



INTERNATIONAL CATHOLIC STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL

CATHOLIC STEWARDSHIP

March 2024 • e-Bulletin

A STEWARDSHIP PRAYER *for March*

Heavenly Father,

Thank you for this new day, and another opportunity to give the traditions of Lent genuine meaning in my life.

Help me to be a good steward of this day; to use it wisely to reflect on my words and deeds, review my habits, and correct my faults. Inspire me to live as Jesus did, to embrace his cross, and live the great paschal mystery in a way that gives hope to others.

Be merciful to me this day. Forgive me my failings and weaknesses. Cultivate in me a humble and repentant heart.

Prepare me for the renewal of my baptismal vows, today and throughout the season of Lent; so that at Easter I may truly rejoice in Christ Jesus, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, God, forever and ever.

Amen



Our Work is Loving the World: *A Lenten Stewardship Reflection*

Insightful stewardship expressions can be found in any number of poems we read reflectively. In the poem “Messenger” for instance, the poet Mary Oliver writes: “My work is loving the world.”

What does the poet mean by her use of the word “work” in relationship to “loving?” How can Christian stewards make prayerful use of this reflection during the season of Lent?



For Christian stewards, bringing Christ’s loving presence into our work and our workplace is necessary in order to live in the world as disciples of the Lord.

The forty days of Lent provide stewards with a marvelous opportunity to evaluate the nature of our life’s “work.” Being reminded to take a meaningful and substantive spiritual “pause” in our lives for forty days is a gift in itself. Sometimes, we have good intentions to improve our spiritual lives. But we tend to put it off. The season of Lent begins by reminding us of the brevity of our lives, and then presents us with the immediacy of forty days to focus more intensely on our life in Christ. This is the first step toward embracing Christian stewardship as a way of life.

It’s a good number, forty days; good enough to provide structure to help us open our hearts to conversion as we examine just what our “work” in this world should genuinely be about. As we imagine

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what Jesus must have done in the desert for forty days, we have the opportunity to examine our lives and vocation, as well as our strengths, weaknesses and temptations. Oliver probably realizes that if most of us are asked what our “work” is, we would reply with a description of how we earn our paycheck or take care of our family. In a sense, this is correct. We all have to support ourselves and provide for our families. Oliver would hardly reject that necessity. But her poem also suggests that, no matter how we spend our lives, there must be a deeper dimension to our life’s purpose; a way of engaging the world with our loving

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presence. Indeed, there is a Catholic worldview that encourages us to pray for and to act in ways that make a difference in a world that is hungry for Christ’s love.

For Christian stewards, bringing Christ’s loving presence into our work and our workplace is necessary in order to live in the world as disciples of the Lord. It is key to living the Christian life in our world today.

The very word “work” connotes a certain dedication and commitment, indeed a certain obligation. This rings true in Oliver’s simple line. As Christian stewards, we have a fundamental obligation to love and embrace the world as ambassadors of Christ. The season of Lent provides us with a singular opportunity to examine how well we’re doing and to make an even greater commitment to exercising good stewardship of all the Lord has entrusted to us.

STEWARDSHIP SAINT *for March*



Saint Turibius of Mongrovejo

Saint Turibius of Mongrovejo is the patron saint of Peru. He was the archbishop of Lima from 1579 to 1606, and it is because of his missionary work and commitment to social justice as archbishop that he has been a popular saint in Latin America for over three centuries. He had a favorite stewardship message which he used often in his teaching and preaching: Time is not our own, and we must give a strict account of it.

St. Turibius was born in 1538 to an affluent family of the Spanish nobility. He was well-educated; a professor of law at the renowned University of Salamanca in Spain. He was ordained a priest in 1578 at age 40 and sent to Peru to become the archbishop of Lima in May 1579. Reportedly, St. Turibius baptized a half million people; among them were St. Rose of Lima and St.

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Martin de Porres. He is also responsible for building many roads, schools, churches and hospitals in Peru. In 1591, he established the first seminary in the Western hemisphere in Lima. He was responsible for a new catechism in Spanish and two local native dialects.

Promoting social justice was a major concern of St. Turibius. He devoted himself to serving the poor and championing the rights of indigenous peoples against the oppressive rule of civil authorities. The governors of Peru mounted continued opposition to the archbishop because of his challenges to their injustices.

The Archdiocese of Lima consisted of 180,000 square miles, (by comparison, the state of California is 164,000 square miles). He traveled the length and breadth of the archdiocese three times, mostly on foot and often alone, exposed to the tropical elements and without protection against hostile tribes and animals of prey. On one of his missionary journeys, he contracted a fever that would end his life. He died on March 23, 1606. He was canonized in 1726.



