

INTERNATIONAL CATHOLIC STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL CATHOLIC STEWARDSHIP

August 2016 • e-Bulletin

A STEWARDSHIP PRAYER for August

The Canticle of Mary

My soul proclaims the greatness
of the Lord;
my spirit rejoices in God my savior.
For he has looked upon his handmaid's
lowliness;
behold, from now on all ages will
call me blessed.
The mighty one has done great things
for me, and holy is his name.

His mercy is from age to age
to those who fear him.
He has shown might with his arm,
dispersed the arrogant of mind and heart.
He has thrown down the rulers
from their thrones but
lifted up the lowly.
The hungry he has filled with good things;
the rich he has sent away empty.

He has helped Israel his servant,
remembering his mercy,
according to his promise to our fathers,
to Abraham and to his descendants
forever.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit:
as it was in the beginning,
is now, and ever shall be,
world without end.

Amen.

see Luke 1:46-55
(New American Bible, rev. ed. 2011)



Being Good Stewards of Our Parish Communities

We're still in the grip of a hot and sunny summer, but August brings a wake-up call. By August's end, visiting relatives have gone home, schools will be open, swimming pools will be closed, and college kids have packed up and left for the halls of academia. What's all that mean for the Christian steward? As we journey through August, parishes begin to teem with plans and new vitality.



The parish is where the Church lives, and stewards are the lifeblood of a successful parish. In the parish, we find community and support, liturgy and ritual, sacrament and healing. In the parish, we find a way to give and a way to receive. On a practical level, fall is the time when parish planning gears up for the seasons ahead. Now, for a Christian steward, is the time to prayerfully consider your own involvement in the life of the parish in the coming year. How might we serve – and be served? The Christian steward knows participation in the parish is a win-win situation, feeding us as we feed others.

Where to begin? Your parish website or office may provide a list of ministries in the parish. What calls to you? Respond to your deep desire. Maybe you're the party planner who'd love to serve on the social committee. Or perhaps you have a heart for helping the bereaved. Are you called to lector, or perhaps to take the Eucharist to the homebound? Maybe this is the year you need to soak in the fruits of adult education. Possibly you see a ministry missing and want to propose it. Perhaps, as a long time steward, you want to be part of revitalizing the stewardship efforts of your parish.

If you take a look at the schedule for ICSC's October conference, you know there are a host of sessions which address how to enliven parish stewardship. Maybe this is the year you're called to attend the conference – another win-win situation in which you learn how to welcome the stranger, bring out the best in your parishioners, and encourage discipleship all while experiencing the community and support of other conference goers. August is a perfect time to reflect on where – not "if"-- you are called. August provides time to decompress from a busy, fun summer and pray about where your own road to discipleship leads you next.

STEWARDSHIP SAINT *for August*



St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross (Edith Stein)

Edith Stein was born in 1891 to a Jewish family living in Breslau, Germany. From a very young age she was intellectually curious and loved to learn. She rejected her family's Jewish piety and even God because her observation was that people acted as though they did not believe in God. She was a brilliant university student and graduated *summa cum laude* with a doctoral degree in philosophy. She became the assistant to one of the most influential philosophers of the 20th century, Edmund Husserl, who recognized and admired her intellectual gifts.

“St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross says to us all: ‘Do not accept anything as the truth if it lacks love. And do not accept anything as love which lacks truth!’”

In 1921 Edith had a conversion experience. At age 30, she began reading the autobiography of St. Teresa of Avila in a friend's library and couldn't put it down. “*This is the truth!*” she exclaimed. She converted to Catholicism and was baptized on New Year's Day, 1922.

Edith soon became well regarded as a Catholic philosopher and author. She left her university appointment as Husserl's assistant and took a position teaching at a Dominican college for women teachers in Speyer, Germany. While there, she studied the philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas and published the first German translation of his treatise *The Truth*. She also lectured widely to Catholic women's groups throughout Europe.

Edith was passionate about her teaching, writing and lectures, but she yearned for a deeper relationship with God. In 1933 she entered religious formation in the Carmelite community at Cologne, Germany and made her final vows on Easter Sunday 1935, taking the name Teresa Benedicta of the Cross.

As the persecution of Jews in Germany intensified in the late 30s, Sister Teresa Benedicta was taken out of the country. On New Year's Eve 1938, she secretly crossed the border into the Netherlands where she was welcomed by the Carmelite community at Echt. There she would write her final book, *The Science of the Cross*, a study of the spirituality of St. John of the Cross.

The German Army invaded the Netherlands in 1940 and Sister Teresa's situation would again become perilous. She and her sister Rosa, also a Catholic convert, were eventually arrested and transported by cattle train to Auschwitz, where they perished in a gas chamber on August 9, 1942.

In his homily at the time of her canonization in 1998, St. John Paul II said: “St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross says to us all: ‘Do not accept anything as the truth if it lacks love. And do not accept anything as love which lacks truth!’”

The feast day of Saint Teresa Benedicta of the Cross is August 9.

Stewardship of Our Parishes: Helping Us Grow in Faith

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

I have had the privilege this spring of guest-presenting during a pastoral leadership class at our diocesan seminary. The first three classes of the semester set the foundation for the remaining topics: the priest as pastor



Being with the seminarians has reminded me of the complex nature of parish life and how stewarding these elements has direct impact on the way people may or may not grow in faith.

and leader; collaboration with the laity; the vision of the parish as the locus or center in which people are formed as disciples, stewards, and evangelizers. I am deeply appreciative of the commitment and genuine desire to lead well that the men, some of whom

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In what ways is your parish the place where disciples who live as good stewards are grown?

will be ordained very soon, have demonstrated. While I have not been with them for every class, I have witnessed their growing appreciation of the ways in which all the varied elements of parish life fit together.

