



INTERNATIONAL CATHOLIC STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL

CATHOLIC STEWARDSHIP

April 2023 • e-Bulletin

A STEWARDSHIP PRAYER for April

Loving Father,

We know the truth of the Easter proclamation.

Christ is risen and with him all creation!

Light replaces darkness, joy replaces sadness, life replaces death.

Through the power of your Spirit, there is no failure his love and mercy cannot reverse, no humiliation he cannot exchange with blessing, no anger he cannot dissolve, no routine he cannot transform.

All is embraced by the victory of your son's cross and resurrection.

Help us always be good stewards of Easter's light, see Resurrection as a daily event, and yearn for the love of Christ as intensely as he yearns for our love.

We pray this in Jesus' name.

Amen



Easter – A joyful season for those who are the “Light of Christ”

For those who exercise good stewardship of their Catholic faith, this April is the happiest, most joyful of months for it ushers in the great Easter season – a season of profound hope and joy. During the Easter season, which extends 50 days, from the Easter Vigil Mass of Saturday evening, April 8 to the Vigil Mass of Pentecost Sunday, on Saturday evening, May 27, Christian stewards are exhorted to celebrate and be joyful, for our Savior is with us.



“Your light must shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your heavenly Father” (Matt. 5:16).

In his apostolic exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium* (“The Joy of the Gospel”), Pope Francis revealed that the best way to live out the joy of Easter is to become a genuine family of faith, an “evangelizing Church that comes out of herself.” He urged Catholics around the world to contemplate the mind of Jesus Christ and what it means to be the “light of Christ.” From there, Francis believed a spirituality of missionary discipleship could be cultivated that would “help the Church get out of herself “ and reach out to those who live in darkness.

At the Easter Vigil, all the great symbols are there: darkness, light, fire, water. The Vigil begins in darkness; not a darkness to be ignored, but a darkness in which we realize where we would be without the light of

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Christ, a darkness that reveals much about our world, our own sinfulness, the darkness that sometimes envelopes our own lives and even shrouds our own hearts. But then, the great fire of



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the Vigil is lit, a fire which consumes the darkness, and the procession into the church reminds us of the light and strength provided by the community of the faithful and the saving light of Christ. Indeed, Saint Paul maintains that we are stewards of this great light. We remember the waters of baptism during the Vigil as we renew our baptismal vows. The Vigil also brings into our community those newly baptized who proceed joyfully with us into April.

As Christ's disciples who exercise stewardship of Jesus' teachings, come into the glory of this April, join with those apostles whose hearts were on fire, and contemplate the words of the risen Lord: "Your light must shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your heavenly Father" (Matt. 5:16). For good stewards of their faith, this charge should be enough to bring hope and joy. Indeed, April is the most glorious of months. Christ is risen! Alleluia!

STEWARDSHIP SAINT *for April*



Father Chanel was declared a martyr and was canonized in 1954. His feast day is April 28

Saint Peter Chanel

Peter Chanel was born in a small village near Lyons, France in 1803. Observing his simple piety and intelligence, his parish priest had him admitted to a church-sponsored school. Chanel eventually studied for the priesthood and was ordained a priest for the Diocese of Belley in 1827. His mind was set on missionary work and after four years of parish ministry, he joined a recently formed religious community of missionary priests called the Society of Mary, the Marists. Father Chanel sought an assignment to a foreign mission, but instead was sent to teach in the local seminary where he soon became a spiritual director and the vice rector.

In 1836, the Marist congregation was assigned a vast area in the South Pacific for its mission work. Very little was known of the New Hebrides, the colonial name for the island group that now forms the nation of Vanuatu. But a delighted Father Chanel was appointed superior of a small group of missionaries that travelled to the area. They split up and Father Chanel went to the Island of Futuna, between Fiji and French

Although his mind was set on missionary work, he instead was sent to teach in the local seminary where he soon became a spiritual director and the vice rector.

Samoa, accompanied by a lay brother and an English layman. They were received by the island inhabitants with much hospitality and soon earned a great deal of respect for their care of the sick.

Once the missionaries learned the local language and began preaching directly to the people, the king of the islanders became disturbed that Christianity would pose a threat to his sovereignty. When his son asked to be baptized, the angered king sent warriors to assassinate Father Chanel. On April 28, 1841, Father Chanel was killed with an axe and his body cut up with knives.

Two weeks after the killing, a passing American trading ship took Father Chanel's companions and others to New Zealand and safety. The French landed the following year to make official inquiries and to take Father Chanel's remains with them. By the time of their arrival, however, the entire island nation had converted to Christianity.

Father Chanel was declared a martyr and was canonized in 1954. His relics were returned to Futuna in 1977.

Saint Peter Chanel's feast day is April 28.



INTERNATIONAL CATHOLIC STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL

61st Annual Conference

October 1-4, 2023 | Orlando, Florida

Easter Season
ICSC Member
Discount

\$499

through June 4, 2023

Feeding of the Five Thousand

Hendrick de Clerck

oil on canvas, c.1590

Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, Austria

EUCHARISTIC

Stewardship

Responding with Grateful Hearts

Click [here](#) to register TODAY!

TWENTY

Stewardship Ideas for the Month of April

1. Participate in the three liturgies of the Easter Triduum at your parish.
2. Write a note of encouragement and prayer to someone entering the Church.
3. Make a blood donation.
4. Join or start a Bible study group.
5. Keep the Sabbath holy. Make a pledge not to work on Sunday.
6. Plan an outing with your family.
7. Re-examine your commitment to the parish's offertory collection.
8. Introduce yourself to a fellow parishioner with whom you are unfamiliar.
9. Celebrate Earth Day 2023 by prayer and commitment to curb pollution.
10. Help a neighbor who is physically unable to clean their yard.
11. Invite someone to attend Easter Mass or another weekend liturgy with you.
12. Don't text when you drive.
13. Reduce your stress by getting outside and getting some exercise.
14. Make contact with a relative you haven't seen in a long time.
15. Take time to pray each day.
16. Treat your family or loved one to a day at the museum.
17. Volunteer to participate in a community cleanup effort.
18. Make a gift to your diocesan annual appeal.
19. Plant flowers, shrubs or trees in a park or other location.
20. Donate gently used clothing.

Celebrate Earth Day – Stop Plastic Pollution

Plastic is choking the earth. The reason, partly, is that we are not doing a very good job of recycling plastic containers. Less than 14 percent of plastic packaging is recycled. Earth Day 2023 will be celebrated on Saturday, April 22. This year's theme is "Invest in Our Planet." One way we can invest in our planet is by recycling plastic.

In his ground-breaking encyclical *Laudato Si* ("Praise be to You"), Pope Francis urged humankind to exercise better stewardship of the earth. Subtitled "On Care of Our Common Home," the pontiff's letter called for a radical "ecological conversion" on the part of people the world over, and especially disciples of Jesus Christ, to honor and save our earth from degradation. One way we can be better stewards of the earth is to fight plastic pollution.



Items like plastic packaging, bags and bottles are thrown away every day, and end up in trash sites as well as in forests, creeks, rivers, seas, and oceans around the world.

Cheap, capable of being made into any conceivable shape, strong and durable, plastic is the wonder product of the modern world. However, the victim of this technological success appears to be much of life on earth. Almost 80% of the plastic produced since the 1950s has been thrown away, either into landfill sites or into the general environment.

Ending plastic pollution was the focus of Earth Day 2018, the annual event celebrated on April 22 world-wide to raise awareness of ecological dangers and demonstrate support for protection of the global environment. But the call to end plastic pollution does not seem to have been heeded.

Items like plastic packaging, bags and bottles are thrown away every day, and end up in trash sites as well as in forests, creeks, rivers, seas, and oceans around the world. While some of these items are recycled, the growth of plastic consumption and its improper disposal currently outpace efforts to recycle and produce post-consumer plastic materials.

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But plastic is more than just litter. A petroleum product, plastic is non-biodegradable. And in reality, most plastic does not ever disappear, but becomes long-lasting “plastic dust”. When items like plastic bags break down, they readily soak up (and release) toxins that then contaminate



Check your refrigerator.
How much stuff in there is
stored in plastic?

soil and water, as well as harming animals that ingest plastic fragments. The increasing presence of plastic in our oceans poisons and ensnares marine life. Check your refrigerator. How much stuff in there is stored in plastic? Hazardous chemicals, some of which can disrupt human hormones, leach from some plastics that are used for food and beverage storage.

Plastic is the basic material of our consumer world. Without it we wouldn't enjoy the same standard of living or convenience. But if we take the Holy Father's urgent pleas seriously, we should take seriously the issue of plastic contaminating and damaging our environment. For Christian stewards, it is a moral responsibility to confront this pollution. And become better stewards of the earth. Celebrate Earth Day 2023 by helping to curb plastic pollution.



Priests Discover New Ways to Engage Parishioners through the ICSC Conference

Priests from across North America and beyond will gather in October for the 61st anniversary stewardship conference of the International Catholic Stewardship Council (ICSC). The theme for this year's conference, to be held October 1 to 4, 2023 in Orlando, Florida, is “Eucharistic Stewardship: Responding with Grateful Hearts.” Special sessions are designed just for clergy with topics that range from homiletic tips on stewardship to successfully engaging those parishioners who have drifted away in this post-pandemic era.