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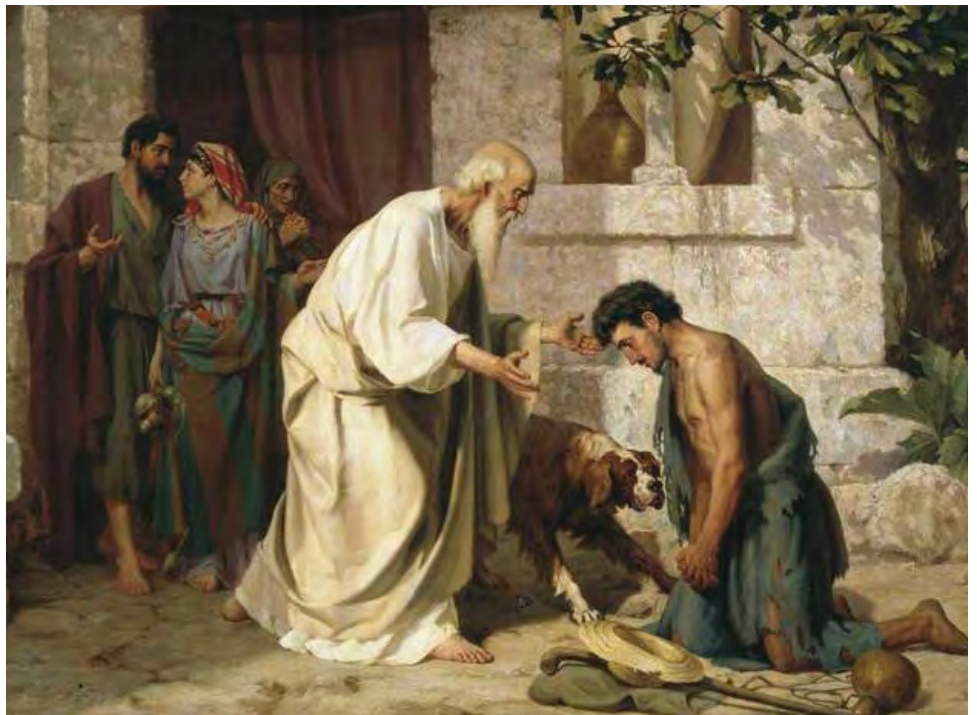
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A Lenten Stewardship Reflection: Compassion

A central theme in the Gospel of Luke and a very good one for Lenten meditation is the notion of compassion. More than any other Gospel, Luke reveals the compassionate nature of Jesus Christ. Jesus said it emphatically and without mincing his words: “Be compassionate just as your Father is compassionate” (Luke 6:36, New Jerusalem Bible).

The word compassion is derived from the Latin words *pati* and *cum*, which taken together mean “to suffer with.” Compassion asks us to enter into another’s pain, to share in their suffering, to feel their brokenness, fear, confusion and anguish.

For Jesus, however, compassion was not just a feeling. It translated itself into action. Throughout Luke’s Gospel, Jesus heals and cares for the downtrodden, the poor and oppressed. Jesus showed his followers that compassion is inherent to discipleship. He did not reach down and lift the poor up from above either. He became



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poor. He suffered with the poor. He chooses pain, rejection, persecution, and death rather than the path of “upward mobility” toward power, authority, influence, and wealth. It is this “downward mobility” that led to his own passion, death and subsequent resurrection and redemption for all.

Jesus’ path of downward mobility differs from the common notion today that compassion means helping those less fortunate than we are. It is a particularly privileged notion to think

that if we volunteer in a soup kitchen or donate money to help others, we have been compassionate. To be clear, these actions are important and valuable ways of serving others. But when we are able to maintain our distance or stay in a place “above” those we serve, such acts easily become acts of pity, rather than

compassion. This is the problem with the idea of serving “those less fortunate.” We are somehow “more” and “they” are somehow “less.” We have all the power. “They” have none. Genuine compassion, as embodied by Jesus, runs counter to our culture’s concept. Christ’s compassion is a call to suffer “along with” those who are powerless.

Compassion is at the heart of the Christian stewards’ life. It is an expression of God’s love for us and our love for God and each other. Perhaps during this Lenten season we can place compassion front and center in our spiritual lives. What better time than the Lenten season to consider a radical reorientation toward others. And what better time than Lent to discover the compassion Jesus calls us to embrace



Forty Days, Forty Ways

to Exercise Good Stewardship of Lent and Easter

Are you looking for ideas to help you with your Lenten experience? Here are 40 ideas to fill the 40 days of Lent and the beginning of the Easter season.

