



INTERNATIONAL CATHOLIC STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL

CATHOLIC STEWARDSHIP

May 2024 • e-Bulletin

A STEWARDSHIP PRAYER *for May*

Gracious and Loving God,

When your Spirit descended upon the apostles at Pentecost, they spoke the languages of those who came to hear their testimony.

They proclaimed a new covenant in Christ Jesus, sanctified by his blood, bound by the Holy Spirit, and sealed in the waters of Baptism.

We give you thanks and praise for releasing your Spirit upon us; and in these anxious times pray that it will break through the many barriers that divide people.

Let your Spirit open our eyes as a communion of faith to your ongoing presence among us, so we can recognize you when we serve one another.

Let your Spirit open our minds so that we may gain the wisdom to work together to show love for our neighbors, and unite our talents to build a better, safer world.

And let your Spirit open our hearts so that together we can live more fully in Christ, shine his light of mercy and hope and prepare for the day of his glorious return.

We pray this through your son, Jesus Christ who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, God forever and ever.

Amen



Pentecost: The Holy Spirit at Work in the World

The feast of Pentecost is quickly approaching (May 19) and it is an annual reminder that the Creed we profess is not for the timid. It's not a part-time deal, a Sunday morning interlude, something we try to get around to when we're not so busy. Pentecost also reminds us, with mighty wind and terrifying flame, that as Christian stewards we must be all in to acknowledge the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives and be open to the Spirit's direction and power.



The working of the Spirit continues to make forgiveness possible and transforms our lives.

Throughout the history of Christianity we can see evidence of how the Holy Spirit continuously breaks out afresh in our Church and world. The Holy Spirit has awakened Christians from their complacency, led them into new frontiers of celebration, sacramentality and evangelization. The working of the Spirit continues to make forgiveness possible and transforms our lives. We believe that God's Holy Spirit has been poured out as a principle of unity to bring to completion the divine plan of salvation for everyone. Good stewards know that they must cooperate and not resist the work of the Spirit.

Saint Paul tells us that there are characteristics by which we can recognize the Holy Spirit at work within each of us. These characteristics are called the fruits of the Spirit and they are: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness,

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generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (Galatians 5:22). These fruits are made manifest through our attitudes and actions in Church, among our neighbors, in the marketplace, the public square and in our use of social media.

In his first Letter to the Corinthians, Saint Paul also writes that no one can believe in Jesus Christ without the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:3). No one can even live as a disciple of the Lord without the Holy Spirit. No one can pray without him. We are convinced that when someone speaks or thinks well of another, the Holy Spirit is at work. When people do not think first of themselves but treat others as sisters and brothers, when they do not give up hope in God's promises for humanity and the world, God's Spirit is at work. Stewards know that the Spirit inspires trust, confidence and the energy not to be satisfied with what one has already

accomplished. The Holy Spirit gives us the wisdom to follow the Gospel and put the Eucharist into action every single day.

The working of the Holy Spirit, though, does not restrict or oblige people to do what they do not accept. God has given us the freedom to follow Jesus or not to follow him. Of course, the Holy Spirit will not be denied, but works most effectively through us when we are committed to the Gospel. If we open ourselves to the Holy Spirit we discover, often to our surprise, capabilities in ourselves of which we could hardly imagine. This in turn allows us to inspire others.

In a world where there is so much conflict, divisiveness and polarization, even among Christians, good stewards have confidence that in the end, the Holy Spirit is going to win. The Feast of Pentecost is a feast celebrating stewardship, for it is a



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reminder for us to be ever vigilant to listen for the Holy Spirit's wisdom and allow ourselves to be guided by that wisdom as we seek to do the will of the Father whose plan will be fulfilled.

STEWARDSHIP SAINT *for May*



Saint Bernard of Montjoux is the patron saint of hikers, backpackers, mountain climbers and alpine skiers. The accounts of his charity, hospitality, and courage on behalf of travelers in the Pennine Alps between Switzerland and Italy are renowned.

Although little is known of his early life, Bernard was thought to be born in Italy around 923. He studied for the priesthood and was ordained for the Diocese of Aosta which was in northwestern Italy at the foot of the Alps. In time, Bernard was appointed Vicar General of Aosta, and spent more than four decades building churches and schools, evangelizing and exercising pastoral care over those who lived in the nearby mountains.

