



## INTERNATIONAL CATHOLIC STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL CATHOLIC STEWARDSHIP

August 2023 • e-Bulletin



### A STEWARDSHIP PRAYER *For Our Parish Family*

#### **Good and gracious God,**

Even in the midst of these extraordinary times, you continue to reveal your loving presence in the communal life of our parish.

Help us to see your active presence in our parish family, a community where peace, love and fellowship will prevail.

May it be truly prayerful, intensely Eucharistic, and deeply joyful.

Teach us how to be good stewards of our parish family even during times of stress and anxiety.

By the power of the Holy Spirit make our hearts humble and compassionate so that we may carry out our responsibilities to our parish family in a just and holy manner.

And through your Spirit, may we love one another as you love each of us, as sisters and brothers who gather around the Eucharistic table, an authentically holy, Catholic community, working together to hasten your Kingdom.

In Jesus' name we pray.

**Amen**

## The ICSC Conference Enhances the Life of Discipleship in Our Parishes

We're still in the grip of a hot and sunny summer, but August brings a wake-up call. By August's end, visiting relatives have gone home, schools will be open, swimming pools will be closed, and college kids have packed up and left for the halls of academia. What's all that mean for discipleship, stewardship and parish life? The upcoming ICSC conference helps parishes that want to be inspired by a new vitality and fresh ideas.



**August is a perfect time to reflect on where – not “if” – you are called.**

The parish is where the Church lives, and its committed disciples are the lifeblood of a thriving parish. In the parish, we find community and support, liturgy and ritual, sacraments and healing. In the parish, we find a way to give and a way to receive. On a practical level, fall is the time when parish planning gears up for the seasons ahead. Now is the time to prayerfully consider your own involvement in the life of the parish in the coming year. How might we serve – and be served? The committed Catholic knows participation in the parish is a win-win situation, feeding us as we feed others. The ICSC conference offers creative ideas from stewardship leaders all over North America.

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Where do you begin looking for new inspiration? Your parish website or office may provide a list of ministries in the parish. What calls to you? Respond to your deep desire. Maybe you're the party planner who'd love to serve on the social committee. Or perhaps you have a heart for helping the bereaved. Are you called to lector, or perhaps to take the Eucharist to the homebound? Maybe this is the year you need to soak in the fruits of adult education. Possibly you see a ministry missing and want to propose it. Perhaps, as a long-serving member of the parish, you want to be part of revitalizing the stewardship efforts of your parish.

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If you take a look at the schedule for ICSC's October conference through the LINK on the accompanying conference promotional page, you know there are a host of sessions which address how to enliven parish stewardship. Maybe this is the year you're called to attend the conference – another win-win situation in which you learn how to welcome the stranger, bring out the best in your parishioners, and encourage discipleship all while experiencing the community and support of other conference goers. August is a perfect time to reflect on where – not "if" – you are called. August provides time to decompress from a busy, fun summer and pray about where your own road to discipleship leads you next.

## STEWARDSHIP SAINT for August



### Saint Lydia of Philippi

Lydia is the first recorded person in Europe to become a follower of Jesus Christ. She was Saint Paul's first baptized convert at Philippi.

What we know of Lydia is found in the Acts of the Apostles. She was from Thyatira, an industrial center located in what is now western Turkey. She was a wealthy business woman; a manufacturer and seller of purple dyes and fabrics for which the city of Thyatira was noted. Lydia was part of a high value industry. Purple goods were luxury items, used by emperors, high government officials, and priests of the pagan religions.

At the time of the narrative in Acts, Lydia and her household had moved to the city of Philippi, a Roman colony on the Rome-to-Asia trade route. This is where she had her first encounter with Paul on his second missionary journey about the year 50.

While visiting Philippi for the first time, Paul and his party came upon Lydia and a group of women gathered by the river that ran through the city center. He sat down and shared the gospel with them. Lydia listened intently, took the gospel message to heart, and she and her family were then baptized in the river.

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Lydia insisted on providing hospitality to Paul and his companions, so they made their home with her while in Philippi. She continued to help them even after they were jailed and released.

As a successful businesswoman, her home would have been spacious enough to welcome guests and to become a place for community gatherings and liturgies.

Paul cherished the members of the Christian community at Philippi and called them his "joy and crown." Undoubtedly, Lydia's generous hospitality and leadership in the founding of this early Christian community contributed to Paul's affection.

Saint Lydia's feast day is August 3.



# INTERNATIONAL CATHOLIC STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL



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# Eucharist and the Spirituality of Stewardship

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

I firmly believe that the spirituality of Stewardship is the best solution to the problem of declining Sunday Mass attendance. Eucharist means thanksgiving and the first step on the

those gifts to be transformed into the Body and Blood of Christ, receive communion and then be sent forth to a waiting world with the message that God gives us the gift of his love.

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**It is impossible to actively join in the celebration of the Mass and not have our hearts filled with gratitude.**

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road to becoming a good steward is “To receive God’s gifts gratefully.” If we can enrich the “attitude of gratitude” in our lives and in the lives of the people we love then we will be on the road to recovery. Once we rediscover that “everything we have is a gift from God” then we will be forever vigilant in our search for ways to thank God for all that he has given us.

