



INTERNATIONAL CATHOLIC STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL

PARISH STEWARDSHIP NEWSLETTER

March, 2010

ICSC Committee for Parish Stewardship Education and Services
1275 K Street NW, Suite 880, Washington, DC 20005-4071 202-289-1093

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Do you have material you'd like to submit for inclusion in our next newsletter? If so, please email it to ParishStewardship@catholicstewardship.org. All submittals are gratefully received, although we cannot promise that all will be published.



A Stewardship Prayer for Lent

Lord Jesus,
At this time of year,
our thoughts are turned to the ultimate sacrifice
you made for us on the cross.
Inspire us to make whatever personal sacrifice
will bring us closer to you,
and strengthen us in that sacrifice.
Pope John Paul II reminded us that "simplicity,
moderation, and discipline, as well as a spirit
of sacrifice, must become a part of [our]
everyday life, lest all suffer the negative
consequences of the careless habits of a few."
May our practice of sacrificial stewardship
during this Lenten season
lead us to the victory of the Resurrection.
In your holy name, we pray, Amen.

Registration is now open for the **2010 ICSC Conference**

*An international gathering of stewardship
practitioners, sharing their experience,
enthusiasm, energy, and ideas*

Don't miss it!

**September 19-22, 2010
San Diego, CA**

ICSC MEMBER EARLY BIRD REGISTRATION

Received before July 15, 2010:

1st registrant @ \$574

Each additional registrant @ \$539

Register on line at

<https://www.catholicstewardship.org/Conference/register.cfm?ConferenceID=29>



STEWARDSHIP AND THE SUNDAY READINGS

Dan Potvin, Archdiocese of Winnipeg

March 7 – 3rd Sunday of Lent

God heard the cry of His people in Egypt and responded generously by bringing them out of captivity. But in the desert the Israelites began complaining to Moses. They were not grateful for the gift of their freedom – *a grateful heart silences a complaining voice!* We good stewards pray that we will always be grateful for the gifts and opportunities that we are given. When we are at times not grateful, when we are overcome with an unhealthy lust for material things, power, or prestige, we are called to repent, and we are grateful for the Lord’s mercy.

March 14th – 4th Sunday of Lent

The Christian disciple is a steward who is prayerful, persistent, patient, and strives to joyfully and generously live out the personal vocation to which God calls him or her. These characteristics are most valuable in our own prodigal stories. At times we may stumble and wander away from God. When we do, we find hope in today’s Gospel. Through our patience, perseverance, and above all prayer, we can return to the Father, trusting in His forgiveness.

March 21st – 5th Sunday of Lent

How will you be remembered? As one who adhered to a strict observance of the law? Or, as one who was not too quick to judge, and lovingly gave others a second chance? Throughout our lives, we will experience many relationships, and they are *all* gifts from God. How will you be a good steward of those relationships? In Jesus’ encounter with the woman caught in adultery, we are given an example of how we are to care for the people we encounter in our lives.

March 28th – Passion Sunday

It is always difficult to hear the Passion narrative. Yet we see in Jesus’ passion something that is at the heart of discipleship and stewardship – **trust**. Jesus’ anxiety in the garden turns into trust, “*yet, not my will but yours be done.*” Good stewards set aside pride and fear and trust in God’s plan for their lives. Pray for wisdom, so that you may know how God wants you to use and share the gift of your life. There is an intense joy and peace of mind that can only be found in doing the will of God.

Forming Good Stewards

*This month we are blessed with two different ways of viewing the Sunday Scriptures, each with an eye for the stewardship implications. The following was written by **Deacon Jerry Martinez of the Archdiocese of New Orleans** who reminds us that “Good stewards are formed by other good stewards!” Useful in your parish bulletin, this material is also helpful for homilists, liturgists, and catechists, too.)*

March 7 – 3rd Sunday of Lent

For three years I have come in search of fruit on this fig tree but have found none. So cut it down! Why should it exhaust the soil? Lk 13:1-9

Jesus tells of a gardener who pleads to save a fig tree so he can cultivate it and hope to make it productive. In chapters one and two of Genesis, God reveals that He created man and woman and gave them dominion over His *Garden* – all of creation. Bishop Robert Morneau poignantly describes how God made us stewards of many *gardens*: the *gardens* of our faith, our body, our family, our mind, our artistic ability, our many abilities and, most importantly, our ability to reason and our free will. He points out that all of the *gardens* belong to God and poses these questions: “How are we caring for our *gardens*? Are we being good stewards? Have we cultivated our *gardens* or let them go fallow? Are our *gardens* as productive as God intended?” If not, it is not too late. The first step is to identify and accept responsibility for the *gardens* that God has entrusted to our care. Do not be afraid. We have Jesus as our helper in our *garden*.