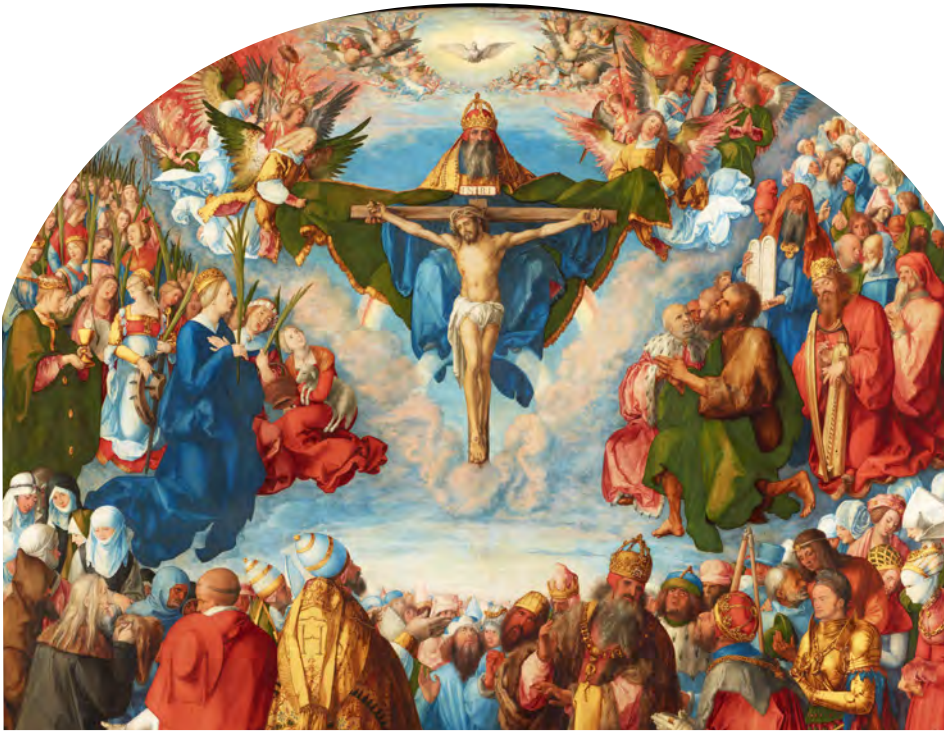
Since the most ancient times there has been a path across the Pennine Alps used by French and German pilgrims on their way to Rome. The traditional route of this pass is covered with perpetual snow and drifts sometimes accumulate to the height of forty feet. The pass could be dangerous, especially in the springtime when avalanches occurred. For the safety of the pilgrims Saint Bernard founded a monastery and

established travelers' hospices; one at the highest point of the pass, 8,000 feet above sea-level, in the year 962.

Bernard also established a religious community of men who rescued travelers, ministered to those who had fallen victim to mountain hazards, and cleared the passes of bandits. At all seasons of the year, but especially during heavy snow storms, these heroic monks, accompanied by their well-trained herding dogs, went out in search of stranded travelers. They provided them with food, clothing, and shelter.

Even through the 20th century Bernard's hospices were well known for the generous hospitality extended to all travelers over the Great and Little St. Bernard alpine passes, named in his honor.

Bernard was canonized in 1681 and then was paid a unique tribute in the late 1800's when European dog breeders renamed their alpine herding and rescue dogs, the St. Bernard. His feast day is May 28.



How Do You Respond to Those Lapsed Catholics Who have Become “Nones?”

Attend the 2024 ICSC Conference and Find Out!

Recent sociological research has identified almost 30% of Americans as people who are characterized as “nones,” those who no longer affiliate with any religion. For those who were raised in the Catholic Church this is singularly perplexing because the sacramental life, especially belief in Jesus’ active presence in our lives through the Eucharist, has been rejected by them. What do “nones” believe? What is their world view? Is their moral outlook a danger to society?

