



INTERNATIONAL CATHOLIC STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL PARISH STEWARDSHIP

Education and Services Committee e-Bulletin • August 2009



Conference Sessions Reveal How to Maximize Your Parish Potential

Do you want to know how to increase parish participation? Would you like to help parishioners discover their true talents? Do you need some practical tools to help you energize your parish family? The 2009 ICSC Conference will offer a series of sessions devoted to helping parishes consider practical, step-by-step processes for inviting pastoral leaders and parishioners to identify their God-given talents and strengths and use them to enhance the life of faith in their communities.

Sessions include topics such as:

- Stewardship of Parishioner Talent
- Stewardship of Parish Talent
- Stewardship of Pastoral Talent
- Stewardship of Hospitality
- Stewardship of Giving and Thanking

These sessions, offered October 12 and 13 at the Hilton Anatole Hotel in Dallas, Texas, are sure to help you transform your parish into one that you realize is truly alive in the Holy Spirit.

For information on these sessions and to register for the conference, contact the International Catholic Stewardship Council at www.catholicstewardship.org or call 1.800.352.3452.

In God We Trust

*Adapted from an article by Jim Lamm, Director of Stewardship
St. Louis Catholic Church, Austin, TX*

The words on the back of United States currency and on coinage are good words to live by: "In God We Trust." However, during these tough economic times these words are often forgotten. Perhaps now is the time to rediscover these words through our prayer and actions.

Nowadays our choices seem to become more limited and decisions about those economic choices become more difficult to make. We begin to feel a loss of control over what happens in our lives. We may lose our jobs, have our work hours reduced or our pay cut back. However, how we deal with a reduction of income or even a job loss speaks volumes about whether or not we really trust in God, and therefore exercise good stewardship over our lives of faith.



The challenge becomes letting go of making decisions that give top priority to our own self-interests and making conscious choices to place our absolute trust in God.

Jesus told his apostles not to worry about their lives (Mt. 7:25). He reminds them that their heavenly Father knows what they need (Mt. 7:32). Sometimes these words of Jesus appear to be small consolation in times of financial stress. Stewardship teaches, however, that God will provide for those who love him. The challenge becomes letting go of making decisions that give top priority to our own self-interests and making conscious choices to place our absolute trust in God.

If we live in constant anxiety, we are prone to make decisions that only serve ourselves. We may choose not to be as generous with others as we did when we were not feeling financial pressures. We may believe it to be in our best interest to stop being as generous as we had been to the Lord, through our community of faith. We are faced with the temptation to take care of what we perceive to be our own best interest instead of expressing our trust and gratitude to the Lord.

Jesus urges his followers to seek the Kingdom of God first, before all else, and all their needs will be met (Mt. 6:33). If we recognize that God is the source of all we have and are to receive, even in these challenging economic times, it will offer us a different perspective on the choices we make and give us the courage to continue living lives of generosity toward God and our neighbors.

A STEWARDSHIP SAINT FOR AUGUST



St. Lawrence

St. Lawrence is the stewardship saint emphasized in the month of August especially for his diaconal ministry in the early church. He is one of the most honored martyrs in the Catholic Church.

Tradition holds that Lawrence was born in Huesca,

Spain, around 225 and went to Rome to be ordained a deacon and to serve Pope Sixtus II. Lawrence was placed in charge of the church's treasury and its budget. For this duty, he is regarded as one of the first archivists and treasurers of the church and was made the patron of librarians.

Lawrence was also put in charge of the care of the poor in the city. Tradition also has it that he was well-known for his devotion to caring for the poor.

In the persecutions under the Roman emperor, Valerian, in 258, a number of Rome's priests and deacons were put to death including Pope Sixtus. The Roman authorities went to Lawrence and demanded he turn over the church treasury. Lawrence asked for and was granted three days to collect the church's wealth. He worked swiftly to distribute as much of the church property as he could to the poor to prevent its being taken by the authorities.

When ordered on the third day to give up the treasures of the church, Lawrence presented to the authorities a number of people in his company who were poor, sick, crippled, and blind, and proclaimed that these people were the true treasures of the church. This act of defiance resulted in his immediate martyrdom. However, it is part of his legacy that his martyrdom had such an impact in the city of Rome that some Roman senators became converts to Christianity after his death.

Lawrence is the patron saint of the poor, cooks, firefighters and Sri Lanka. Legend has it that he suffered martyrdom by being roasted alive on a gridiron. At one point during his torture Lawrence cried out: "This side's done, turn me over." This legend is often quoted to explain why Lawrence is also the patron saint of comedians.

St. Lawrence's name appears in the first Eucharistic Prayer of the Mass and his feast day is August 10.

Stewardship Prayer for August

It helps, now and then, to step back and take a long view.

The kingdom is not only beyond our efforts,
it is even beyond our vision.

We accomplish in our lifetime only a tiny fraction
of the magnificent enterprise that is God's work.