1. Attempt a more intentional prayer life – start a habit in the morning and before bedtime.
2. Attend Mass on Ash Wednesday. Wear your ashes out into the world as a witness to our faith.
3. Make a prayer basket at home - slips of paper or construction paper hearts (invite kids to participate) writing names or intentions that each person around the table picks out before each meal.
4. Attend a weekday Mass.
5. Pray the rosary.
6. Make a point of experiencing the sacrament of reconciliation at the beginning and end of Lent. Consider inviting someone who's been away from the sacrament to join you.
7. Pray for someone with whom you are out of touch.
8. Give up meat on Fridays but don't substitute lobster - make fasting something that is truly sacrificial.
9. Resolve to stop engaging in rumors, gossip, and negative chatter that devalues others.
10. Begin and end each week with an e-mail thanking someone for all that they do.
11. Be sure to say grace at any restaurant you frequent (don't dodge making the Sign of the Cross either).
12. Buy a cup of coffee for someone living on the street but not until you learn their name and exchange in some conversation.
13. Pray before the Blessed Sacrament.
14. Reconcile with someone you've hurt or aren't speaking to.
15. Invite someone who's been away from the church to attend Mass with you.
16. Make a gift to a charitable cause - make it a sacrificial gift.
17. Attend a parish or diocesan event centered on faith issues.
18. Thank a bishop, priest or member of a religious congregation for their public witness - invite them out for coffee or a meal.
19. Learn about the life of a saint, perhaps your parish saint.
20. Visit someone who's alone.
21. Reflect on the most pressing challenges confronting our Church and pray for a Spirit-filled response.
22. Pray for our Holy Father, Pope Francis.
23. Attend the Stations of the Cross.
24. Find out if there is a person participating in your parish's RCIA program and send a note of encouragement.
25. Find out how your diocese is involved in refugee resettlement and see how you can help.
26. Attend your parish's Good Friday liturgy, squeeze in and make room in your pew to give others a spot to sit.
27. Make time for family activities that are faith-related such as reading the Bible as a family.
28. Keep a journal during Lent about your spiritual highs/lows.
29. Make a playlist of spiritual music that you enjoy and share it with a friend.
30. Embrace periods of silence in each day.
31. Attend a parish mission or Lenten Retreat; invite others to join you.
32. Offer to be part of the church preparation crew or cleanup crew for the Easter Triduum liturgies.
33. Commit to a parish ministry or try a different ministry than the one you in which you are currently engaged.
34. Cut your media consumption to open time for prayer or scripture reading. Start and end each day free from the influence of the media.
35. Attend a Friday fish fry at a local parish with friends or co-workers. It's not the healthiest meal, but a fun Catholic tradition to join others and help you abstain from eating meat on Fridays during Lent.
36. Find a form of Lenten fast appropriate for your age and state of health.
37. Buy a book of daily spiritual reflections, keep it by your bed and read it upon rising or retiring or both.
38. Dedicate a portion of your time during Lent to serve others such as working at a soup kitchen or homeless shelter.
39. Participate in Catholic Relief Services' (CRS) Rice Bowl collection. Visit crsricebowl.org to watch videos of the people and communities you support through your Lenten gifts to CRS Rice Bowl.
40. Invite someone you know who will be alone to Easter Sunday dinner.





A STEWARDSHIP MOMENT

Third Sunday of Lent Weekend of March 2/3, 2024

If your parish celebrates the Mass for the First Scrutiny for catechumens preparing for Baptism at the Easter vigil, you may hear the Gospel story of Jesus speaking with the Samaritan woman at the well; someone who supposedly is of the wrong gender, wrong religion, and has lived the wrong life. The woman is overwhelmed by guilt and shame. And yet Jesus speaks to her and offers her “living waters” to quench her spiritual thirst. The living water that Jesus gives is new life through the Holy Spirit; a life that is accepted, forgiven, loved and eternal. Good stewards of their life in Christ remain mindful of their own spiritual thirst. They listen to Jesus who speaks to them just as he spoke with the Samaritan woman at the well. Jesus has living water for us today. He encourages us to come and drink. Are you thirsty? Are you ready to listen to him?

