



INTERNATIONAL CATHOLIC STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL
CATHOLIC STEWARDSHIP

January 2024 • e-Bulletin

A STEWARDSHIP PRAYER
for the New Year



Heavenly Father,

Thank you for the gift of a new year.
You have entrusted us with the
coming days,
weeks and months as stewards
of your divine plan;
to live in gratitude,
joy, and an ever growing confidence
in your Kingdom to come.

We ask for the humility
to reform our lives;
the courage to commit ourselves
to you no matter the cost;
and the wisdom
to shine the light of faith
on others.

Open our hearts,
give us your Spirit
and show us how to
share your love
so that we may bring hope
to a world in need of your
justice and peace.

We pray to be a sign of your
grace in this new year
through your son, Jesus Christ,
who lives and reigns with you
and the Holy Spirit, one God,
forever and ever.

Amen.



Epiphany: To Find Our Meaning in Christ

On the weekend of January 6 and 7, 2024 we celebrate the Solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord.

Epiphany! What a wonderful word. Even its secular definition is thrilling: “a sudden realization about the nature or meaning of something.” It brings all sorts of images to mind: a light bulb suddenly turning on, shedding brilliant illumination; a revelation that brings a gasp; an idea so vivid we pause and give thanks; a truth so powerful we fall to our knees.

The feast of the Epiphany is all of those things and more. We celebrate the mysterious appearance at Jesus’ birthplace of three men from the East. They had set off on a most quixotic journey, seeking what they would find at the end of a star’s dazzling rays. What, we wonder, did they make of the epiphany with which their journey ended? Did they spend the rest of their lives trying to discern what their discovery of the baby meant, or did the Christ Child gift them with “a sudden realization” of His nature?

What more could they – or we – want of a life’s journey, than to find, in our epiphany, the Christ waiting for us?

The twelve days of Christmas have led us to this place, where Gentiles from afar have discovered Christ, thereby revealing that He came for everyone, for each one of us throughout history, and not just for the Jewish people to whom he was born. The feast of Epiphany brings us to the last week of our liturgical celebration of Christmas.

But for the Christian steward, Epiphany is not an end but a beginning. This feast reminds us that the New Year beckons us to openness about the epiphanies to which God leads us if we but keep an open, prayerful heart, a heart full of deep, awed gratitude.

Let us pray never to become too jaded, too full of certainty, too wrapped up in the routine of life to be asleep at the time of epiphany. If we could resolve to keep only one New Year’s Resolution, let it be this: to pay attention to the epiphanies God places before us.

STEWARDSHIP SAINT *for January*



Embracing a Steward's Mindset for the Coming Year

Saint John Bosco

John Bosco was born in 1815 in a small town near Turin, Italy, now one of the great cultural, educational and manufacturing cities of Italy. He was the youngest of three sons of a family of farm workers. His father died when Bosco was 2 years old, leaving a widowed mother to support a family in her poverty. He was unable to afford an education but was given an opportunity to enter the seminary by a priest who saw promise in the young man. He did well and was ordained to the priesthood in 1841 at age 26. "Don" Bosco soon thereafter began a lifelong devotion to educating and caring for boys and young men who were poor, homeless or among the working class in the newly industrialized city of Turin.

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Upon his death on January 31, 1888, approximately 40,000 mourners filed past his body as he lay in state in church and it is reported that most of the population of Turin lined the streets for his funeral. He was canonized on Easter Sunday 1934 by Pope Pius XI, who as a young priest had known Don Bosco. The next day a national holiday was observed in his honor throughout Italy. Saint John Bosco is the patron saint of Catholic editors and publishers. His feast day is January 31.

Christian stewards may very well interpret the greeting "Happy New Year" to mean: "I hope and pray for you a joyous year ahead in proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ!" If we are to interpret this cheery salutation in that way, should we not consider similar greetings throughout the year?

"Happy New Day!" In the lyrics of the popular gospel song "Oh, Happy Day!" we are reminded that Jesus taught us "... how to live rejoicing every day." Be grateful for each of God's amazing days.

"Happy New Week!" The motto of many is to Live for the Weekend. Why not live for the entire week? Let's resolve to make a difference in our lives and the lives of others in our homes, offices and schools each week of the year.

"Happy New Month!" As we examine our monthly planners and budgets, we should ask ourselves: Have I left room for Jesus Christ this month? How can I be a good steward of God's gifts in the coming month? What am I willing to do this month for the sake of the Gospel?

As we turn over 2023 to the history books, let's approach 2024 with renewed vigor. Let us see the days, weeks and months for the God-given gifts they truly are: **"Happy New Year!"**



A New Year's Resolution: Giving Generously to Your Parish

As we reflect on our family budgets for the coming year, now is an ideal time to focus on gratitude and what we are willing to give back to the Lord in 2024. It can be easy to become distracted by the busyness, planning, spending and indebtedness we occur around the holidays. But when we turn the calendar page we should prayerfully reflect on what priority we will give to God in our spending.

Christian stewards acknowledge with gratitude that even their financial resources and material wealth ultimately come from God. Exercising good stewardship over the money one makes, manages, spends and offers back to God is a tangible measure of their gratitude to God and their spiritual health.

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Giving generously to their parish, dioceses and institutions of the Catholic Church is second nature to good stewards. They prayerfully reflect on their ability to give and return the "first fruits" of their financial resources back to God (Leviticus 23:10). The good steward's desire is to put God first among his or her spending priorities. They take seriously the psalmist's question: "What return shall I make to the Lord for all the good He has done for me?" (Psalm 116:12).

The best way to respond to God's loving generosity is by reflecting that generosity day by day. What God does in Jesus' human life is a much magnified version of what happens when we take time to pray, offer our time and talents to our parish family or when family budgets and spending habits are reprioritized to conform more devotedly to the Gospel. The stewardship question is not, "Should I do these things?" but rather, "How much should I do?" Take time during these next couple of weeks to reflect prayerfully on God's generosity toward you, on the quality of your own life of gratitude and what you are doing and can do to further God's kingdom by your own giving patterns in the coming year.

Stewardship in the New Year: Making Commitments to the Lord



Stewardship is a commitment of mind and heart to the Lord; a way of life that needs constant renewal and transformation. This time of year has always been one of looking forward to a new year, reflecting on the changes we need to make in our lives and resolving to follow through on those changes. Perhaps those who seek to make resolutions to be better stewards might find inspiration in one or more of the following samples:

Stewardship of Prayer: Resolve to strengthen your relationship with the Lord through prayer. Notice how often you pray and what hinders you from praying. If you are a beginner, commit to short, daily prayer times.

Stewardship of Family: Resolve to set aside more time to stay connected with your family. Eat dinner together, schedule regular dates with your spouse, plan family outings, and go to Mass together. Practice patience and forgiveness.

Stewardship of Health: Resolve to get those medical and dental checkups. Adopt healthier eating habits. Add exercise and other physical activity to your daily routine.

Stewardship of Possessions: Resolve to possess a little more "lightly" this year. Consider ways you can reduce the amount of all that stuff you own. Distinguish between those

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items that are necessary and those that are considered luxurious and unnecessary.

Stewardship of the Parish Family:

Resolve to serve your faith community in some way this year such as at liturgy, in the parish's outreach or education and formation efforts. Is it time to enhance your generosity to the parish?

Stewardship of Money:

Resolve to render sacred your annual budget. Reprioritize your financial goals to ensure that the Lord comes first in your spending. Take positive steps to improve your financial health.

Stewardship of Work:

Resolve to be faithful to your daily, work-related tasks and offer them up to the Lord. Cultivate your skills. Deepen your knowledge. Be mindful of how you are building the Kingdom of God.

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Stewardship of Mind:

Resolve to keep your mind active. Commit to being more informed on the issues of the day. Read your bible. In this presidential election year in the United States, become even more familiar with Catholic social teaching.

Stewardship of Neighbor:

Resolve to be a person of hospitality and mercy. Make time and space for others who enter your life. Be more aware of those times when a neighbor, co-worker, fellow parishioner or stranger, needs a moment of kindness, a little attention or an affirming gesture on your part.

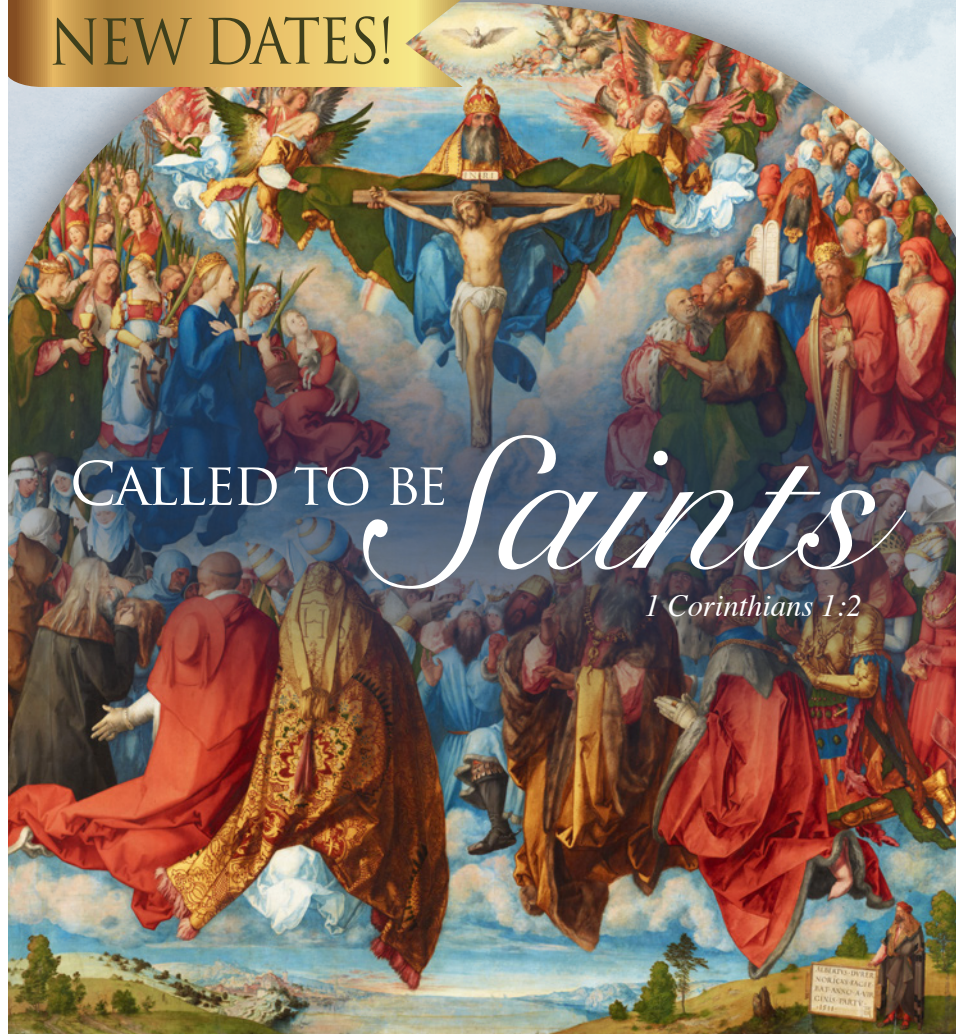
Stewardship of the Poor:

Resolve to live with more compassion and in solidarity with those less fortunate. Remember the poor in prayer, and commit to helping relieve in some way the plight of those who are impoverished or marginalized

The 62nd Annual Stewardship Conference ICSC

September 15-18, 2024 | New Orleans, Louisiana

NEW DATES!



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1 Corinthians 1:2

ICSC Member
Advent-Christmas Discount!

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Offer good until Friday, January 5, 2024

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A STEWARDSHIP MOMENT

Solemnity of Mary, the Holy Mother of God January 1, 2024

We have become so accustomed to today's Gospel narrative of the birth of Jesus, this "Hallmark card" moment, that we may have the tendency to dismiss the sheer scandal of this scene. We have nobody but the despised shepherds coming to visit the couple who have nowhere to go. They find the child in the animals' feeding trough. Far from being welcomed into ordinary society or even royal company, he is rejected. Eventually, he will turn the social order upside down by his proclamation of the kingdom and his fellowship with the oppressed and marginalized. Good stewards know that, as disciples of our Lord, they must strive to look at the world through his eyes. This week imagine how you might view the world through the eyes of Christ Jesus.

The Epiphany of the Lord January 6/7, 2024

The Gospel reading reveals the journey, the visit and the gifts of the Magi. They read the stars and inspired by their own wisdom and vision they truly want to find and pay homage to Christ Jesus who they understood would bring about a kingdom of justice and peace. Although they are not astrologers like the Magi, good stewards go about the task of reading the signs of the time as well. Moreover, they help others discover the loving presence of Christ through their own actions, bringing mercy, compassion and hope for a better world. How do you live each day to bring about a better world, a better life, unity with those who gather around the Eucharistic table and a deeper communion with God?

Second Sunday in Ordinary Time January 13/14, 2024

In today's Gospel Jesus asks two of John the Baptist's followers who now want to follow him, "What are you looking for?" That is, of course, a very practical question. It is a very good question for us to ask ourselves as we begin this new year: What is it that we seek? What is it that we really want in following Jesus? How do we wish to live so

that Christ will know that we have an authentic desire to be his disciples? This is a stewardship question. By our very human nature we are on a spiritual quest and we have many choices. Is our choice truly to be followers of Jesus Christ? If so, what changes will we make in our lives that will draw us closer to the Lamb of God.

Third Sunday in Ordinary Time January 20/21, 2024

In today's letter from Saint Paul to the Corinthians, he calls upon people of faith to disengage from the world's way of living. He wants the community to step back and see how being entangled with the outside world can be a captivity preventing them from living authentic lives in Christ. Yet, to his way of thinking, disengagement is not an end in itself. Rather, being disengaged and set free, a person can engage the world from the perspective of being one who is "in Christ." Good stewards recognize that they live in a troubled world. Knowing the certainty, however, of God's ultimate kingdom beyond human history, how can we work as good stewards of our daily lives to align the present and the future with that kingdom?

Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time January 27/28, 2024

A central theme in today's Gospel reading is the nature and extent of Jesus' authority. The people were astonished, "for he taught them as one having authority and not as the scribes." Jesus' authority brought blessings to people including healing and comfort. His authority possessed an irresistible power that drew people not through manipulation, but simply by the person that he was and the gifts that he gave. Good stewards reveal the power and authority of Christ through the words they use and deeds they perform every day. At times their stewardship leaves them open to ridicule and scorn. But having the courage to imitate Jesus invites others to imagine a different world. What can we do this week to reveal Christ's authoritative presence in the world?