Nothing we do is complete, which is a way of saying
that the kingdom always lies beyond us.

No statement says all that could be said.

No prayer fully expresses our faith.

No confession brings perfection.

No pastoral visit brings wholeness.

No program accomplishes the church's mission.

No set of goals and objectives includes everything.

This is what we are about.

We plant the seeds that one day will grow.

We water seeds already planted,

knowing that they hold future promise.

We lay foundations that will need further development.

We provide yeast that produces far beyond our capabilities.

We cannot do everything, and there is a sense of liberation
in realizing that. This enables us to do something,
and to do it very well. It may be incomplete,
but it is a beginning, a step along the way,
an opportunity for the Lord's grace to enter and do the rest.

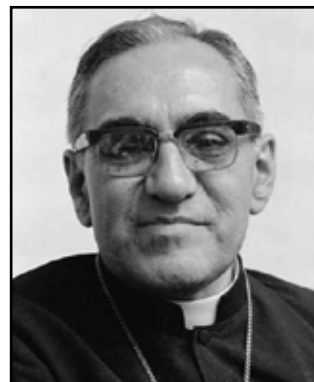
We may never see the end results, but that is the difference
between the master builder and the worker.

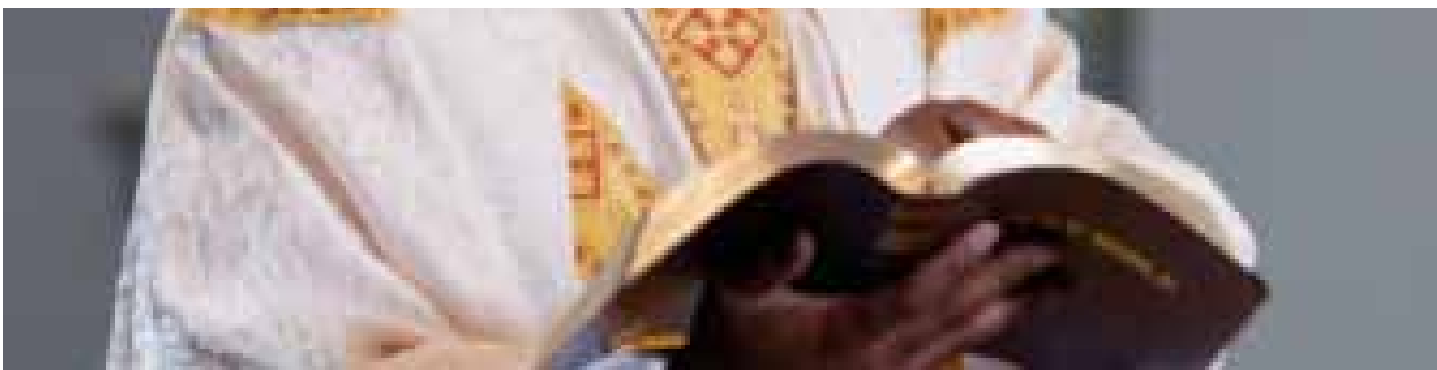
We are workers, not master builders; ministers, not messiahs.

We are prophets of a future not our own.

Amen.

- Archbishop Oscar Romero (b. August 15, 1917)





A STEWARDSHIP MOMENT

For the weekend of August 1/2, 2009 Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

In today's Gospel we hear Jesus proclaiming that he is "the bread of life." He then offers an invitation to come to him. For us, the invitation is to live the Eucharistic life in Christ. What does it mean for our parish family to live together in the Eucharist? What does it mean for us to share the Eucharist together, to participate in the "bread of life" together? Does it mean we love each other, support our community of faith, work together? Do we carry each other's burdens? Celebrate our joys? What are the practical implications of being good stewards of our Eucharistic life together?

For the weekend of August 8/9, 2009 Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

The Letter to the Ephesians urges us to be mindful that part of our life together in the Eucharist means being kind to one another, compassionate and forgiving, just as Christ has forgiven us. What can we do this week to show our kindness, compassion and forgiving attitude toward others in our family of faith? How can we be even better stewards of our faith community as, what St. Paul refers to as "Imitators of God?"

For Saturday, August 15, 2009 Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary

The words of the Blessed Virgin Mary, "My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord," are prominently placed near the beginning of the Gospel of St. Luke. They initiate the Gospel Cantic at Evening Prayer in the Liturgy of the Hours. They are heard in today's Gospel. The Feast of the Assumption offers, among its numerous Marian themes, a celebration of the Our Blessed Mother's life of holiness, a life full of grace, a life from which new life in Jesus Christ bursts forth. Mary is the model of Christian stewardship *par excellence*; one who carries and brings forth the life of Christ. As a Eucharistic people, how can we be imitators of the Blessed Virgin and allow Christ's presence within us, to be present in the world? How can our lives proclaim the greatness of the Lord?

