

INTERNATIONAL CATHOLIC STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL
CATHOLIC STEWARDSHIP

April 2017 • e-Bulletin

A STEWARDSHIP PRAYER
for April

Christ Our Savior,

As our Lenten journey brings us
closer to Easter,
we see with a deeper awareness
our world's desperate need
to experience
the healing power of your justice
and peace.

Make us sacraments of your mercy
and instruments of your
compassion.
Show us how to be better stewards
of your people;
through our families,
our brothers and sisters
with whom we share your
Eucharist,
our neighbors, and the stranger.

Show us how to carry the cross
so that by dying to ourselves,
we may give new life to others.
And strengthen our faith, so that
we may proclaim your
Easter triumph
more confidently,
every day,
in word and deed.

Amen

Finding Hope in the Cross

Do you ever think about how you experience the cross of Jesus Christ? Do you ever think about the power of that cross in your daily life? Is the cross even relevant to your life? It is to stewards of the Lord, who recognize the hope Christ brings through the gift of his cross. They acknowledge that for them, the cross is their *only* hope.

Being good stewards of our life in Christ is not easy, but to embrace the cross is not only countercultural, it seems absurd. Then again, we cannot avoid what Jesus said to his disciples: "If you wish to come after me you must deny yourself and take up your cross daily and follow me. For if you wish to save your life, you will lose it; but if you lose your life for my sake you will save it" (Luke 9:23-24).



The cross is more readily embraced by people of faith who suffer, are poor, broken, or are the victims of such things as violence, oppression or natural disasters. They see the cross as the hope that no matter what has happened to them, God will see them through. The Father did it for Jesus who hung on the cross, so surely their sufferings will be redeemed by Jesus' sufferings.

Where people possess much material abundance, comfort and leisure, however, there is a tendency to de-emphasize the cross, to draw away from it. They can't touch it or feel it so they wish to "save" their lives by looking to other things: power, wealth, fame, relevance, being the center of attention. What is preached about the cross from the pulpit sounds good, but in reality something more tangible is desired.

Christ emptied himself completely in humble obedience, allowing himself to suffer and die out of compassion for the world (Philippians 2:6-11). Good stewards follow his example and work day-to-day to empty themselves and live compassionately; most noticeably by sharing their lives with others.

As we approach the climax of our liturgical year, the Easter triduum, let us ask the Holy Spirit for an even deeper awareness of the cross in our lives. Let us find hope in the cross and pray that as we embrace it, we too will experience in a special way the joy of new life in the risen Lord.



STEWARDSHIP SAINT *for April*



Saint Teresa of Los Andes

The life of Saint Teresa of Los Andes, who died three months before her 20th birthday, offers proof that a Christian steward need not live a long life in order to reflect the light of Christ on others in a profoundly meaningful way.

Juanita Fernandez Solar was born on July 13, 1900 into a devout Catholic family in Santiago, Chile, the fourth of six children. She was educated by the French nuns of the Sacred Heart and led an active school life. She was known to have excelled at swim-

ming and tennis and was gifted musically as well. She could sing, dance and play the piano. Juanita was also known for her vanity and hot-temper. It was said that she liked to have things her way.

At age 15, Juanita read *The Story of a Soul*, the spiritual autobiography of Saint Therese of Lisieux that had become a publishing phenomenon. It was to prove transforming. She had always attended daily Mass and even taught catechism classes to younger students. But after having read the words of the Little Flower, a desire to serve God began to grow. When Juanita read the biography of Saint Teresa of Avila her spiritual journey became clear as she decided to join the Carmelite community.

In May 1919, at age 19, Juanita entered the Carmelite convent in the town of Los Andes. The convent offered the simple lifestyle Teresa desired and the joy of living in a community of women completely devoted to God. Initially, she focused her time on prayer and daily acts of sacrifice and she took the name "Teresa of Jesus."

