



INTERNATIONAL CATHOLIC STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL CATHOLIC STEWARDSHIP

February 2023 • e-Bulletin

A STEWARDSHIP PRAYER for February



Heavenly Father,

You made the light
to shine out of darkness,
a light that reveals the goodness
of all you have created.

Your Son tells us
we are the light of the world.
It is a dark world in desperate need
of your infinite love and mercy.

Help us to be good stewards
of the light you shine in our hearts
so that through this precious gift,
we too may reveal your handiwork.

And by the power of Your Spirit,
show us how to shine
our light before others,
that they may see our good deeds
and glorify you.

We pray this in the name of
Christ Jesus,
your Son, who lives and reigns
with You
and the Holy Spirit,
God, forever and ever.

Amen.

Stewardship and the Family

In his *Letter to Families*, Saint John Paul II referred to the family as the “domestic Church.” It is a phrase the Second Vatican Council brought forth from the writings of the early Church fathers. It was a phrase the pope used often, and describes family life as the center of Catholic spirituality and faith. Those of us who live in a modern family, though, can attest to the incredible challenges of creating a family life that fully lives up to that image of “domestic Church.”



What can we do to make sacred the “domestic Church”
within our homes? What can we do to exercise better
stewardship of our families?

Busy schedules can make family members feel as though they live as ships passing in the night. Job demands, class schedules, school events, church groups, business trips, commute times, sports – the list goes on. Experts tell us the family dinner, a nightly event years ago, is an increasingly rare occurrence, and even when families are together under one roof, computers, televisions, and every imaginable screen demanding their attention keep them isolated from each other in the same house, even the same room.

What can we do to make sacred the “domestic Church” within our homes? What can we do to exercise better stewardship of our families? How about starting with the family meal? Schedule a big breakfast or brunch on Sunday after Mass. The table celebration could include everyone’s favorite food. Make it a family event from beginning through clean-up. Keep a large, visible calendar on which everyone’s schedule is noted, so that a family dinner can

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be planned and prioritized. That meal should be a social occasion, not the time to check if Bobby passed his science test or scold Suzy because she wouldn't get out of bed that morning. It is a time for pleasant conversation, no electronic devices permitted. And don't worry if it's not roast beef – pizza out of a box and a salad can be just as fun.

Those of us who live in a modern family, though, can attest to the incredible challenges of creating a family life that fully lives up to that image of “domestic Church.”

Then, create a plan to work on family prayer time. Besides going to Sunday Mass together, how about a time in the evening when everyone stops what they're doing and gathers for just a few moments before bedtime for prayer? Perhaps use commute times – the trip to the soccer field or the morning drive to school – to share a brief and heartfelt prayer with your children. Do your children see you pray with Scripture? Let children see you make prayer a priority. John Paul II stressed the importance of prayer as a family. “Prayer makes the Son of God present among us,” he wrote.

What else might you do to elevate the sacredness of your own domestic Church? Do your children see you honor special time with your spouse? Do you make quality time with each child individually? Do you listen to them when they speak, or are you checking your cell phone texts as they talk? Communicate the idea that family comes first and they will catch on. As a steward, prioritize your own sense of family stewardship. If our children grow up with the idea that “church” is indelibly linked to “family,” their faith will grow stronger.

STEWARDSHIP SAINT for February



Saint Maroun, *Father of the Maronite Catholic community*

The Maronite Catholic Church, an Eastern Rite Catholic community, celebrates the feast of Saint Maroun on February 9. Saint Maroun is considered the father of the Maronite Catholic community, which professes the same apostolic faith, celebrates the same sacraments and is united with the chief shepherd of the Church, the pope, as are all Roman Catholics throughout the world.

Based in part on the writings of Saint John Chrysostom (feast, Sept. 13), Saint Maroun's life is dated at approximately 350-410. Saints Maroun and John Chrysostom are believed to have studied together in the great Christian

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learning center at Antioch, which at the time was the third largest city in the Roman Empire.

Unlike Saint John Chrysostom, who became Archbishop of Constantinople, Saint Maroun embraced a life of quiet, prayerful solitude in the mountains of Syria. He was known for his simplicity and his extraordinary desire to discover God's presence in all things. He was also known for his evangelization efforts and his extensive healing ministry. He shared his deep commitment to Christ with everyone he encountered.

Saint Maroun's missionary work came to fruition when he converted an entire pagan community living in the mountains of Syria to Christianity. This was the beginning of mass conversions to Christianity in Syria. Saint Maroun attracted a multitude of followers and drew attention throughout the empire. His influence on the Syrian Christians was so great they took their name after him, “Maronites.” In time, the Maronite movement spread the Christian faith to Lebanon where its influence was even more profound.

Saint Maroun is the patron saint of Lebanon, which celebrates his feast day as a national civic holiday for Christians and Muslims alike. Pope Benedict XVI established the granting of a plenary indulgence to anyone who visits a Maronite church on February 9th.



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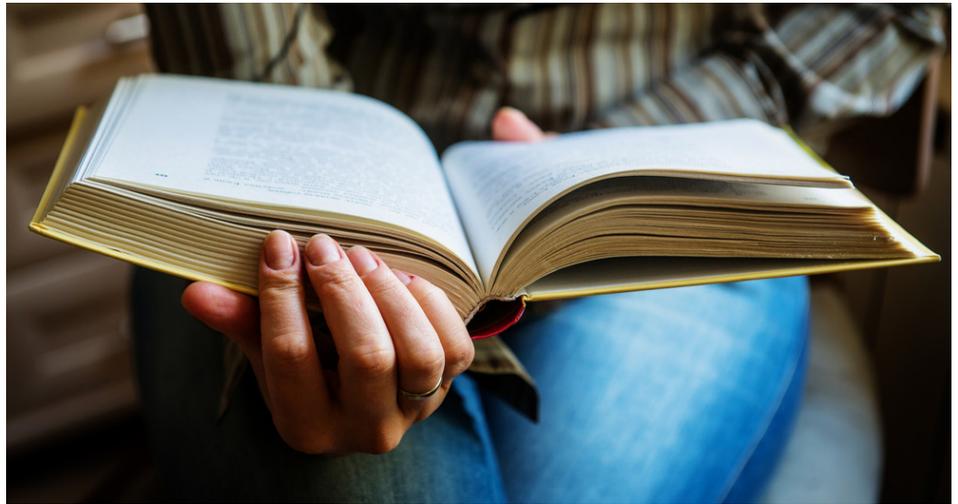
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Stewardship of God's Word: Reading the Bible

February is a transitional month, especially with Ordinary Time ending on the 21st at the doorstep of Ash Wednesday, February 22, and the season of Lent. Many of us also begin to hope that spring will be around the next corner. The first seed catalog we find in the mail reminds us this must be true, yet we know it's not time to turn the soil. We wait in the quiet of late winter.

What better time than February, before Lent and the advent of spring, to settle in for some reading and praying with sacred scripture? February can be a quiet time of patient reflection for the Christian steward. The psalms, like so many biblical passages, remind us of the benefits of reading God's word: "Your word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path" (Ps 119:105).

Our liturgical year offers us a wonderful pathway to the Bible by providing Lectionary readings for each day. Our Sunday Gospel readings this year come to us mainly from Saint Matthew. In the month of February we have an opportunity to reflect on Christ's teachings in his Sermon on the Mount with its hope-filled Beatitudes. This Gospel is ideal for spending time with the Lord in quiet meditation.



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In the Gospel of Saint Matthew Jesus gives us a guide to Christian living. If you choose to read this great book of the Bible, consider just one episode in the Gospel each time you read it. Put yourself into the scene. See what words strike a chord in you. Ask the Lord to help you know him through the Gospel reading.

One of the hallmarks of Saint Matthew's Gospel is his emphasis

on discipleship and what it means to follow Jesus. Christian stewards look to this Gospel to gain new insights into their journey of faith; and much like the desires of gardeners, long for the seeds of the Gospel, especially the Beatitudes, to be planted in their own hearts. Find some quiet time. Pick up your Bible. And use God's gift of these quiet February days to deepen your knowledge of Christ through sacred scripture.

Servant Leadership: Ascending from the Prevailing Culture

by Leisa Anslinger



For those of us who have in some way exercised stewardship of our parish communities, whether as staff or volunteer, consider the way in which our leadership is inspired and modeled by our Lord, Jesus Christ, captured in the phrase, "servant leadership." As stewardship leaders, not only are we called to servant leadership, it is also up to us to draw others into servant leadership with us – we cannot, nor should we, do this alone! There are many in our parishes who lead through their coordination of ministries, participation in service and outreach, membership in committees and councils, and when we really think about it, participation in the life of discipleship, at home, in the workplace, and in the wider community of the world. Each of us leads, in many ways, in a variety of capacities, every day of our lives.

Reverend Donald Senior, theologian and president emeritus of Catholic theological Union, draws upon the writing of business leadership author Robert Greenleaf in describing the servant leader:

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In contrast to the prevailing culture that emphasized ‘watch out for number one,’ servant leaders ‘put others first’; where the prevailing institutional culture would strive for the ‘survival of the fittest,’ servant leaders say, ‘We are all in this together.’ Where the prevailing culture says, ‘Never trust anyone,’ servant leaders ‘trust everyone unless, and until, they prove themselves untrustworthy.’ Greenleaf also emphasized that the person who aspires to servant leadership must choose first to be a ‘servant’ and then later to be a ‘leader.’ In other words, the vocation to service, to reaching out to others in need rather than being absorbed by one’s own needs and ambition, is the crucial starting point for this kind of leadership.

We can be inspired by the faith and courage of the apostles and those who came to believe in Jesus Christ as a result of their witness and stewardship of their community of faith.

I am struck by Greenleaf’s description of the prevailing culture, and I’ve seen how that culture can sometimes creep into the culture of the parish. I’ve also seen how many parish leaders who experience this “prevailing culture” in their workplace, however, strive to “ascend” from this culture and help the parish community grow in a different, more life-giving way, inspired by Jesus himself. The more we grow as servant leaders the more able we will be to create an environment in which “we are all in this together,” for the good of our parish community, for the life of the Church and for the world.

1 Senior, Donald, “The Gift of Administration: New Testament Foundations for the Vocation of Administrative Service,” Colleville, MN, Liturgical Press, 40 .



World Marriage Day – A Day to Celebrate the Sacrament of Marriage

A sage once wrote that a good marriage is like a fire around which others come to warm themselves. So, as we celebrate World Marriage Day on February 12, we realize that no matter our station in life – married, single or religious – we have benefited from this sacred covenant relationship whether through the example of our parents, grandparents, and other role models, or through our own stewardship of the marriage covenant.

For the Catholic steward, marriage goes far beyond the legal or societal agreement that our culture might define. For the Catholic steward, marriage is a sacrament that fosters a sacred covenant; establishing family and nurturing the domestic church which we understand is fundamental to our spiritual development.

Many parishes celebrate World Marriage Day by the renewal of vows, the celebration of special anniversaries, or even candlelit dinners in the parish hall.

Marriage brings us countless blessings, but is met with many obstacles. Busy schedules, the challenges of parenthood, the strains of finances, mortgages, issues of health and aging – all of these test the bonds of even the finest unions.

World Marriage Day, observed on the second Sunday of each February, is sponsored by Worldwide Marriage Encounter, associated with Catholic Marriage Encounter. Many Catholics have participated in a Marriage Encounter weekend, but no matter how we have endeavored to grow in and to support our marriages, or the marriages of those close to us, we know that marriage does take effort, continuing commitment, deep prayer, great communication, a good sense of humor and faithful love.

This year, the observances of National Marriage Week, February 7 to 14, and World Marriage Day, are an opportunity to focus on building a culture of life and love that begins with supporting and promoting marriage and the family.

Many parishes celebrate World Marriage Day by the renewal of vows, the celebration of special anniversaries, or even candlelit dinners in the parish hall. Take time this February to celebrate marriage, whether by setting aside a special time to devote to your own spouse, or by honoring the marriages that have warmed you and nurtured you throughout your life.



A STEWARDSHIP MOMENT

Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time Weekend of February 4/5, 2023

In this weekend's readings and psalm, the prevailing theme is that of light: We are the light of the world; our light breaks forth like the dawn; our light shines in the darkness; our light reflects generosity and justice. Good stewards know they are the lamp, and Christ is the flame that, through them, illuminates the earth. They know that they carry Christ's light in their hearts, and let it shine through their words and deeds. What are we doing to shine Christ's light on the hungry, the homeless and others most in need of God's mercy? How do we exercise good stewardship over the light of Christ that burns within each of us?

Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time Weekend of February 11/12, 2023

In today's Gospel, part of his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus does not speak of replacing the law of the Old Testament. He goes beyond it. He obliges his followers to work at being holier than even the strictest of Pharisees. But the work is not accomplished by following a religious "law", it requires growing in love for other human beings. Followers of Jesus know they are required to be good stewards of others. In what way will you exercise good stewardship over other people this week?

Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time Weekend of February 18/19, 2023

In another passage from his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus continues to turn his disciples' way of thinking upside-down. One of the lessons for the Christian steward in today's Gospel is that if we have a chance to help someone in need, we should be generous and give more than is expected of us. Jesus went "the extra mile" for us. Can we be more like Jesus and "go the extra mile" for others?

First Sunday of Lent Weekend of February 25/26, 2023

In today's Gospel reading we listen to the confrontation between Jesus and the devil, who thought he might tempt Jesus to forget who he was and commit a grievous sin when he was most vulnerable. Jesus had just spent 40 days and nights out in the desert, alone, away from civilization. He was hungry, thirsty, and tired. If there ever was a time to tempt Jesus, that was it. Temptations to sin come at us every day, from many directions and in many different forms. When the temptation to sin tries to overcome us, how do we react? Do we consciously remind ourselves that we are followers of Christ? Is there a time this week when you have needed to confront a temptation to sin? What lessons did you take away from the experience?