If your parish does not celebrate the Mass for the First Scrutiny for catechumens, you may hear the Gospel story of Jesus’ cleansing of the Temple, a familiar story. The prophets Jeremiah, Zechariah and Malachi prophesied that when the Kingdom of God was at hand, the Temple would be cleansed of all activities unworthy of an encounter with God. Christians are often referred to as “Temples of the Lord.” As stewards of a “Holy Temple” God has entrusted to each one of us, what are we doing to be cleansed of activities unworthy of an encounter with the Lord? This week, reflect on one thing you can do to cleanse the Temple God has given you so that it becomes a more inviting home for Christ Jesus.

Fourth Sunday of Lent Weekend of March 9/10, 2024

If your parish celebrates the Mass for the Second Scrutiny for catechumens preparing for Baptism at the Easter vigil, you may hear the Gospel story of how a man born blind came to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. Jesus and his disciples are walking along when they encounter the man. The disciples ask a question that reflects a narrow understanding of God’s mercy. They assume that if people suffer, then they must have done something bad to deserve it. In the case of a man born blind, it had to be something done by his parents. But Jesus says: “Neither he nor his parents sinned; it is so that the works of God might be made visible through him...” Good stewards know that God is working in their lives so that through their lives, God’s goodness will be revealed. How is God working in you? Do you see God’s goodness reflected in your life?

If your parish does not celebrate the Mass for the Second Scrutiny for catechumens, you may hear the Gospel story of Jesus’ encounter with Nicodemus, a Pharisee and leader of the Jews who comes to Jesus by night, recognizing Jesus as a teacher from God, but coming in secret for fear of being put out of the synagogue. Jesus rebukes him for his lack of understanding. Good stewards realize that for the sake of this world, God gives his most cherished beloved son. And so they are willing to confess Jesus as their Lord and savior in a public way. They do not keep their faith to themselves, in darkness. The Gospel reading challenges us to profess our faith in word and deed publicly, not to hide it away. Are we willing to accept the Gospel’s challenge? Are we willing to get out of our personal “comfort zone” and confess our faith in Christ Jesus in an open, tangible way?

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A STEWARDSHIP MOMENT continued

Fifth Sunday of Lent Weekend of March 16/17, 2024

If your parish celebrates the Mass for the Third Scrutiny for catechumens preparing for Baptism at the Easter vigil, you may hear the Gospel story of Jesus raising his friend, Lazarus, from the dead. One of the many lessons learned from this Gospel story is that of Martha's confession of faith in her friend: "Yes, Lord. I have come to believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, the one who is coming into the world." Raising Lazarus from the dead was a miracle and a clear display of God's power. It was also an unmistakable sign that Jesus was the Christ. Good stewards of their faith see signs of Christ's presence all around them and are eager to respond in faith. The stewardship question for us is: Who or what will be the Lord of our lives? Will it be Christ Jesus? And if so, how will we respond to him? Are we willing to walk in his footsteps and follow his example?

If your parish does not celebrate the Mass for the Third Scrutiny for catechumens, you may hear the Gospel story of Jesus inviting his disciples into a great mystery with curious pronouncements: Those who love their lives just as they are will lose them. If a grain of wheat dies, it will bear much fruit...What does Jesus mean? The climactic event of Jesus' passion and death is drawing closer; a time when the great confrontation between Jesus and the powers of darkness take place. When Jesus is lifted up, he will draw all to himself. The Christian steward knows life can't be lived in complacency. We are called to die to self, bear more fruit, be raised up with Jesus. Jesus brings discomfort to those who are comfortable. Jesus urges us to give witness in his name. How will we respond?

Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion Weekend of March 23/24, 2024

This weekend we participate in the proclamation of the passion and death of Jesus according to the Gospel of Mark. In the extended version of this weekend's Gospel reading, Jesus is at Gethsemane, praying to his Father, in much emotional distress. He knows he can save himself. He can escape over the Mount of Olives in the dead of night and make his way safely into the Judean desert. Instead, Jesus chooses obedience to his Father and waits for his persecutors. As Saint Paul puts it in the second reading, Jesus is "obedient to the point of death." Jesus' obedience is a lesson for those who are good stewards of their life in Christ. Let us reflect on how we might be more obedient to the will of God instead of our own will.

Easter Sunday March 31, 2024

Jesus Christ has risen today! For those good stewards of their faith who die with Jesus, they rise with Christ their savior every day. They are an Easter people. Our Savior is active, alive, and transforming us and our communities of faith, even the world, at this very moment. Easter is a time of joy, a time of celebration. To have faith in the risen Lord is also to believe that we are disciples who bear witness to Christ in a broken and troubled world. To be good stewards of this faith obliges us to be living witnesses to Christ's peace at home and in public. Jesus cannot be found buried in some long forgotten time, in some far away land. He is risen. He lives within each one of us. Alleluia!