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After becoming accustomed to the daily rhythms of a cloistered life, Teresa embarked on a letter writing ministry to offer simple reflections on the spiritual life to a large number of people needing encouragement and inspiration.

Before her first year in the convent was completed, however, Teresa contracted typhus. Diagnosed as fatal on Good Friday of 1920, she was allowed to profess her final vows in the Carmelite community "in periculo mortis" ("in danger of death") just a few days before she died on April 12, 1920.

Teresa was canonized by Saint John Paul II in 1993. She is a popular saint in Chile, where her shrine is visited by some 100,000 pilgrims each year. She is sometimes referred to as the "little saint" of America in imitation of the Little Flower. She is the first Chilean to be canonized.



Teaching Stewardship as a Way of Life

by Leisa Anslinger, author and co-founder of Catholic Strengths and Engagement Community (CSEC).

The introduction to the United States bishops' pastoral letter on Christian stewardship, written 25 years ago, is just as compelling today as it was in 1992. Its words get at the crux of why on-going stewardship formation in our dioceses and parishes is so important to our Catholic life of faith. It is likely we all can rattle off examples of parishes that "did stewardship" for a few years in a way that really was only about trying to encourage parishioners to increase their offertory contributions, and then found that it "didn't work." The results were limited by the lack of on-going formation of the people in the deeper meaning of stewardship as a way of life. Allow me to reintroduce what is at the heart of stewardship formation by the words of our Catholic bishops:

This pastoral letter initiates a long-term, continuing process encouraging people to examine and interiorize stewardship's implications. At the start of this process it is important to lay out a comprehensive view of stewardship — a vision of a sharing, generous, accountable way of life rooted in Christian discipleship — which people can take to heart and apply to the circumstances of their

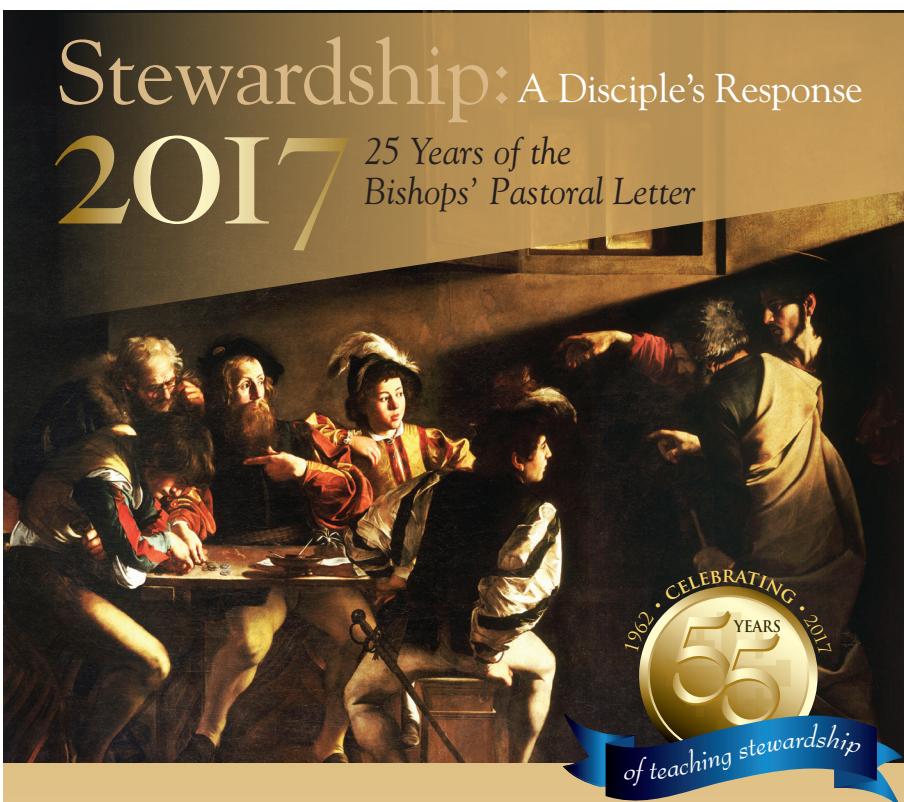
lives. Concentrating on one specific obligation of stewardship, even one as important as church support, could make it harder — even impossible — for people to grasp the vision. It could imply that when the bishops get serious about stewardship, what they really mean is simply giving money (**Stewardship: A Disciple's Response, Introduction**)

Undoubtedly, offertory enhancement can be very important to the parish and its people. But as the bishops point out in the above quote, people need to be formed to “take to heart and apply [stewardship] to the circumstances of their lives.” This is the chal-

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lenge of stewardship leadership. How do we help people to recognize themselves and grow as disciples who are committed to live as stewards in all of the aspects of their lives, including the life of their parish? How do we help them to see that they are members of Christ's Body, the Church, and as such, have a responsibility to contribute to the very Body to which they belong?

Recently, I was invited to speak at the end of Masses at a parish as the culmination of a month-long focus on aspects of stewardship. I shared thoughts about stewardship as a deeply spiritual way of life. After one of the Masses, a parishioner stopped me and remarked, “I am a professional fundraiser, but I have never thought about financial giving in this way. You have given me much to reflect on, personally and professionally.” May all of our stewardship leadership lead people to such reflection!



Join us in Atlanta

For the International Catholic Stewardship Council's 55th Annual Conference

September 17-20, 2017



Special LENTEN discount for ICSC members only

\$449

registration fee per person, through Easter

Visit catholicstewardship.com
for more information and to register TODAY.

Called to Care for Creation

Both Saint Francis of Assisi and Pope Francis remind us that it is a Gospel imperative that we be good stewards of the earth. What better way to remind us of their teaching than to observe Earth Day 2017 and be good stewards of this precious planet year-round.

Earth Day will be observed worldwide on April 22. The first Earth Day was held in 1970, activating 20 million Americans and helping to pass legislation including the Clean Air Act. Today, Earth Day is a global event and possibly the largest civic observance in the world. For the Catholic steward, this day is an affirmation of Pope Francis' call to the world to embrace the ethical dimensions of climate change and our response to it in his 2015 encyclical, *Laudato Si*.



During the 47 years since the first Earth Day, the world has become more conscious of environmental degradation and humans' role in it.

It can feel overwhelming, and we ask, what can one person do? Pope Francis acknowledges technological fixes, global guidelines, international protocols. He praises solar energy and calls for a decrease in the use of non-renewables. But the pontiff calls for something more radical, more spiritual, and for the Christian steward more deeply challenging: "profound interior conversion."

Climate change, environmental destruction and a change in weather patterns, he reminds us, exert their greatest damage on the world's poor. The poor are a major theme of *Laudato Si*, as they are of Francis' papacy. He challenges us to examine the profit motive that often engulfs respect for nature. He challenges us to consider how the powerful and the rich of this earth are affecting the powerless.

Pope Francis reminds us that care of creation is rooted in the *Book of Genesis*. He begins his encyclical, the first ever dedicated solely to the environment, with a quote from St. Francis of Assisi, and quotes frequently from his predecessors. This, he is telling us, is a spiritual and Catholic issue.

In honor of Earth Day, consider what changes – perhaps some radical – you might make. "Live simply so that others may simply live," has long been a mantra of the Christian steward. Begin by turning down the thermostat and promising to eschew one-use plastics. Take a reusable bag to the grocery and a reusable container to the coffee shop. Cut down on frivolous buying. Consider what the "throwaway culture" of which Francis speaks means in your own life. Prayerfully consider your personal relationship to the poor. Make your environmental concerns known to your legislative representatives.

"Teach us to contemplate you in the beauty of the universe," Pope Francis prays to a generous God, "for all things speak of you."

**Important Notice for
all ICSC Parish Members!**

ICSC 2017 Parish Stewardship Award Information

**Has your parish developed
stewardship materials that
would help others?**

**Did your committee work hard
on resources you are proud of?**

***Please consider applying for
one or more ICSC Parish
Awards in 2017.***

Parishes at all stages of the
stewardship journey are
encouraged to apply!

Entries will be judged by
members of the ICSC Parish
Stewardship Education and
Services Committee.

***Application Deadline is
May 31.***

All applicants will be contacted
by July 15.

For additional information,
list of awards, and entry forms
[**CLICK HERE**](#)





A STEWARDSHIP MOMENT

5th Sunday of Lent Weekend of April 1/2, 2017

Jesus called to his friend from the dead, "Lazarus, come out!" It is the same call our Lord makes to us unceasingly: "Come out!" Jesus calls us from our tomb of doubt and unbelief, from the darkness of our fear and anxieties; from the depths of our weaknesses and lack of hope. Christian stewards pray for an open heart, so that they may hear the voice of the Lord, heed the continuous call to come away from their former way of living and reprioritize their lives in the light of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Do we believe Christ has the power to transform our lives? Do we take time to listen for his call?

Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion Weekend of April 8/9, 2017

We are at the doorsteps of Holy Week where we remember Christ's passion. Jesus humbled himself and let go of everything, emptying himself for us. During this time of Lent, how have we joined the Lord? Has our prayer, penitential practices and almsgiving moved us to humble ourselves before the Lord? Have we let go of things that keep us from being authentic stewards for Christ Jesus? How have we "emptied" ourselves so that when we do approach the table of the Lord, we can be nourished by His body and blood? As disciples of Christ and stewards of His gift of faith, it is time to evaluate our lives under the cross.

The Resurrection of the Lord – Easter Vigil April 15, 2017

In tonight's reading from Saint Paul's letter to the Romans, we are reminded that we are alive in Christ. And it is not merely once a year that we remember what Jesus did to give us this new life, forgiveness and peace. Every day good stewards remember their baptism. They remember that they are united with Jesus in his death; that daily they drown the old sinful nature, and that daily they rise to their new life in Christ. Let us be mindful every day, especially when we are troubled by life or tempted by sin, that our lives are no longer about us, but about Christ's active, loving presence within us. That is our baptism. Alleluia! He is risen!

The Resurrection of the Lord – Easter Sunday April 16, 2017

The reading from the Acts of the Apostles reminds us that we, too, bear witness to the risen Lord. The presence of Christ is within us, making us new, transforming us, turning us into stewards of the Good News. There is no more time for holding grudges, disliking others, seeking vengeance, maintaining old prejudices, tolerating bias. We are Christ's joy and instruments of his peace. Our world is reordered. Reflect on how we are called to let Christ's forgiveness, reconciliation and love permeate our lives. We are Easter people. Rejoice! He is risen! Alleluia!

Second Sunday of Easter/Divine Mercy Sunday Weekend of April 22/23, 2017

In today's first reading, the four activities of the earliest church are introduced to us as priorities of the church: devotion to the teachings of the apostles, communal fellowship, the Eucharist and prayer. The early members of the church saw themselves as devoted stewards of these activities. These were not options. They were the fruits of a genuine conversion to a life in Christ. Sharing in the Eucharist was the most intimate expression of fellowship, while the most common expression of fellowship in the New Testament was that of sharing financial resources – giving. It was not a perfect community, but one that gave evidence of God's active presence in its midst. This early community offers us an excellent example of how to better exercise stewardship in our own parish families.

Third Sunday of Easter Weekend of April 29/30, 2017

As today's gospel reveals, the first meal shared with the risen Lord happened in a place called Emmaus. Perhaps there is no better time to reflect on this story than in those prayerful moments at Mass when we return to our place after receiving Holy Communion. Those few moments give us an opportunity to reflect on our stewardship of Christ's presence within us. We have a chance to practice hospitality by inviting Jesus into our hearts to walk and talk with us about our own Emmaus journey. We can relive once again the time when he broke bread for the disciples. And just as they did, we too can recognize Christ in this meal we have just shared with others.



A Steward's Way of the Cross

Why a "Steward's Way of the Cross"? Stewardship is all about receiving God's gifts gratefully and sharing them generously. But to be good stewards, we have to understand first that we have been blessed – that all we have are the gifts of our good and loving God. Only then can we make our use of those gifts an act of Thanksgiving to the God who gave them.

Our greatest single gift from God is Jesus, his life and ministry, his death on the cross and his resurrection for our salvation. It is appropriate to look at the gift of the Lord's passion, death and resurrection through the lens of stewardship; to reflect on the Stations of the Cross and consider what gifts are being given and received in each one so that we are able to receive and rejoice more fully in the gift of God in Christ.

Good and loving Father,

we bring you praise and thanksgiving for the gift of your beloved Son, our Savior.

As we walk this way of the cross, devoutly recalling his passion and death, send your Spirit to open our eyes to your gifts of grace that we may do this and all things in union with Christ.

Amen.

I. Jesus is condemned to death

"Why? What evil has he done?"

The gift of this first station is **innocence**. Pilate offers Jesus up for crucifixion. Jesus says nothing, but is in fact innocent of the crimes of which he is accused. An ancient Eucharistic prayer says "Jesus, your Son, innocent and without sin, gave himself into our hands and was nailed to a cross." Through that selfless act, through his death and resurrection, we are saved.

Save us, Savior of the world, for by your cross and resurrection, You have set us free.

II. Jesus carries his cross

...carrying the cross himself, he went out to what is called the Place of the Skull

We see in this station the gift of **acceptance**. Following Jesus may

mean accepting burdens of one kind or another, and those burdens are also a gift. Saying "Yes" to the Lord means accepting the joys and sorrows that discipleship brings.

Save us, Savior of the world, for by your cross and resurrection, You have set us free.

III. Jesus falls the first time

He himself was tested through what he suffered...

The gift of this station is **fortitude**. The way of the cross is long and painful, and under the weight of the cross, Jesus stumbles and falls. But he gets up and begins again – and so must we when adversity brings us to our knees, confident that our Lord is with us in our troubles.

Save us, Savior of the world, for by your cross and resurrection, You have set us free.

IV. Jesus meets his mother

... he said to his mother, "Woman, behold, your son."

There are many gifts here – the gift of relationships, the gift of Mary to John and in that way, to the whole Church – but the most important gift of this station is **compassion**. In her anguish, Mary came out to be present to her son, and even in the pain and cruelty of the crucifixion, Jesus made sure his mother would be loved and cared for.

Save us, Savior of the world, for by your cross and resurrection, You have set us free.

V. Simon helps Jesus carry his cross

...this man they pressed into service to carry his cross.

The gift of this station is **service**. Big, strong, and available, Simon of Cyrene was a steward in spite of himself, putting those gifts to use in



the service of the Lord. We have gifts to share, too, and we share them best when we are “bearing one another’s burdens,” engaged in the loving service of our neighbor.

Save us, Savior of the world, for by your cross and resurrection, You have set us free.

VI. Veronica wipes the face of Jesus

“...whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.”

Loving kindness is the gift of this station. Heedless of the danger to herself in a crowd of angry men, Veronica presses forward to wipe the sweat-stained face of Jesus, her love for Him overcoming her fear. In this small, loving act, we see that no gift of ours is too small or too insignificant to be offered. It is good stewardship to “do small things with great love.”

Save us, Savior of the world, for by your cross and resurrection, You have set us free.

VII. Jesus falls the second time

...it was our pain that he bore, our sufferings he endured.

