

INTERNATIONAL CATHOLIC STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL

PARISH STEWARDSHIP NEWSLETTER

August, 2010

ICSC Committee for Parish Stewardship Education and Services
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Do you have material you'd like to submit for inclusion in this newsletter? If so, please email it to ParishStewardship@catholicstewardship.org. All submittals are gratefully appreciated, though we can't promise that all will be published.

Worth noting...

A recent article in the Knights of Columbus newsletter entitled, “Finding Happiness in Life” echoes many of the same themes we find in our stewardship messages: Check it out at http://www.kofc.org/un/eb/en/columbia/detail/2010_07_kaczor.html

PRAYER OF STEWARDS

Let us prayerfully reflect on the stewardship to which God calls us...

“Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.” Col 3:15

Oh, Lord, may our prayer to you always be filled with gratitude for your abundant blessings.

“Teach me your way, O Lord; I will walk in your truth.” Ps 86:11

May we consistently seek to form, cultivate, and nurture ourselves as better stewards of your gifts.

“He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.” Micah 6:8

May our desire for love and justice prompt us to a generous sharing of our gifts with one another.

“But who are [we] that we should have the means to contribute so freely? For everything is from you, and we only give you what we received from you.” 1 Chr 29:14

And may our gratitude to you move us to return to you a truly thankful portion of those gifts.

Amen.



Less than 2 months 'til the 2010 ICSC conference...

Hundreds of enthusiastic stewardship practitioners will gather in San Diego to share their expertise and experiences, Sept. 19-22.

Have you registered? Do it now, online at:

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

This is the one “go to” conference of the year. You will come home refreshed, renewed, and with countless new ideas to help you be a better steward personally - and ready to help call others to good stewardship of God's many blessings, too! Check it out - download the conference brochure and **register today!**

http://www.catholicstewardship.org/PDF/2010_ac_reg_broc.pdf

Cultivate Gifts

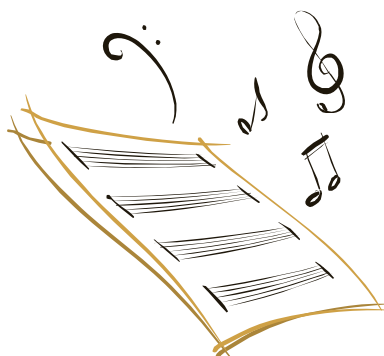
(This page is part of series developed by Scott Bader, Director of Parish Stewardship, Archdiocese of Seattle, to give parents and children – separately and together – a greater understanding of stewardship and what it means to be a good steward.)

From the US Bishops Pastoral Letter, *Stewardship: A Disciples Response*

Life as a Christian steward requires continued involvement in the human vocation to cultivate material creation. Ecological stewardship means cultivating a heightened sense of human interdependence and solidarity. Baptism makes Christians stewards by grace, able to act explicitly on God’s behalf in cultivating and serving the portion of the world entrusted to their care.



For Parents



People are sometimes unsure about the meaning of “cultivating gifts” as a necessary part of being a good steward. They think, “Well, perhaps if I were a musician or an artist, I would know how to cultivate that gift. But what about other sorts of gifts? How can I work to make those other kinds of gifts better?”

Fortunately there are many ways to cultivate our gifts – we might learn new ways of being good parents, for example, by reading a parenting magazine or taking a parenting class. Cultivation means acquiring the knowledge and learning the skills that will make us better at all those everyday things good stewards do: becoming informed citizens, taking care of our bodies and our health, learning new ways to manage our material resources, including planning for the future, practicing and learning more about our faith...

Living Stewardship Together Planting a garden or taking care of house plants, parents and children together, can be a dramatic lesson in what cultivation really requires – patience, dependability, effort, and being open to learning what works and what doesn’t.

For Children Being young means you are always learning. Being a good learner is good stewardship! It is also a great way to cultivate your gifts and make them grow.



Forming Good Stewards...

These “bulletin bites” are by **Deacon Jerry Martinez of the Archdiocese of New Orleans** who says, “Good stewards are formed by other good stewards!” Share with your homilists as well as your parish bulletin editor!

August 1, 2010 – Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

“Take care to guard against all greed.” Luke 12:13-21

Greed is a very insidious and seductive emotion. It is at the root of all sin. It was a factor in the sin of the first man and woman in the Garden. They were not content to be grateful for all God had given them. They wanted to **be** God. George Carlin had a comedy routine about *stuff*. He said that we get *stuff* and then we need to get a house to put our *stuff*. Then we get more *stuff*. So we need a bigger house for our *stuff*. We go on vacation and take some of our *stuff*. But we buy *stuff* we don’t need and come home with more *stuff*. Our lives are filled with *stuff*. And we get very attached to our *stuff*. Our attachment to our *stuff* stems from our erroneous belief that we are the source of all of our *stuff* and that we acquired it out of our own effort and ingenuity. When we acknowledge God as the source of all that we are and all that we have and all that we ever will be, we can enjoy the *stuff* we have and share it with others without being obsessed about getting and keeping more *stuff* than we really need to enjoy life.

August 8, 2010 – Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

“For where your treasure is, there also will be your heart.” Luke 12:32-48

The trash we put on the curb to be discarded reveals much about who we are and what we do in life. It contains the packaging of the products that we treasure. It reveals where our hearts are. What is in our trash? Is it packaging from the latest electronic games, the best type of athletic equipment, the current fashion in clothes (no matter how revealing), the appliances with the most features, containers that held gourmet foods, too many empty liquor bottles and beer cans, and the shredded documents of the fortune we are trying to amass? There are some people whose hearts are not revealed by their trash. They have no trash. Sadly, they have nothing to throw away. They do not have sufficient food and they have very little clothing. We would do well to remember these words of Jesus, “Much will be required of the person who has much, and still more of the person entrusted with more.” When we bring our trash to the curb we should ask, “How much treasure have I been entrusted with? What does this trash reveal about my heart?”

August 15, 2010 – Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary

“Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb.” Luke 1:42

On November 1, 1950 Pope Pius XII, in his Encyclical Letter *Munificentissimus Deus*, proclaimed, declared and defined to be divinely revealed dogma that “...the Immaculate Mother of God, the ever Virgin Mary, having completed the course of her earthly life, was assumed body and soul into heavenly glory.” Some ask why, how, when, and where? Those are fair questions. The simple answer is “It’s a mystery!” But it is more important to ask, “Why not?” Why would Jesus not want to honor the young girl who accepted God’s call to be his mother (at great risk to her life), who carried him in her womb and gave birth to him in a cave, who watched him grow and was with him when he died on a cross, and who rejoiced at his Resurrection by assuming her uncorrupted body to be with him in heaven for eternity? The world would be a much better place if we all honored our parents, family, friends and the strangers who often do so much for us that we do not appreciate! Once again Jesus reveals to us that gratitude is the beginning of generosity.

August 22, 2010 – Twenty-First Sunday in Ordinary Time

“I do not know where you are from.” Luke 13:22-30

What will we do if Jesus speaks those words to us when we finally meet him? Will our faces go pale and our knees buckle? Will we be very frightened? Will we mumble, “I ate and drank in your company and you taught me”? What if Jesus ask us, “But what did you learn? Did you eat and drink in the company of the hungry, the homeless, the naked, the oppressed, the diseased? Do they know where you are from?” If people in need in our world know where we are from, Jesus will know where we are from. He will recognize us right away. He will be anxiously waiting for us to enter into his presence. Jesus is very clear: “People will come from the east and the west and from the north and the south and will recline at the table in the Kingdom of God. For behold, some are last who will be first, and some are first who will be last.” Where do we want to be when we all take our places in the God’s Kingdom, last or first?

August 29, 2010 – Twenty Second Sunday in Ordinary Time

“Invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, the unwanted; blessed will you be because of their inability to repay you.” Luke 14:1, 7-14

A parishioner noted to his pastor that Jesus dined with the rich and famous of his day. He asked, “Do you think Jesus would belong to an exclusive country club if he were here today?” The pastor answered, “I suspect he might, if he could afford it. But his guests would include people who could not afford it, people who need a bath and a new set of clothes, people who have not recently had a decent meal, people who are lame, who limp, or feel their way with a white cane.” The pastor then said to his parishioner, “You belong to a very exclusive country club. Have you ever brought such guest to your club?” The man said nothing. He had many possessions. The pastor added, “When we leave Mass and go into God’s world we are supposed to be Jesus present in that world. So, when you are at your exclusive country club Jesus *is* a member. You might want to start reviewing your guest list.”

Choosing the I AM over iThings

by Jim Lamm, Director of Stewardship, St. Louis King of France Church, Austin, TX

Have you been keeping up with the latest news from the technology world? Apple has released the new iPad and its latest version of the iPhone. Microsoft, not to be outdone, has released a new phone of its own called the KIN. There are also 3G and 4G networks, larger and higher definition TV’s, Blu-Ray DVDs, and satellite and HD radios. With all these new gadgets, and the advertising blitz that goes along with them, it seems we cannot be satisfied without these great new things. Whether all this rapidly evolving technology really makes our lives easier or simply consumes more of our time is a debatable question. One thing is clear, however – no technology, no new device, or no “thing” can satisfy us or bring us closer to the one person who can fully satisfy us as human beings – God.

