



INTERNATIONAL CATHOLIC STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL PARISH STEWARDSHIP

Education and Services Committee e-Bulletin • July 2008



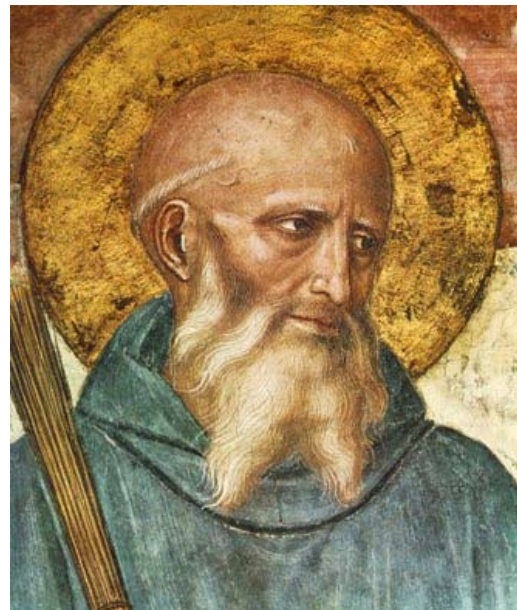
The air in July seems to be filled with the music of birds, the hum of insects, and the sounds of picnickers, boaters, golfers, fireworks and concerts in the park. July is also a time when many people pause for rest and recreation; taking time for leisure; time set aside for vacation, to be with family, to do fun things; a time for relaxing and recharging their inner batteries. There is such a thing as being a good steward of rest and recreation. Making this a priority is part of leading a healthy, balanced life. It also helps us more fully appreciate Jesus' directions to his disciples to "...go off to a secluded place and rest" (Mark 6:31).

Stewardship calls us to nurture and care for God's gifts which includes taking care of the gift that is ourselves. So, make leisure a priority. Take time out to rest, recreate and enjoy the beauty of all that God has laid before us. Perhaps we should consider activities that will add variety to our lives and our relationships. It will not only prove restorative but will reveal more acutely the blessings of God's creation and help us discover in new ways the wonders of our loved ones and ourselves.

STEWARDSHIP SAINT FOR JULY

Saint Benedict, the father of Western monasticism is considered a model of Christian stewardship. He authored the famous Rule of St. Benedict, a handbook of daily Christian living that emphasizes exercising stewardship over prayer, work, and community

Born in central Italy in the town of Nursia around 480, Benedict studied in Rome as a young man. He was so distressed by the chaos and incivility he found there that he left the city and traveled to Subiaco, Italy to become a hermit. He soon attracted followers who wanted to join him in his simple way of living; imitating his style of prayer and work while respecting the rhythms of the day. Benedict stayed there for 25 years before taking a small group of his monks to Monte Cassino, near Naples, where he wrote the final version of his Rule.



The Rule of St. Benedict started a simple, spiritual tradition that exists to this day. It was meant to "...establish a school for the Lord's service." It is a set of Christian principles around which the members of the community were to organize their daily lives, focusing on the most important Christian values that would direct their daily actions and help them cultivate habits that would ensure good stewardship of their physical, emotional and spiritual well-being.

A hallmark of Christian stewardship is hospitality, making room for others. St. Benedict found this aspect of the Christian life especially important for his communities. In his Rule, St. Benedict writes:

"Let all guests who arrive be received like Christ, for he is going to say: 'I was a stranger and you welcomed me (Mt. 25:35).' 'And to all let due honor be shown, especially to those who share our faith' (Gal. 6:10) and to pilgrims...In welcoming the poor and pilgrims the greatest care and solicitude should be shown, because it is especially in them that Christ is received" (Rule of St. Benedict 53:1-2, 15).

The Rule of St. Benedict was meant to stand on the shoulders of the Gospels and many spiritual writers throughout the ages attest to its transforming power to change lives. It teaches the principles of stewardship, shows one how to live in a way that is uniquely countercultural and invites its adherents to enter into a deeper and more joyful relationship with the Lord.

St. Benedict died in approximately 550. He is the patron saint of monks and farm workers. In 1964 Pope Paul VI declared him to be the patron saint of Europe. His feast day is July 11.



THE GRATITUDE ATTITUDE

As spring makes way for summer, we witness the beautiful colours of nature and are reminded again of the miracle of life.

I love to work around my yard and in the flower beds, yet for me, summer is a time when I get to enjoy golf. In fact, at the time of writing, I have already reduced my handicap by one.

Golf is a pastime that has exploded in popularity and I enjoy it with a growing number of enthusiasts. But can I play golf and be a disciple of Jesus?

Consider all of the challenges facing our world and the pressing priorities of our local communities. How do I balance my golf with my role as husband, father, son, brother, friend and citizen? Is golf really more important than building a more just world, mentoring my children, or spending time with my wife?

First off, golf is a game and I love playing it but it is just one part of my life. I enjoy the challenge, the camaraderie of friends, the relaxing escape it provides, the aerobic exercise I get, and the experience in being amidst the beauty of God's creation. Although I have been known to get frustrated during the odd round, golf is one way that I get recharged.

Let me build a link between golfing and being a disciple of Jesus... or being a steward. Stewardship is not about me quitting golf and spending all of my time at the church.

However, it might cause me to go from golfing four times a week to twice a week so that I can spend more time in my family. It might mean that I don't buy the latest equipment every year but instead take the couple hundred dollars and use it to support a halfway house for the poor. It might mean that I change my Sunday T-time from 8am to 12:30 so that I am able to attend Mass with the family. It might mean that I use my organizational skills at the club to help with the junior golf program... and so on.

The approach I take with my recreational activities is part of living as a steward. It is part of how I express that I am a disciple of Jesus. As it applies to my golf game, it is more important as I care for the other areas of my life such as my family, the environment, my health, my career, my finances, and my spiritual wellbeing.

Whether it relates to golf or any other activity, as a steward I must always ask myself, "Am I devoting the appropriate time and resources to what is truly important in my life?"

*Thanks to Steve Foran of St. Marguerite Bourgeoys Parish in Halifax, Nova Scotia, and to **The Atlantic Catholic** newspaper for this article, one of Steve's monthly stewardship contributions to the newspaper. Steve can be reached at Steve@Giveraising.com*

Those who have taken part in an Ignatian retreat know the following prayer very well. It is considered a stewardship prayer par excellence and many people recite it before they start their day to acknowledge to the Lord that all that is given is gift and to offer that gift back to the Lord all throughout the day.

*Take, Lord,
and receive all my liberty,
my memory
my understanding
and my entire will,
all I have and call my own.
You have given all to me.
To you, Lord, I return it.
Everything is yours;
do with it what you will.
Give me only your love and your grace;
that is enough for me. Amen.*

- St. Ignatius of Loyola



A STEWARDSHIP MOMENT

(For the weekend of July 5/6)

Jesus says: "Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest." One of the habits of a good steward is to "possess lightly," to free oneself of the burden of too many possessions. This should include the disproportionate amount of concerns so many of us carry around. Are there ways in which we can lighten the weight of the cares and concerns we have, learn to trust the Lord and place more of our burdens on His shoulders?

(For the weekend of July 12/13)

The parable of the sower has much to offer about our willingness to listen and our openness to understanding God's call to us. Ours is a busy world and we are constantly preoccupied with getting things done, finishing a project, making the appointment or meeting the deadline. The Lord is the sower, planting seeds of wisdom, healing, faith, communion and joy within us. Stewardship includes pausing to listen and to make space for God; allowing those seeds to grow deep within our hearts. How are we preparing the ground for the sower to plant his seeds?

(For the weekend of July 19/20)

Jesus said that the Kingdom of God is like a tiny mustard seed which eventually grows into a huge bush that spreads out immensely. Similarly, the Christian steward's smallest loving action, like a mustard seed, becomes transformed into an expression of caring that helps bring about the kingdom in ways we cannot yet imagine. What loving actions have we performed today? What are the ways in which we embrace and share the Gospel of Jesus Christ?

(For the weekend of July 26/27)

We can more readily appreciate Jesus' image of the kingdom of heaven as a hidden treasure or a pearl of great value. But what of the kingdom as a fisherman's net thrown into the sea? Perhaps Jesus was describing a kingdom that, like the net, will capture everyone, be all inclusive. However, some will be like the good fish, some like the bad fish. Our commitment to discipleship will determine how we wish to be identified.



INTERNATIONAL CATHOLIC STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL

2008 Conference

Hyatt Regency Chicago
October 12-15, 2008

Please join us for the 2008 annual conference of the International Catholic Stewardship Council in Chicago, Illinois.

The ICSC annual conference offers the most comprehensive and relevant programs on the theology, spirituality and practical aspects of Christian stewardship.

Network! The ICSC annual conference is widely recognized as the most valuable opportunity for those involved in Christian stewardship to connect with others who share their commitment to teaching stewardship as a way of life. Many say meeting others with similar experiences is the main reason they attend the ICSC Conference!

Learn! The ICSC annual conference is filled with sessions and forums that provide practical information you can take home and use immediately. You will be exposed not only to topics that offer fundamentals but also new ideas, innovations and strategies!

Grow in your Catholic faith! The ICSC annual conference is a great opportunity to get away from your busy schedule to pray, reflect on your own life of faith, listen to inspiring reflections and participate in invigorating liturgies!

Register today! Online at www.catholicstewardship.org or call ICSC toll free at 1.800.352.3452



REGISTER
NOW

2008 Catholic Stewardship Institute

SUMMER SESSION July 21-25, 2008
San Damiano Retreat Center, Danville, CA



The ICSC Catholic Stewardship Institute is the only one of its kind to offer such a comprehensive treatment of stewardship. The Institute is offered in a peaceful and prayerful setting of a Catholic retreat center.

The Institute offers an engaging and expert faculty with over 100 years of combined experience working with parishes and dioceses in North America and beyond.



RESERVE YOUR PLACE NOW!

For more information visit
www.catholicstewardship.org
or call **800.352.3452**



Register now for the
SUMMER STEWARDSHIP INSTITUTE!

If you are new to Christian stewardship or would like an in-depth spiritual reflection, we strongly encourage you to attend the newly designed 2008 Summer Stewardship Institute.

The ICSC Institute has been re-designed to address the specific needs of pastors and parish leaders searching for a comprehensive, well-grounded introduction to the theology and practical application of Christian stewardship in their own faith journey and in their parishes. It is also appropriate for those who are involved in stewardship formation at the diocesan level. It is the only Institute of its kind to offer such a comprehensive treatment of stewardship.

The Institute is offered in a reflective and prayerful setting of a Catholic retreat center offering daily celebration of the Eucharist, Sacrament of Reconciliation, Prayer from the Liturgy of the Hours and Adoration before the Blessed Sacrament.

Please make plans to join us and enter into a week-long experience of stewardship formation and spiritual renewal.

We encourage you to check out the ICSC Forum at www.catholicstewardship.org under 'members' where members can share ideas and questions. The Parish Stewardship section is reviewed every day by members of the Parish Stewardship Education and Services Committee.

INTERNATIONAL CATHOLIC
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