

INTERNATIONAL CATHOLIC STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL

PARISH STEWARDSHIP

Education and Services Committee e-Bulletin • February 2011

A STEWARDSHIP PRAYER *for February*



Oh Lord, giver of life
and source of our freedom,
we are reminded by the psalmist
that Yours is "the earth
and its fullness; the world
and those who dwell in it."

We know that it is from
Your hand that we have received
all we have and are and will be.

Gracious and loving God,
we understand that You call us
to be the stewards of
Your abundance,
the caretakers of all
You have entrusted to us.

Help us always
to use Your gifts wisely
and teach us to share them
generously.
May our faithful stewardship
bear witness to the love of Christ
in our lives.

We pray with grateful hearts,
in Jesus' name.

Amen

- Thanks to Sharon Hueckel

Pope Urges Good Stewardship of the Internet

Christian stewards are called to be witnesses to Jesus Christ and to proclaim the Gospel in word and deed. Pope Benedict XVI recently reminded us that the steward's witness extends to the internet as well. In a January message to mark the Vatican's 45th World Day of Social Communications, Pope Benedict gave his blessing to social networking, and urged Catholic internet users to adopt a respectful, Christian "netiquette" when interacting with others online.

Etiquette is concerned with rules governing socially acceptable behavior. "Netiquette" is a new term dealing with the importance of appropriate behavior and conduct in the social setting of cyberspace. The pope acknowledged that new technologies were creating unprecedented opportunities for establishing relationships, building fellowship and spreading the Gospel. He wrote: "The proclamation of the Gospel requires a communication which is at once respectful and sensitive."

When communicating via the internet, one danger is to express oneself in word, manner or tone that would never be considered when communicating "face-to-face." Thus, expressing and applying Christian love of others through the keyboard and monitor toward the person on the other end of cyberspace requires more thoughtfulness and consideration. The pontiff maintained that there was "a Christian way of being present in the digital world: this takes the form of a communication which is honest and open, responsible and respectful of others."

The pope observed that with all the internet's positive aspects, which included dialogue, solidarity and the creation of positive relations, there is a downside: "the one-sidedness of the interaction, the tendency to communicate only some parts of one's interior world, the risk of constructing a false image of oneself, which can become a form of self-indulgence."

Pope Benedict also expressed concern about the dangers of too much social networking such as "enclosing oneself in a sort of parallel existence, or excessive exposure to the virtual world." He wrote: "In the search for sharing, for 'friends,' there is the challenge to be authentic and faithful and not give in to the illusion of constructing an artificial public profile for oneself." He warned against replacing real friendships with virtual ones as well.

The Holy Father's message is, in part, a call for Christians to exercise good stewardship of others when communicating online, and to remain mindful of one of the fundamentals of the Gospel message when using the internet: to love one's neighbor.

Internet Etiquette (“Netiquette”) For Christian Stewards

The internet can be a wonderful tool for Christian stewards to give witness to their faith, and knowing proper internet etiquette (“netiquette”) is important for exercising good Christian stewardship. Listed below are just a few netiquette principles to keep in mind when communicating over the internet.

Be kind to people. Send messages that reveal a care and concern for others. Avoid posting comments that reveal impatience or lack restraint. Don’t use expressions that are vulgar, intemperate or aggressive in tone.

Be truthful. When sending e-mails or using social networks, be sure what you are relating is accurate and do not leave false impressions. Avoid creating or promoting false online profiles or images of yourself.

Be helpful to others. Believe it or not, newcomers to online usage appear every day. If you encounter new internet users, help them. Be patient and help newcomers understand appropriate internet use and “netiquette”.



decide on the appropriate response, or whether it might even be better not to respond in certain circumstances, rather than reacting in anger and posting words in an inflammatory manner. St. Paul wrote that if we bite and devour one another, we’ll only be consumed by one another. (Gal 5:15).

On the internet, messages can more easily be misinterpreted or we can respond in a way that appears curt or lacking in sympathy. Practice compassion online.

Act with compassion and empathy. It is hard to share feelings on the internet. In person, people can see the genuine concern and love on our faces when sensitive issues arise. On the internet, messages can more easily be misinterpreted or we can respond in a way that appears curt or lacking in sympathy. Practice compassion online.

Avoid gossip. Posting any form of gossip designed to slander, show disrespect or put down others behind their back (back-stabbing) should be avoided. We should also not share personal information about anyone without that person’s permission.

Avoid character assassinations. Addressing others using derogatory terms such as “liars” or “morons” is certainly inappropriate for public forums, especially for a disciple of Jesus Christ.

Avoid “flaming” or matching “flame” for “flame.” Flaming is an internet term meaning an exchange of inflammatory remarks with another in anger. Pause before reacting to someone’s post in anger, and pray before you

DON’T SEND MESSAGES USING ALL CAPITAL LETTERS. Using ALL CAPS is generally perceived as “shouting” at others. It is considered as rude as it is inflammatory and should be avoided.

Be forgiving of other peoples’ mistakes. Mistakes, especially unintentional, do happen. Avoid scoffing or making fun of others’ mistakes in grammar. Where a message may be confusing or could be construed in a negative way, give the sender the benefit of the doubt. Ask for clarification where necessary.

Look for opportunities to encourage others. Think of two or three people to whom you can send a brief word of encouragement. Sometimes it is just, “Hi, I was just thinking about you and prayed that God bless you in a special way today.”

We can enjoy our internet communications and serve Jesus Christ at the same time. A principle of Christian stewardship is fundamental to internet communications: Do unto others as you would want them to do unto you.

STEWARDSHIP SAINT *for February*



Saint Maroun, Father of the Maronite Catholic community

The Maronite Catholic Church, an Eastern Rite Catholic community, celebrates the feast of Saint Maroun on February 9. Saint Maroun is considered the father of the Maronite Catholic community, which professes the same apostolic faith, celebrates the same sac-

raments and is united with the chief shepherd of the Church, the pope, as are all Roman Catholics throughout the world.

Based in part on the writings of Saint John Chrysostom (feast, Sept. 13), Saint Maroun's life is dated at approximately 350-410. Saints Maroun and John Chrysostom are believed to have studied together in the great Christian learning center at Antioch, which at the time was the third largest city in the Roman Empire.

Unlike Saint John Chrysostom, who became Archbishop of Constantinople, Saint Maroun embraced a life of quiet, prayerful solitude in the mountains of Syria. He was known for his simplicity and his extraordinary desire to discover God's presence in all things. He was also known for his evangelization efforts and his extensive healing ministry. He shared his deep commitment to Christ with everyone he encountered.

Saint Maroun's missionary work came to fruition when he converted an entire pagan community living in the mountains of Syria to Christianity. This was the beginning of mass conversions to Christianity in Syria. Saint Maroun attracted a multitude of followers and drew attention throughout the empire. His influence on the Syrian Christians was so great they took their name after him, "Maronites." In time, the Maronite movement spread the Christian faith to Lebanon where its influence was even more profound.

Saint Maroun is the patron saint of Lebanon, which celebrates his feast day as a national civic holiday for Christians and Muslims alike. Pope Benedict XVI has granted a plenary indulgence to anyone who visits a Maronite church on February 9th.

SAVE THE
DATE



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Visit www.catholicstewardship.org for more information



A STEWARDSHIP MOMENT

Fifth Week in Ordinary Time

Weekend of February 5/6

Jesus said to his followers “You are the light of the world... your light must shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your heavenly Father.” Christian stewards allow the light of Christ to shine through them to reach others. A good reflection question for the week: In what ways do we allow the light of Christ to shine through us?

Sixth Week in Ordinary Time

Weekend of February 12/13

In today’s Gospel, part of his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus does not speak of replacing the law of the Old Testament. He goes beyond it. He obliges his followers to work at being holier than even the strictest of Pharisees. But the work is not accomplished by following a religious “law”, it requires growing in love for other human beings. Followers of Jesus know they are required to be good stewards of others. In what way will you exercise good stewardship over other people this week?

Seventh Week in Ordinary Time

Weekend of February 19/20

In another passage from his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus continues to turn his disciples’ way of thinking upside-down. One of the lessons for the Christian steward in today’s Gospel is that if we have a chance to help someone in need, we should be generous and give more than is expected of us. Jesus went “the extra mile” for us. Can we be more like Jesus and “go the extra mile” for others?

Eighth Week in Ordinary Time

Weekend of February 26/27

Saint Paul reminds us as baptized Christians, as those who have shared the Eucharist with one another, that we are “servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God.” We are not to define ourselves by our age, ethnicity, gender, social status, work, vocation or avocation. Our primary self-understanding should be that of servants and stewards of the Lord and all that has been entrusted to us. Can we accept this self-understanding? Do we find it encouraging?

Practical Stewardship: Jesus is our Model

*Adapted from an article by Rick Jeric,
Director of Stewardship and Development,
Diocese of Columbus, Ohio*

Did you take an accounting of your stewardship of time, talent, and treasure at the beginning of this New Year? I hope this accounting, which is both practical and spiritual, is something which we will do periodically. This personal effort is even more important than regular visits to the doctor or dentist. Our physical health is a top priority. Our spiritual health determines eternal life. So, what is more important? Our journey to heaven and eternal life with God is guided by our good and faithful stewardship. How we spend our time, how we use our talent, and where we spend our treasure are all efforts by which we maintain the life of a Christian. Jesus is our model. As Christian stewards, it goes without saying that we have a responsibility to follow the life and teachings of Jesus Christ.

Let our practical challenge in the month of February be to bravely take steps to model the life and ministry of Jesus

The Gospels are filled with examples of our Lord’s prayer life, his relationship with family and friends, his teachings and his ministry. Jesus was obedient to his Father in heaven. But he also obeyed and respected his earthly parents. Jesus bowed his head and was baptized by John the Baptist. He preached the Sermon on the Mount, he served those in need. He confronted the rich and powerful. He cured, consoled, healed, and forgave.