Like the words from the Waylon Jennings song, “we are looking for love in all the wrong places.” We search for satisfaction in things, in possessions, hoping that these will bring us happiness and contentment. What fools we are! Jesus himself tells us in the Gospels that he alone is the Way, the Truth, and the Light. Why do we waste our time, energy, and lives chasing after things that give us fleeting satisfaction? St. Augustine had it right when he wrote, “Our hearts are restless until they rest in you, O God.” While our society may be telling us to store up riches and possessions on earth and to live for the moment; our Christian faith implores us to store up riches in Heaven because our earthly lives are short and this world is only temporary. Jesus warns us, “Take care to guard against greed, for though one may be rich, one’s life does not consist of possessions” (Luke 12:15).

To be truly satisfied as Christians and make the claim to be Jesus’ disciples, we must free our lives from our dependency on “things” and become dependent on God. We must place God first in our lives, ahead of everything and everyone else, including ourselves. While we may search in vain for a “God app,” our iPhones, iTunes, iPads, and other possessions are no replacements for the **I AM**.

A note about the content of this newsletter...

There was apparently some confusion about the piece on the difference between charity and philanthropy that appeared on page two of our last ICSC newsletter, July, 2010. It actually was an article, not a “Q&A,” and members are free to reprint it at no cost as long as they also include the attribution (for example, “by Tom Cullinan, director of stewardship at St. Robert Bellarmine Parish in Omaha”).

We prepare and publish this newsletter for you to use. So please do feel free to reprint the bulletin notes, the template bulletin insert – and all other material in this newsletter – in your bulletin and other parish publications, always remembering that appropriate attribution is not only necessary, it’s good stewardship!

STEWARDSHIP AND THE SUNDAY READINGS

Courtesy of Dan Potvin, Archdiocese of Winnipeg

August 1

Virtues of the Disciple & Christian Steward:

Responsibility

“Well done good and faithful servant”

Matt 25:19

To be responsible is to first understand that we are not our own masters. Neither are we the owners of all that we possess. We belong to God, and all that we possess is a gift from God. Every gift comes with a responsibility. How do we use it? More importantly how do we share it? One day God will require an accounting of the use each person has made of the particular gifts entrusted to him or her.

August 8

Virtues of the Disciple & Christian Steward:

Gratitude

“A grateful heart silences a complaining voice.”

Bishop Eugene Gerber

Being a Christian steward means living each day in gratitude, not envy. It is hard to always be wanting more when you have a grateful heart. The secret to happiness is not found in having what you want, but in wanting what you have. Good stewards count their blessings while everyone else is adding up their problems.

August 15

Virtues of the Disciple & Christian Steward:

Generosity

“Mature disciples make a conscious, firm decision, carried out in action to be followers of Jesus Christ no matter the cost to themselves.”

Stewardship: A Disciple’s Response

What is authentic generosity? It is born out of gratitude. For the Christian steward it means ‘needing to give’ not simply ‘giving to a need’ in order to relieve ourselves of guilt or obligation. Authentic generosity means we freely give of ourselves, our lives, and our possessions, without counting the cost.

August 22

Virtues of the Disciple & Christian Steward:

Simplicity

“Live simply so that others may simply live”

Blessed Mother Teresa

Embracing a simpler lifestyle enables us to live more generously. Simple living is also the antidote for “influenza,” the social disease caused by rampant consumerism and materialism.

A Prayer for Simplicity: Lord, grant me the grace to be free from the excesses of this life. Let me not get caught up with the desire for wealth. Keep my heart and mind free to love and serve you. Amen.

August 29

Virtues of the Disciple & Christian Steward:

Mercy

“Go and learn what the Scriptures mean when they say, ‘Instead of offering sacrifices to me, I want you to be merciful to others.’ I didn’t come to invite good people to be my followers. I came to invite sinners.”

Matt 9:12-14

One of the greatest measures of mercy is the commitment to be compassionate towards everyone we meet. We pray that we will always be a community that welcomes all people with love and compassion.

September 5

Virtues of the Disciple & Christian Steward:

Perseverance

“My life is like a drink offering being poured out on the altar. I have fought well. I have finished the race, and I have been faithful”

2 Tim 4:6-7.

Discipleship and stewardship is a way of life that is both joyful and rewarding, while at the same time being challenging and sometimes difficult. Be persistent, patient and persevere! It has its rewards both in this life and in the life to come.