March 14th – 4th Sunday of Lent

“My son, you are here with me always. Everything I have is yours.” Luke 15:1-3, 11-32

Jesus tells the story of the man with two sons, one who is ungrateful and leaves home to squander half of his father’s possessions. Despite his son’s ingratitude, the father longs for his son’s return. The ungrateful son sinks so low he realizes his mistake and chooses to return to his father to beg forgiveness. The other son is angered by his father’s act of love and compassion for the son who abandoned and hurt him. In a similar story in the Talmud, the ungrateful son is too ashamed to take the first step to return to his father. His father sends him a note, “Son, come back as far as you can, and I will come the rest of the way!”

God has given us all that we have, all that we are, and all that we ever will be. Are we sometimes ungrateful for all that God has given to us? Have we failed to use it as God intended? Have we abandoned God’s plan for us? Probably!! But God longs for our return. If we are reluctant to take the first step, God comes to us. Our God is an Awesome God!

March 21st – 5th Sunday of Lent

Teacher, this woman was caught in the very act of committing adultery. Now, in the law, Moses commanded us to stone such women. Jn 8:1-11

Reason would lead us to conclude that if the scribes and Pharisees caught a woman “in the very act of adultery,” that they also caught the man. The law required that both parties “caught in the very act of adultery” be stoned [Deut. 22:22]. But here, they only bring the woman before Jesus. Hmmm... Could the man “caught in the very act” have been an influential or high-ranking public or religious official? Hmmm... It is not unusual for people to be selective in their decisions, to be quick to judge and unfair with condemnation. Would not the world be a much better place if we all stopped judging others, at least not so quickly, and were quicker to be generous with all that God has given to us – that is, everything we are and have? Note that Jesus does not condemn the men who wanted to stone

the woman. They actually condemn themselves. The woman does not deny her sin, but Jesus does not condemn her. He tells her to sin no more. When we are judgmental and selfish, Jesus does not condemn us. But we condemn ourselves and should turn to Jesus to help us.

March 28th – Passion Sunday

“Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet, not as I will, but as you will.” Lk 22:14 - 23:56

Msgr. Winus Roeten says that when we are in prayer and we hear ourselves saying “No!” we probably just heard from God. Prayer is not so much about what we say to God, but about what we are willing to hear from God. When we are in true communion with God to discern his will for us, God may ask us to do something difficult or unpleasant; something we have not done before; something that may antagonize our family or friends, or something involving financial or physical risk. And it is okay, as Msgr Roeten suggests, if our first answer is “No!” But, if we are good stewards of our prayer life, growing constantly in our communion with God to discern his will for us, we must ultimately say “Yes, Lord!” Only a fool would want to accept the cup that Jesus knew was in front of him. And Jesus was no fool. But Jesus was in full communion with the Father, so he was willing to accept the cup, to do God’s will, not his own will. What are we willing to hear from God? Whatever our initial reaction, what will be our final answer?

Coming soon, near you...

Diocesan Stewardship Days

Diocese of Orange (California)

March 16, 10am – 3pm

Marywood Pastoral Center

Contact Debbie Leaverton: dleaverton@rcbo.org

Diocese of Rochester (New York)

April 24, 8am – 12noon

Church of the Assumption, Fairport, NY

Contact Mark Clark: mclark@dor.org

How to be a good steward

(#4 in a series of bulletin inserts developed by Scott Bader, Director of Parish Stewardship, Archdiocese of Seattle, that focus on practical ways to recognize God as the source of all our gifts, to be grateful for those gifts, to cultivate them and use them to build up the kingdom, and to share and return a grateful portion of those gifts.)

What Can I Change?