As Christian stewards we must also be people of prayer; and like Jesus, we must be willing to bow our heads, serve, cure, heal, forgive and proclaim the Gospel in creative ways. We too must be people of action. Let our practical challenge in the month of February be to bravely take steps to model the life and ministry of Jesus, and act in a way pleasing to the Father. No rationalizing. No exceptions. No age limits. We must live an authentic Christian life each and every day. Pray, act, live, and love. Do all to the fullest, as Jesus did.

FEBRUARY 14-16, 2011

Palisades Retreat Center
Federal Way, Washington

Winter Session

Still Time
to
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2011 ICSC/OSV Catholic Stewardship Institute



ICSC and Our Sunday Visitor are partnering on a new venture of regional Stewardship Institutes!

These Institutes are perfect for both those just beginning their efforts to teach stewardship, and those with experience seeking a great refresher. In a retreat-like setting, Mass is celebrated each day to complement the ten sessions which offer key spiritual and practical components of parish stewardship.

Our Sunday Visitor

Enriching Parishes...Enhancing Community
www.osvoffertory.com



INTERNATIONAL CATHOLIC
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Sessions include in-depth presentations on:

- The theology of Christian stewardship and its basic concepts
- Practical techniques for inviting parishioners to embrace stewardship as a way of life
- The annual parish stewardship process, hospitality, stewardship communications and ongoing renewals
- The characteristics of a stewardship parish
- And much more

Palisades Retreat Center

The Palisades Retreat Center is located in a peaceful, natural setting of 39 secluded acres of woods, on a beachfront bluff overlooking Puget Sound, with steps to the beach, nature trails and a meditation garden with waterfalls.

Housing at The Palisades is single rooms with double or queen beds. Each guest room has a private shower and individual heat control. A beautiful Chapel and library are available to guests. Wireless internet is available throughout the center.

Offering Outstanding Faculty Members

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

Michael Murphy, Co-Host

Executive Director
International Catholic
Stewardship Council
Washington, DC

Rick Fersch

*Executive Director
of Stewardship
and Development*
Archdiocese of Seattle,
Washington

Rev. Jim Lee

Pastor
St. Michael Parish
Olympia, Washington
2005 Archbishop Murphy
Stewardship Awardee

Julie Kenny, Co-Host

*Stewardship Services
Manager*
Our Sunday Visitor, Inc.
Huntington, Indiana

Sharon Hueckel

*Director of Stewardship
and Pastoral Planning*
Holy Name of Mary Parish
San Dimas, California

For session topics, daily schedule or to register for the Institute visit www.catholicstewardship.org



STEWARDSHIP EXPRESSIONS | FEBRUARY 2011

Inspired by the stewardship ministry of Suzanne Erpenbach, Knoxville, Tennessee

A fresh opportunity to integrate stewardship practice into life – at home, work, school, on-the-road, with friends and neighbors ... everywhere. Let us strive to rethink, recommit and rededicate our daily living with focus and determination to reflect caring discipleship and service throughout the year.

–Suzanne Erpenbach

FEBRUARY OBSERVANCES

American Heart Month – Since 1963 Congress has proclaimed February “American Heart Month.” The purpose has been to maintain public awareness that heart disease is the leading cause of death in the United States and is a major cause of disability. We also continue to be informed that healthy eating habits, exercise and healthy lifestyle choices are the best weapons we have to fight heart disease. What can we do this month to become better stewards of our health?

Black History Month – Black History Month commemorates the significant events and achievements of African-Americans in the United States. As Christians, we recall the civil rights movement; a movement initiated by Christians who saw injustice and worked in nonviolent ways to bring the love of Christ to bear on a system of discrimination that reflected neither the Gospel nor the values espoused by the U.S. Constitution. When we celebrate the positive achievements of Americans who excelled despite having been socially marginalized, we also affirm the victory of God’s grace.

WEEKLY OBSERVANCES

February 15-21 – Random Acts of Kindness Week – In 1994, Congress passed a resolution declaring a week each February as “National Random Acts of Kindness Week,” dedi-

cated to celebrating the little things we do for others. St. Francis of Assisi famously commented, “Preach the Gospel at all times and *if necessary* use words.” This is yet another opportunity for Christian stewards to be mindful that we are called by Christ to show his mercy and compassion toward those in need.

NOTABLE DAYS IN FEBRUARY 2011

11 – National Shut-in Visitation Day is a day set aside to remind us not to neglect those who by reason of age, illness or other infirmity are confined in their homes, long-term care facilities or other institutions. Perhaps there is a person you can visit to model the healing presence of Christ.

14 – Valentine’s Day can be a day not only to send cards and flowers to those we love. It can be a day to reflect on God’s love for us, and just how we reflect that love to others year-round. Take time to read Saint Paul’s reflections on love in 1 *Corinthians* 13.

21 – Presidents’ Day is a federal holiday observed the third Monday of February to honor the legacy of past presidents of the United States. Remember in your prayers the president, national leaders, our nation and the men and women who make sacrifices to serve in our armed forces.

INTERNATIONAL CATHOLIC
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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.