The gift here is **endurance**. Jesus falls a second time, but struggles to his feet and continues. In the Garden, He had prayed to be spared this, but rose from prayer strengthened to do the Father’s will, not his own. Following Jesus is the work of a lifetime, and to fall is not to fail. With the strength of the one who bore our burdens, we

can begin again and persevere on our Christian journey.

Save us, Savior of the world, for by your cross and resurrection, You have set us free.

VIII. Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem

These women had followed him when he was in Galilee...

These women who had faithfully followed Jesus during his ministry were drawn by their love for him into this scene of unimaginable horror. They brought emotional gifts of sympathy and concern. And, like women of every age, just by being there, they also brought the gift of **presence** to the one whose suffering they were not otherwise able to ease.

Save us, Savior of the world, for by your cross and resurrection, You have set us free.

IX. Jesus falls the third time

By his wounds we have been healed.

The gift of this station is **selflessness**. A man for others, Jesus teaches us to bear one another’s burdens, to set aside self interest and use our gifts to help the poor, the suffering, and the forgotten. Worn and weak, He summons his remaining strength to do for us what we cannot do for ourselves. Good stewards must follow His example.

Save us, Savior of the world, for by your cross and resurrection, You have set us free.

X. Jesus is stripped of his garments

“They divided my garments among them...”

Here we see true **humility**. Stripped naked on that first Good Friday, Jesus invites us to strip away the non-essentials in our lives and focus on what really matters. Good stewards know that they have nothing – even their very life is a gift – that has not come as a gift from God. And humbly acknowledging that fact, they then use their gifts for others, in thanksgiving.

Save us, Savior of the world, for by your cross and resurrection, You have set us free.

XI. Jesus is nailed to the cross

“Father, forgive them, they know not what they do.”

Forgiveness – even for his tormentors – is the gift of this station. Discipleship is not an easy road. “If you wish to come after me,” Jesus said, “you must deny yourself and take up your cross daily and follow me. For if you wish to save your life you will lose it, but if you lose your life for my sake you will save it.” And here’s the hard part... If we are truly following Jesus, we must forgive from the heart all who have hurt us in any way.

Save us, Savior of the world, for by your cross and resurrection, You have set us free.



XII. Jesus dies on the cross

"Father, into your hands I commend my spirit"

Here we see the ultimate gift – the total **self sacrifice** of Jesus. Jesus who has always given himself to the will of the Father, now gives his life as well. "There is no greater love than this, than to lay down one's life for a friend," he had told his disciples. Here on the cross as he breathes his last, he shows the depth of his love for them – and for us.

**Save us, Savior of the world, for by your cross and resurrection,
You have set us free.**

XIII. The body of Jesus is taken down from the cross

Joseph of Arimathea... came and took his body.

A tentative disciple at first, Joseph of Arimathea now braves the wrath of the authorities and asks for the body of Jesus. The gift we see in him is **faithfulness**. Once having committed to follow Jesus, he was faithful to the end, giving this last act of love and service. Good stewards are like that – always and everywhere saying "Yes" to the will of God, even when it's difficult or dangerous.

**Save us, Savior of the world, for by your cross and resurrection,
You have set us free.**

XIV. The body of Jesus is laid in the tomb

Joseph wrapped it in clean linen and laid it in his new tomb

The gift of this station is **generosity**. Joseph of Arimathea gives his own new tomb to Jesus. What a bittersweet joy he must have felt to be able to give this one last gift to the Lord. But the truth is, whenever we give generously of the gifts God has so bountifully given to us – to anyone -- we give them to the Lord. It is the duty and the blessing of good stewards to give freely, as we have freely received.

**Save us, Savior of the world, for by your cross and resurrection,
You have set us free.**

A Steward's Way of the Cross is offered as a result of the generous authorship and contribution of ICSC member Sharon Hueckel and the Stewardship Council at Holy Name of Mary Parish, San Dimas, California.