For the weekend of August 16, 2009 Twentieth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Jesus announces that he is the "living bread." And we understand that the Eucharist is the center of our life in faith: in our families, parish, local church and throughout the world. We are the stewards of Christ's life in the Eucharist. We are called to put the Eucharist into action. How do we do that? St. Paul enjoins us to be always grateful, to worship, to try to understand the will of the Lord and to watch carefully how we live. What are some of the ways we can put the Eucharist into action this week?

For the weekend of August 22/23, 2009 Twenty-first Sunday in Ordinary Time

In today's Gospel, we hear that a number of Jesus' followers left him because his message was too difficult for them to accept. In essence, they did not believe in him. He then asked the Twelve if they wished to leave as well. Peter responds by making a profound profession of faith in Jesus as Lord and Savior. The Twelve made a choice and stood by their choice, remaining loyal to their commitment to Jesus. A good question for our reflection might be this: Are we satisfied with the stewardship we exercise over our baptismal commitment? Are we just "along for the ride?" Are we keeping Christ in front of us as we make decisions about our daily activities, our relationships, our parish, issues in the workplace, issues such as peace and justice? What is the quality of our stewardship?

For the weekend of August 29/30 Twenty-second Sunday in Ordinary Time

In the reading from the letter of St. James we are urged to be "doers" of the Gospel, not just listeners. Being a "steward" of God's Word is a matter of listening to the Good News, embracing the Good News and putting the Good News into action in our day-to-day lives. And whenever we are uncertain as to what decisions to make or actions to take as good stewards of the Gospel, St. James reminds us: We can never go wrong if we resist popular values that are not compatible with the Gospel, and we come to the aid of those who are burdened, distressed and poor.



INTERNATIONAL CATHOLIC STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL



11-14 October • Dallas, Texas

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Stewardship:

LIVING OUR BAPTISMAL CALL

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 at www.catholicstewardship.org
or call ICSC toll free at 1.800.352.3452

LIVING AS A STEWARD – REDEMPTION AND STEWARDSHIP

The following pages are based on the United States bishops' pastoral letter, *Stewardship: A Disciple's Response* (1992). It is compiled, edited and written by Scott Bader, Director of Parish Stewardship for the Archdiocese of Seattle.



Jesus' disciples share in his priestly work, called to offer up the world and all that is in it – especially themselves – to the Lord of all. In exercising this office, they most fully realize the meaning of our Christian stewardship.

Stewardship: A Disciple's Response,
a Pastoral Letter on Stewardship

Now I rejoice in what I am giving up for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ on behalf of his body, which is the church. Colossians 1:24

All of us are stewards – Christ just asks us to examine to what extent are we practicing stewardship. One reason for our practice of stewardship is to help bring about redemption – not just ours, but for the rest of the world, too.

This stewardship to help bring about redemption is often practiced through the use of our time, including setting aside time for prayer, scripture, adoration, and worship. But it can also be through our suffering. We'll never understand why we suffer, but our stewardship means that we try to find Christ even in pain, deprivation, and loss. The knowledge that we'll never completely understand it, but that we will strive toward that understanding anyway, reminds us again that Stewardship is also a journey that we must continue to make, even though we'll never get to the end.



QUESTION:

- How does redemption relate to stewardship?

Knowing what we believe and why then prompts us to live out our faith spiritually in the world today. At times, the cost involved in doing this is high. But we are asked to pay that price in trying to incarnate the values of the Gospel and the teachings of the Church today.

-Archbishop Thomas Murphy

LIVING AS A STEWARD – COOPERATION IN REDEMPTION



Stewardship involves embracing, cultivating, enjoying, sharing – and sometimes also giving up – the goods of human life.

Stewardship: A Disciple's Response,
a Pastoral Letter on Stewardship

*Let us master this great and simple truth,
that all rich materials and productions of this world,
being God's property, are intended for God's service;
and sin only, nothing but sin, turns them to a different purpose.*

-Cardinal John Henry Newman

Are you ever concerned about the approach of Lent and the challenge of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving that accompanies it? I used to feel that way, when whatever I chose to give up for Lent was chosen only to find something challenging to give up. It served no other purpose. Whatever I gave up had no relationship to my relationship with God or making me a more spiritual person, or helping the poor.

Now I have found something! I go to the Stations of the Cross on Friday evenings during Lent, give up the usual video and popcorn I enjoy every Friday night during the rest of the year (and the comfortable flopping on the couch after a week of work) and give what I would usually spend on the video and popcorn to the "Rice Bowl."

This "discipline" has helped to realize that unpromising experiences like deprivation, loss, and pain can lead to redemption. It all involves better stewardship of my time and treasure.

Stewardship calls us into a new sense of collaboration with God where we are accountable and responsible. Such collaboration with God impacts creation, redemption, and the sanctification of the world in which we live.

-Archbishop Thomas J. Murphy

QUESTION:

- Has repentance or penance ever made you feel "liberated"? When? How?

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 STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL

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