A number of priests joined the ICSC family for the first time last October at its 60th annual conference. One of them, Rev. Richard Gonzales, pastor of Saint Joseph Parish in the Diocese of Corpus Christi, shared his own experience:

I am grateful for having attended the International Catholic Stewardship Council Annual Conference in 2022. As the pastor of a large semi-rural community, the conference broadened my perspective as to how my parish leaders and I could better serve our parish community. One of the things that I started borrowing from one of the priests who spoke at the conference is to deliver a brief, 2-minute “State of the Parish” report, prior to my homily, at the first weekend Masses every month. Both parishioners and I have been amazed by the amount of activity that is taking place in our parish. That 2-minute



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~ Rev. Richard Gonzales

report has inspired other parishioners to get involved with our various ministries and inspired more contributions to our weekend collection and individual contributions to various ministries. Visiting with other priests at the conference is a blessing of the brotherhood of the priesthood and the support we can offer each other.

We thank Father Gonzales for his thoughts and pray that other pastors may see the value of the conference to their own pastoral leadership. We are confident that the 61st anniversary conference will truly be a moment of grace for all involved. You will be able register by clicking [HERE](#).



A STEWARDSHIP MOMENT

Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion Weekend of April 1/2, 2023

We are at the doorsteps of Holy Week where we remember Christ's passion. Jesus humbled himself and let go of everything, emptying himself for us. During this time of Lent, how have we joined the Lord? Has our prayer, penitential practices and almsgiving moved us to humble ourselves before the Lord? Have we let go of things that keep us from being authentic stewards for Christ Jesus? How have we "emptied" ourselves so that when we do approach the table of the Lord, we can be nourished by His body and blood? As disciples of the Lord Jesus and stewards of His gift of faith, it is time to evaluate our lives under the cross.

The Resurrection of the Lord – Easter Vigil April 8, 2023

In tonight's reading from Saint Paul's letter to the Romans, we are reminded that we are alive in Christ. And it is not merely once a year that we remember what Jesus did to give us this new life, forgiveness and peace. Every day good stewards remember their baptism. They remember that they are united with Jesus in his death; that daily they drown the old sinful nature, and that daily they rise to their new life in Christ. Let us be mindful every day, especially when we are troubled by life or tempted by sin, that our lives are no longer about us, but about Christ's active, loving presence within us. That is our baptism. Alleluia! He is risen!

The Resurrection of the Lord – Easter Sunday April 9, 2023

The reading from the Acts of the Apostles reminds us that we, too, bear witness to the risen Lord. The presence of Christ is within us, making us new, transforming us, turning us into stewards of the Good News. There is no more time for holding grudges, disliking others, seeking vengeance, maintaining old prejudices, tolerating bias. We are Christ's joy and instruments of his peace. Our world is reordered. Reflect on how we are called to let Christ's forgiveness, reconciliation and love permeate our lives. We are Easter people. Rejoice! He is risen! Alleluia!

Second Sunday of Easter/Divine Mercy Sunday Weekend of April 15/16, 2023

In today's first reading, the four activities of the earliest church are introduced to us as priorities of the church: devotion to the teachings of the apostles, communal fellowship, the Eucharist and prayer. The early members of the church saw themselves as devoted stewards of these activities. These were not options. They were the fruits of a genuine conversion to a life in Christ. Sharing in the Eucharist was the most intimate expression of fellowship, while the most common expression of fellowship in the New Testament was that of sharing financial resources – giving. It was not a perfect community, but one that gave evidence of God's active presence in its midst. This early community offers us an excellent example of how to better exercise stewardship in our own parish families.

Third Sunday of Easter Weekend of April 22/23, 2023

As today's gospel reveals, the first meal shared with the risen Lord happened in a place called Emmaus. Perhaps there is no better time to reflect on this story than in those prayerful moments at Mass when we return to our place after receiving Holy Communion. Those few moments give us an opportunity to reflect on our stewardship of Christ's presence within us. We have a chance to practice hospitality by inviting Jesus into our hearts to walk and talk with us about our own Emmaus journey. We can relive once again the time when he broke bread for the disciples. And just as they did, we too can recognize Christ in this meal we have just shared with others.

Fourth Sunday of Easter Weekend of April 29/30, 2023

Saint Peter plays a prominent leadership role in the first two readings, urging his listeners to be baptized and accept the gift of the Holy Spirit; and encouraging them to follow in the footsteps of Christ. We have just renewed our baptismal promises at Easter and the Holy Spirit dwells in us in a special way. Are we good stewards of those baptismal vows? Have we renewed our commitment to follow in Jesus' footsteps? Have we opened our hearts to discern the will of God in our lives? Take some time to reflect on the importance of our baptismal renewal and our lives as disciples of the Lord.