Sociologists have found that most “nones” at least believe in God, no matter how they characterize or say they relate to God. But very few participate in the life of a worshiping community. A recent Pew Research survey concluded that most people who identified as “nones” say religion does some harm, but many also think it does some good. So, as a group they are not particularly against organized religion.

Christ calls us all in unique and special ways. That call is persistent and continues to invite a response to God’s love. For those who are identified as “nones,” there exists a profound failure to listen to the Lord’s call. Many times that failure is through willfulness, but many times it is because of personal and societal distractions and roadblocks. This is where good stewards can be effective evangelizers.

The 2024 conference of the International Catholic Stewardship Council offers timely and compelling presentations by those experienced in evangelization who will share keen insights into how to help members of our families, neighbors and others open their hearts and listen to the Lord’s call in their lives.

Come and Join Us!

Stewardship: A Witness to Young People

I have always found this excerpt from the U.S. bishops’ pastoral letter, *Stewardship: A Disciple’s Response* particularly powerful: “Jesus’ call is urgent. He does not tell people to follow him at some time in the future but here and now — at this moment, in these circumstances. There can be no delay” (SDR, p. 14). As stewardship leaders, we must constantly ask ourselves these questions: What is our particular moment of life personally and in our faith community? What circumstances must we take into consideration as we call one another to live and grow as stewards, especially our young people?



In the first chapter of the bishops’ letter, they help us to recognize that embracing stewardship is about living out our particular vocations and acting as compelling Christian witnesses to others. We discern Christ’s call for us in the context of the community of believers; we respond to the urgent call of Christ. This is why it is very important that we begin forming our children and

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teens as stewards, so that they will recognize and respond to God's grace in their lives, understand themselves as disciples of Jesus Christ from a very early age, and reflect on their response to Christ's call and their many blessings as good stewards.

There is much evidence that such real-life, day-to-day faith formation is needed if our youth are to remain actively engaged in a life of faith within the faith community as young adults. In the United States over 30 percent of adults under the age of 30 are now unaffiliated. The majority of these young people leave their faith community before age 24. Young adults tell us they are looking for a meaningful way of life; they want to contribute to something that matters; they need to know that religion is not at odds with science, but rather, that faith brings a larger perspective to what is learned through science. They want and need to learn from the witness of adults who are actively living as faith-filled people in the world. Stewardship provides so much that our young people need. Forming young people to live as good stewards is a gift beyond what most of us can ask or imagine.

Make Giving Part of Your Summer Plan

The month of May means summer is right around the corner after plenty of chilly weather and rain. Flowers are blooming and trees are budding. Christian stewards are reminding themselves that stewardship continues as we head into the days of vacation, barbecues, summer reading lists, family reunions and trips to the beach.

We need to be especially mindful of our commitment to giving to our parish and our local church, the diocese. The Chronicle of Philanthropy reports that November and December are the biggest months for giving in the United States. But for those lazy days of summer? Not so much.

Just think about the giving impetus during the holiday season. Every school classroom has a charitable project, youth groups take a turn working at the local soup kitchen. Offices sprout "giving trees" and shelters are inundated with food and donations. The Christmas spirit inspires us to share the bounty. Cold weather brings out our desire to make sure others are sheltered from storm.

But often, charities tell us that the shelves are not quite so full in the summer, even though people are still hungry. Agencies scramble to fill the roster of helpers who are out on vacation, and sometimes people forget to call and ask how they might fill a need. Even parishes turn to electronic giving programs to make sure that financial donations continue during the summer weeks.

Christian stewards are well aware of summer needs, as well as being aware of their own need to give throughout the year. For the Christian steward, the spirituality of gratitude to God is part of their everyday lives and motivates their generous heart.



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On a practical level, this can mean involving your whole family in a summer project at a shelter or soup kitchen. With kids out of school, there's a great opportunity to fill some idle hours with some eye-opening charitable ventures to a part of town they've never seen, or an agency they've never visited. The Christian steward can offer to pick up the slack for a day or two when an agency is short on helpers. Remember to make that special monetary gift that equals our holiday giving. We can use spring housecleaning, not as an excuse to spend a day running a garage sale, but instead as a chance to visit a charity with our surplus and spend the day helping.