There is no better way to thank God than to gather with our fellow believers, admit our sinfulness, give glory to God, open our minds and hearts to the Word of God proclaimed, offer our gifts, pray together for

The Second Vatican Council, in its decree on the Liturgy, reminds us “liturgy is the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; at the same time it is the fountain from which all her power flows.” (#10) It has been 50 years since the Council issued its first teaching on the liturgy. Much has been done to restore liturgy to its central role in the life of the Church. More remains to be done until the vision of “full, active and conscious” participation in the Mass becomes the norm rather than the exception.

It is impossible to actively join in the celebration of the Mass and not



have our hearts filled with gratitude. Whenever we gather to celebrate the Mass, we come to give thanks to God for all his gifts and a miracle happens. We come to give thanks, we receive more gifts and we go forth with even more for which to be thankful.

Perhaps the best way to explore the miracle, the mystery of the Eucharist, is to take part in an extended meditation of just what happens when we gather to break bread as the People of God. (See Part III in the September ICSC eBulletin).

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## Good Stewards Avoid “Compassion Fatigue”



One of the spiritual maladies Christians face today is “compassion fatigue.” The media inundates us with details of disasters, natural and made, far and wide. We can’t turn on the television without being assailed by news stories of another event that cries to us for help, and our mailboxes are full of pleas from worthy charities.

We try to give out of a sense of compassion, but the needs of the world overwhelm us. Generous givers become “fatigued” and grow weary. We can’t respond to all the problems and crises in the world, can we?

Of course we can’t respond to the cries of a suffering world with our comparatively meager resources. If we try to respond to every crisis, to say “yes” to every loud or consistent plea for help, it is no surprise that we feel tired and discouraged. Our efforts to respond generously can become scattered and not well thought out, and sometimes our giving becomes motivated by guilt rather than compassion. Eventually, we may stop giving.

Good stewards understand that, though Christ calls them to embrace a needy world with compassion, they cannot solve the world’s problems themselves and that a balance must be struck in their spiritual lives. Christian stewards prayerfully discern how they are able to respond to the needs of the

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world. They budget their time and resources so that their response can be generous but focused, sacrificial but not overwhelming. They begin with a prayerful commitment to their immediate family of faith.

Being generous to one's faith community can go a long way toward meeting the needs of others. Their response to the diocesan annual appeal and to special collections also makes them part of a larger faith community's response to the poor and marginalized. For some, this focused generosity may be the extent of their ability to give financially. The decision to give is made prudentially and without guilt. For others, a well

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thought-out approach to supporting other charitable causes can be part of their stewardship planning as well. But for Christian stewards the giving does not stop there. Good stewards realize that the greatest gift they can give is the gift of prayer. Compassion, in its Latin roots, means "suffering with," and through prayer we can be drawn powerfully into solidarity with those who suffer.

The Parable of the Good Samaritan in the Gospel of St. Luke is often seen as Jesus' example of compassionate giving. The Samaritan saw the man near death lying at the side of the road not just with his eyes, but with a compassionate heart. It is the kind of compassionate heart good stewards seek to cultivate within themselves through prayer, planning and focused generosity; ready to respond, without experiencing fatigue or weariness, to the cries of the world.

## What World Youth Day Participants Can Teach Us about Being Good Stewards of Our Parish Life of Faith



World Youth Day 2023 is being celebrated this year in Lisbon, Portugal from July 28 to August 7. Young pilgrims from all over the globe will join together to pray, learn and share their joy of the Gospel with one another. Hundreds of thousands of young Catholics will gather in the name of Christ Jesus:

*"... who stirs in you the desire to do something great with your lives, the will to follow an ideal, the refusal to allow yourselves to be ground down by mediocrity, the courage to commit yourselves humbly and patiently to improving yourselves and society, making the world more human and more fraternal (Saint John Paul II, prayer vigil address, World Youth Day, August 19, 2000).*

Another year of formal parish activities will begin soon. Catholic educators, DREs and catechists will assemble our youth, engaging and encouraging them to discover their talents, recognize and focus on their potential, and help them understand more about life, faith, and the world. In many parishes, those who have attended World Youth Day have taught us much about evangelization and Christ's call to each of us to commit ourselves to learning more about our faith.

But the young evangelists who return from World Youth Day celebrations of past years have not stopped evangelizing. They have accomplished much to keep the Holy Spirit alive in their parish communities. They have shown us that the "fire" they bring home from World Youth Day is not just for the young and that the need for ongoing formation and catechesis is vital for everyone. Here is a short, selected list of faith-formation activities World Youth Day participants have brought to their parishes that we too might consider for our own communities of faith:

- Join or lead a parish Bible study group.
- Start a book club reading books about saints, liturgy and Catholic practices.
- Encourage parishioners to download an app for a daily devotional with reflection and commentary.
- Coordinate parish participation in a diocesan faith-formation day or course.
- Help organize a Catholic speakers' program for your parish.
- Help sponsor the purchase of Catholic faith pamphlets, diocesan newspapers or other resources for mailing or dissemination to parishioners.
- Look for Catholic digital resources suitable for viewing in a parish setting.
- Organize a group to study documents and summaries from the Second Vatican Council.
- Join in parish gatherings that discuss current issues related to the Catholic faith with your pastor, permanent deacon, parish life director, or pastoral associate.
- Participate in or organize a parish prayer group that prays together regularly using a digital platform.



## A STEWARDSHIP MOMENT

### **Feast of the Transfiguration of the Lord Weekend of August 5/6, 2023**

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, 2023**

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, 2023**

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 Cantic 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, 2023**

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 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, 2023**

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.