CONCEPT

“You can’t serve the Master and MasterCard at the same time,” said the pastor of Mount Carmel Baptist Church. He recognized that credit card debt was not only impeding his parishioners’ ability to achieve their own personal goals but also to support the church and other charities too. So serious is the pastor that at monthly revival meetings, parishioners donate to help pay off the credit cards of other parishioners.

BENEFITS

Much of what we hope to accomplish is obstructed by debt – debt many of us accumulated in our attempts to have it all and/or do it all. We might not be able to change some of our debt in the short term – like mortgages and car payments (though in the long term we can choose more modest houses and cars) – but many of us can cut back on the time and money spent on entertainment (including videos, computers, etc), eating out, gifts for others, or things we buy for ourselves or our houses. It is with the money and time freed up by doing fewer of these things that we can accomplish the things that we would do if we “won the lottery” or were able to quit work now.

QUESTIONS

Looking at the budget of time and money you put together last month, what do you need to change to have enough time and money to accomplish your goals?

ACTION STEPS

Set your path today – resolve here and now to eat out less often, buy fewer things for yourself and your home that you really don’t need. Adopt a lifestyle that better reflects your commitment to Christ.

I resolve to cut back on discretionary spending in the following way:

(Put half of the money you save into a personal giving account – more on this next month.)

I resolve to cut back on the time I spend doing these things:

(Use the additional time that is freed up to do things you identified as things you would do if you had more leisure time.)





Stewardship and Rice Bowl

By Joe Hastings – Catholic Relief Services West

Operation Rice Bowl and Stewardship share the same basic goal – faithful living, not simply generous giving. Operation Rice Bowl is a way for people to practice Lent, to help their practices of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving complement and strengthen each other through learning. Using the ORB materials, we learn about our human family living around the world, their struggles with poverty, and their successes through community development. As we pray for their needs in gratitude for their inspiration, we pray in solidarity with them as one human family. This prayer opens us to act with them in solidarity and to act for them through giving. It invites us into an ongoing relationship and inspires us to keep the connection beyond the ORB program. Compassion for the poor may open a door in us, but in solidarity, we can step through that door and put ourselves in another shoes.

Stewardship is a commitment to sharing, rooted in my relationship with God and aware of the needs of my faith community. So too, the solidarity inspired by Operation Rice Bowl is a commitment rooted in my relationship with God and aware of the needs of the whole human family, especially the poorest of the poor.

These Lenten practices of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving also deepen the connection between the Sunday liturgy and our lives all week long. The simple meal we eat at home extends the Eucharist to our table and extends our table to the world beyond our culture. As we learn about the life of Jesus of Nazareth in the Gospels, we learn about

the life of Jesus “in disguise” in the poor all over the world. And as the readings of Lent lead us through the unfolding story of Jesus Christ giving himself to the world, we give ourselves to the world through our donations to feed and support people in poverty, both locally and globally. Operation Rice Bowl begins in the kitchen and at the table, continues in our local parish, feeds into our local diocese, and from there through the global Church to people around the world, thereby binding together the church at every level.

For more information about Operation Rice Bowl 2010, see <http://orb.crs.org/>

Is yours an award-winning parish?

Now is the time to apply for one of ICSC's annual

Parish Stewardship Awards



The **Archbishop Murphy Parish Stewardship Award** – for outstanding long-term work in stewardship. Find application information at: <http://catholicstewardship.org/en/introduction/awards.cfm>

Other Parish Promotion Awards (**Video, Capital Campaign, Materials**) – for parishes that have best promoted the spirituality and practice of stewardship during the year through Video, Materials (of any sort), and Capital Campaigns.

[http://www.catholicstewardship.org/PDF/Parish Stewardship Promotional Awards.pdf](http://www.catholicstewardship.org/PDF/Parish%20Stewardship%20Promotional%20Awards.pdf)

Parish Stewardship Recognition – for any parish that meets certain set criteria demonstrating how they promote the practice of stewardship in several different areas:

<http://www.catholicstewardship.org/PDF/Parish%20Recognition%202009.pdf>

Deadline is April 30, 2010! (Even though the forms say '2009,' they may be used to apply for this year, 2010, too.) Apply now!

All ICSC parishes are encouraged to apply for one or more of these awards!