We should, of course, not forget our parish when we go away on vacation. Make sure to increase your gifts to make up for those weekend Masses you will not attend at your parish. Also, many diocesan appeals take place in the spring and summer. Giving to the diocesan annual appeal is an excellent way to support the ministries of the local church that no single parish could undertake by itself.

Summer offers a chance to have fun and adventures. Your summer stewardship plan can be as unique and beneficial as the season itself.



“As someone who works in a parish office, I gain invaluable insights and practical strategies for fostering a culture of stewardship within our faith community every time I attend the ICSC Conferences. The sessions have opened my eyes to the profound significance of stewardship as a way of life, extending far beyond mere financial contributions and showed me how stewardship is a spiritual journey, a means of living out our Christian values through the responsible use of our time, talents, and treasures.”

Carol N. *Holy Cross Melkite Catholic Church*

1 *Corinthians* 1:2
Called to be Saints

“My husband and I attended our first ICSC stewardship conference last year and were overwhelmed by the sheer magnitude of information we received, both at the spiritual and the very practical levels, as to how embracing stewardship has not only the potential to transform our parish but also our own lives as we continue our spiritual journey to be better disciples of the Lord.

As a couple, Luis and I are involved in several different ministries, programs and social activities at a parish that consists of middle and working class parishioners, retirees and a growing number of Hispanic families.

The ICSC conference was awe-inspiring for this first-timer. Learning more about getting lapsed parishioners back in the pews was invaluable. I encourage everyone who is a pastoral leader or volunteer in their parish to attend, not only for the future of your parish, but also to nourish your own faith in Jesus Christ.”



Silvia P. *St. Alfred Parish*



62nd Annual Stewardship Conference

September 15-18 | New Orleans, Louisiana

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Offer good through May 31

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A STEWARDSHIP MOMENT

Sixth Sunday of Easter Weekend of May 4/5, 2024

In today's Gospel, Jesus commands his disciples, whom he calls "friends," to love one another as he loves them. Jesus uses the word "love" as a verb or a noun nine times. He also employs the word "command" or "commandment" five times. His command to love one another is explicit. Those who understand the depth of Christ's love for us have reason to be joyful. We are called to be stewards of this loving friendship; to love one another as Jesus loves us. Do we give serious attention to what this love requires of us? What is the price of this friendship with the Lord? Are we willing to pay this price to keep Christ's friendship?

The Ascension of the Lord Thursday, May 9 or Weekend of May 11/12, 2024

Before he ascended into heaven, Jesus instructed his disciples to proclaim the Gospel to all of creation. In the first reading, after Jesus' ascent, the angels ask his disciples "Why do you stand here staring at the skies?" The angels want them to look around themselves and be assured that Christ is working through them. The Ascension does not memorialize Christ leaving us. But instead, Christ working through us, his mystical body, his Church. As stewards of this legacy, we too are called to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ in our words and actions; in how we live and how we treat others. Are we sharing the life of Christ with others in our day-to-day lives? In what ways do we see ourselves proclaiming the Gospel? In what ways can we do better?

Pentecost Sunday Weekend of May 18/19, 2024

Today we celebrate the gift of the Holy Spirit, the birth of the Church and the beginning of its mission in the world. Pentecost Sunday reminds us that our lives are filled with the Holy Spirit and that God has accomplished creative things in us through this gift. We have been entrusted with this great gift of the Holy Spirit. This great gift empowers us to be bold proclaimers of the Gospel in word and deed. It urges us to speak truth to power. It encourages us to use words and exhortations and even arguments that are meant to heal, show care and compassion and to reconcile. Now is a good time to ask: Are we being good stewards of this gift of the Holy Spirit? What creative things have we done to glorify God's accomplishments in us?

Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity Weekend of May 25/26, 2024

In today's Gospel and in the reading from the letter of St. Paul we hear of the gift of the Triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. In our devotional life we make the sign of the cross and recite the "Glory Be" as an expression of our faith as a Trinitarian people. But what does it mean for Christian stewards to accept in a practical way the experience of God in this three-fold gift? Is it not a call to share our own life in community, with compassion and love, and to work for healing, justice, peace and unity? Is it not an invitation to invite others into fellowship with us in the unity of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit?