time. And depending on the quality of his stewardship, there is the anticipation of a reward as a result of his stewardship. Luke believes stewards are not just a chosen or appointed few. Stewardship is the responsibility of all Christian disciples.

Luke takes his basic ideas of stewardship and applies them to the motif of material possessions as well, instructing his readers on the right use of wealth and the wrong use of wealth.

Finally, Luke's concept of almsgiving, based on his theology of stewardship, was unique and radical at the time of his writing. Almsgiving was considered an obligation of Christian disciples; imperative inside and outside the community. Luke enjoined his readers to look upon the poor with genuine sympathy and urged those with material resources to remember their identity as stewards, to distribute their wealth to the poor as alms, and to give up ownership of their own material possessions.

Luke is the patron saint of physicians, artists and butchers. His feast day is October 18.

The Steward's Harvest

October is traditionally the harvest month for those of us who live in the Northern Hemisphere. This year, farmers across the great American plains have seen crops stunted by drought and intemperate heat. Yet, October brings again the bright yellows and oranges of falling leaves and vine-ripened pumpkins and the invigorating crispness of autumn air.

In October, we cannot fail to note the dying of things. The grasses grow dormant; the flowers fade and then yield to frost, the once verdant leaves fall and decay. This year of drought, many U.S. farmers have plowed under dried up corn husks that have yielded no fruit. October brings with it the knowledge that the cycles are ever with us, and that we, too, are part of this cycle of birth, death, and rebirth.



It's good, no matter how old we are, to yield to the lessons of this passing season

For many, it's a challenging lesson. We sometimes turn away from all that this season tells us about our own mortality. But the Christian steward knows that stewardship is steeped in the season of harvest.

It's not surprising that the Hebrew Scriptures are filled with harvest imagery. There is a time for everything, the writer of Ecclesiastes tell us, and a season for every activity under heaven ... a time to plant and a time to uproot. From our ancestor's world, embedded in agrarian culture, we've moved to a fast-paced environment where we sometimes ignore the cycles of life, or fail to learn from their implications.

Jesus, the offspring of a carpenter and the friend of fishermen, was also deeply attuned to the rhythm of the fields. He observed the seed that fell on rocky soil and the seed that fell on fertile land. He told us the hard truth that unless a grain of wheat dies, it remains but a single grain.

It's good, no matter how old we are, to yield to the lessons of this passing season. How do we approach the harvest? Have we prepared our soil well? What will be harvested from our lives? Where are our first fruits going? Are we comfortable acknowledging that the summers of our lives lead inevitably to their autumns, that all of this is God's plan, that faith tells us another spring is promised somewhere in our future?

October tells us what the heart knows: the harvest and the steward are inexorably linked.



Saint Francis: *A Stewardship Saint for Our Time*

Scientists say that most of us will never experience the full wonder of the star-filled nighttime sky because of the "light pollution" which keeps our modern world too bright to see true night. No doubt, this would have saddened St. Francis of Assisi, whose feast we celebrate October 4.

The saint who embraced the glory of creation, Francis is the patron saint of ecology and a model steward for our present age. Always one of our most popular saints, you need only visit a garden shop to find that, even in the midst of secular commerce, you can find a lawn statue of the 12th century native of an Umbrian hill town. Yet like many famous folk, Francis has become somewhat stereotyped, those statues always

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adorned sweetly with little birds.

In reality, Francis was a bold and inspired man, a good steward of creation, who embraced it as bountifully good, emphasizing the original outpouring of God's love into the world (at a time when the

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emphasis was often placed heavily on the stain of original sin.) Francis was a good steward of his neighbor. He famously embraced a leper he met on the roadway, even though he deeply feared the disease. When the man appeared to vanish, Francis felt he had encountered Christ himself which strengthened his belief that God is found in all of creation.

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Francis heard the words “Rebuild my church” while visiting the worn-down chapel at San Damiano. Only later did he and others regard those words as a challenge not to repair a structure but to reinvigorate Christian spirituality. Today, in a time of environmental crisis, Pope Francis is the first pontiff to take the saint of Assisi’s name as his own. The Holy Father’s encyclical, *Laudato Sí*, On Care for Our Common Home, speaks to the need to be good stewards of creation, to protect and cherish God’s great gift. St. Francis left us, along with a deep love for creation, with a spirituality that embraces simplicity and love for the poor.

October offers Christian stewards an opportunity to pray outdoors in the beauty of autumn, the changing leaves, the early dusk. Be a good steward of your prayer life: Take a prayer walk, as St. Francis would. Ask the saint to help you recommit to a simpler lifestyle, recycling, reusing, honoring resources, to seeing the earth and its poor as holy. Perhaps we might even venture out to the garden late at night, to see as many stars as we can.

Leading Parishioners to Live as Disciples and Stewards Who Evangelize

by Leisa Anslinger, the 2022 recipient of ICSC’s Christian Stewardship Award.



I have been greatly influenced by the wisdom of Bishop Sylvester Ryan, bishop *emeritus* of Monterey, California, who often reminds us that stewardship and evangelization are two sides of the same coin. That coin is discipleship. Forming people who are aware of their call to grow as disciples is a dynamic and life-giving process. It can also be challenging, as is the call itself. Jesus’ way is one that places demands upon us, and yet, as the United States bishops’ pastoral letter on stewardship notes, it is also a way of joy and a life filled with meaning. Let us briefly explore these three interrelated calls:

“Stewardship is an expression of discipleship with the power to change how we understand and live out our lives.”

Discipleship: While we are drawn into Christ’s Body through the waters of baptism, many of us grow into a living relationship with Christ over many years. Once that relationship has been ignited, or re-ignited, people’s lives are shaped by their faith and desire to grow in love of God and all that we believe as Christians. This process of ongoing conversion takes place within the community of faith. As leaders, we have the opportunity to create an environment in which those who are already on the journey of discipleship recognize their call to reach out to others, building bridges to living faith.

Stewardship: We are Christian stewards because we are followers of Jesus Christ. As the bishops’ pastoral indicates clearly, “Stewardship is an expression of discipleship with the power to change how we understand and live out our lives.” Through our lives as stewards, we embrace Christ’s self-giving, sacrificial way of life.

Evangelization: When we are in love, we cannot help but share that love with others. That is the essence of evangelization. We share the love of God as good stewards of our faith, and our sharing has the potential to draw others into a new or deeper relationship with God in Jesus Christ, as disciples and stewards.

Keeping this interrelationship in mind as we develop stewardship processes and initiatives helps us lead the people we serve to a joy-filled, meaningful way of life.

Stewards of a Missionary Church

The month of October is an ideal time to focus our prayerful reflections on the world and to see its peoples as a gift from God. The global community is a gift to be received with gratitude and held in stewardship. With the celebration of World Mission Sunday, October is a month that offers Catholics worldwide the opportunity to renew their commitment to proclaim the Gospel and to give a greater missionary focus to parish activities. It is time to reflect on the global context of our stewardship, and to express our gratitude to missionaries who bear witness to Christ in the most remote and challenging places of the world, often with their lives.



The month of October can remind us that being witnesses to Jesus Christ is a stewardship responsibility of us all, and that in a world experiencing increasingly disturbing forms of alienation and indifference, our communion of faith can offer signs of hope and work to make the planet a home for all peoples.

We are “communion” because of the gift of the Eucharist. And this gift that we celebrate in the sacrament is not something we can keep to ourselves. By its very nature it demands to be shared with everyone. That is one reason the missionary impulse of our Church has always

been a sign of vitality in its unique witness of unity around the world.

There are a number of ways you can focus on the missionary activity of the Church:

- Include petitions for the Church’s missionary work in your daily prayers.
- Increase your awareness of the wider global mission of the Church.
- Discover ways to participate in specific missionary activities taking place in your parish or diocese.
- Give generously on World Mission Sunday, celebrated this year on October 23.

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The Church’s work around the world is as important as the work in our own neighborhood. Let us be mindful this month that we are stewards of the Gospel, called to proclaim it to the ends of the earth, bringing hope to a world that hungers for Christ’s peace.





A STEWARDSHIP MOMENT

Twenty-seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time Weekend of October 1/2, 2022

From today's second reading, we are made to realize, like Timothy, that Christ's call to follow him is meant for us all. Good stewards realize they have everything necessary to live for Christ. "Stir up the fire that is already burning inside you." Another way to express this thought in the vocabulary of stewardship is: "Use your gifts now! Serve the Lord now! Get involved now! God put the fire inside you but you have to stir up the flame! Let it burn!" Everyone can give witness to Christ's presence in the world, and most of us can do more than one thing for the Lord. How exactly do you "stir into flame" God's unique gifts you hold within you?

Twenty-eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time Weekend of October 8/9, 2022

In today's Gospel, we hear of the ten men afflicted with leprosy, and the one who glorifies God for being healed. It is a dramatic scene of gratitude. But in order for the miracle to happen in the first place, these men had to start walking in faith before their diseased conditions could change one tiny bit. Good stewards of their faith realize that they cannot wait until their problems are over to start walking in faith. They praise God even in the darkest of nights, and in the worst of circumstances. Do we walk in faith, offering the Lord our gratitude even when we are in difficult circumstances?

Twenty-ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time Weekend of October 15/16, 2022

If we want to know what Jesus' parable is about in today's Gospel, it seems that we don't need to work too hard because Saint Luke tell us right at the beginning: "Jesus told his disciples a parable about their need to pray always and not to lose heart." This parable has often been used to bring comfort to us about our prayer life. But could there be a more challenging message for those who take stewardship seriously? Widows were the poorest and most vulnerable of people in Jesus' time. Oppressive legal and

economic structures were the norm. Jesus embraced with great compassion the poor and the marginalized. Could it be that we are also encouraged to pray persistently for the poor, the weak and the vulnerable as we hear their cry for justice? And that we must not lose heart that we can effect change in their lives?

Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time Weekend of October 22/23, 2022

There is an interesting twist we find in today's gospel when we hear Jesus' parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector praying in the temple. The Pharisee is "praying to himself." It doesn't mean he was praying silently. It seems to mean something a lot more troubling, that he is praying to himself; that God is not his prayer's intended audience. The words of the Pharisee are very much centered on himself: he makes claims about his character. He highlights his own admirable activities. Good stewards of their prayer lives know that a prayer of praise and thanksgiving should focus on the goodness of God. Do your prayers of thanksgiving always stay focused on God's unfathomable, immeasurable goodness and generosity?

Thirty-first Sunday in Ordinary Time Weekend of October 29/30, 2022

The Gospel story of Jesus' encounter with Zacchaeus makes for an ideal stewardship reflection. So does today's first reading from the Book of Wisdom. Good stewards have faith in, and give thanks for, an almighty and powerful God who transcends the universe, but who gives personal attention to every human being.

God loves his creation, his people. He lives in them, and through his Holy Spirit, instills a fundamental goodness in them. Good stewards recognize this movement of the Spirit as a gift, and make efforts to cultivate this gift and grow in their faith. Take time this week to stop and look around you, be aware of God's awe-inspiring creation, and give thanks for God's loving care and concern for each of us.