Being with the seminarians has reminded me of the complex nature of parish life and how stewarding these elements has direct impact on the way people may or may not grow in faith. When we make adjustments in one aspect of the parish, it will affect other aspects. Hopefully, over time, the adjustments we make will result in deeper conformity to Christ, to holiness lived in daily life.

This calls for us to stay focused on the vision and good stewardship of the parish as the place where disciples are grown, where people are drawn to Christ, to live their faith in the daily lives, and to share their faith with others. Good stewardship of a parish requires on-going attention to the spirituality of stewardship, not only at specific points of the year; it requires us to consider parish practices in light of the call to live and grow as stewards, to help our people make primary connections between Mass and their daily lives, to understand how stewardship is an authentic way to live as disciples of Jesus Christ, and to do all of this in the context of the community of faith. In what ways is your parish the place where disciples who live as good stewards are grown?

Our First Christian Steward: The Blessed Virgin Mary

On August 15 we celebrate the Feast of the Assumption; the day we recall Our Blessed Mother being assumed into heaven and crowned queen. In the Gospel reading on this day we hear proclaimed once again the Canticle of Mary, recorded in the Gospel of Luke (1:46-55). It is the Virgin Mary's song of joy in response to her cousin Elizabeth's greeting (Luke 1:41-45), and summarizes Mary's deep faith and trust in God.

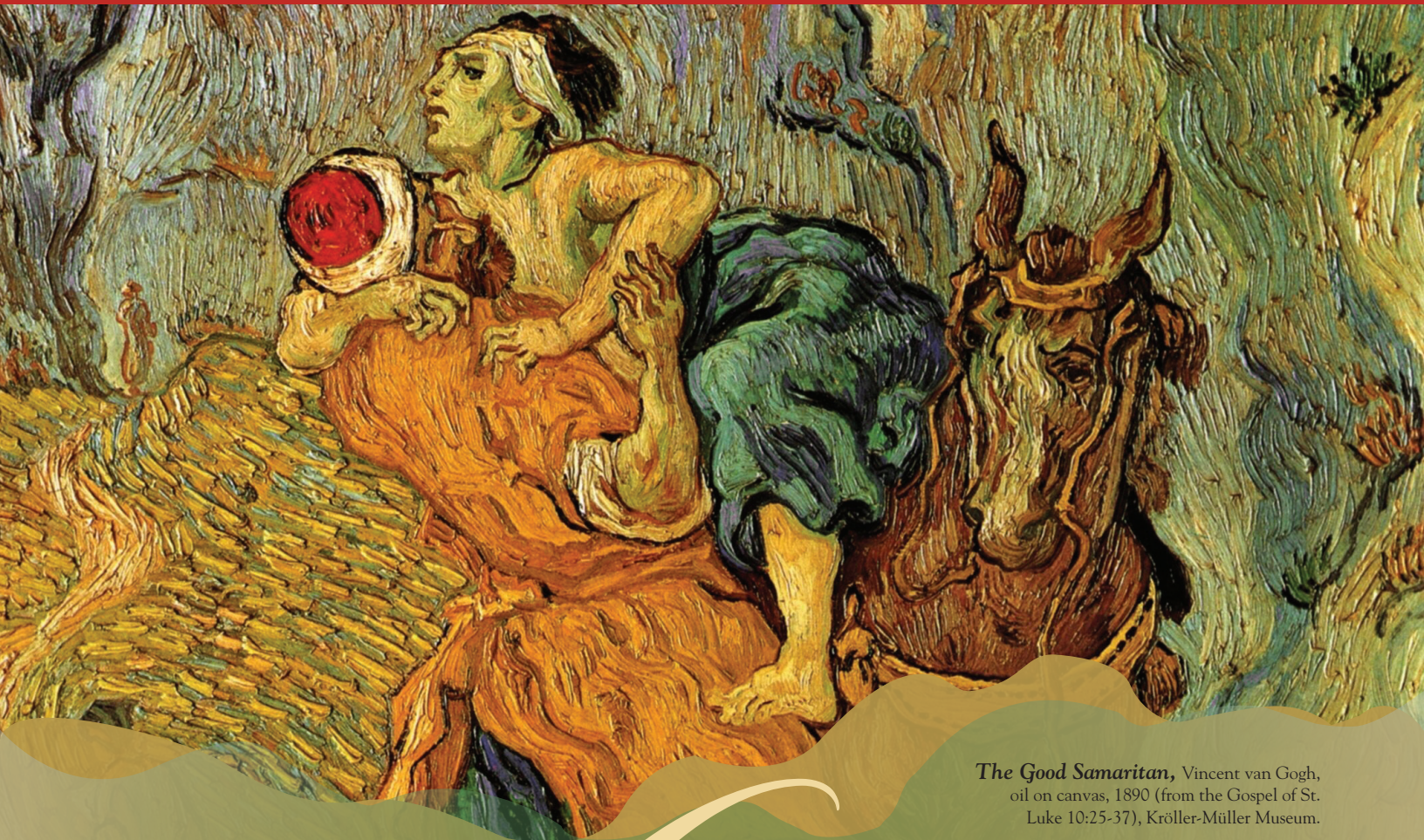
This joyous song is also known as the *Magnificat*, from the opening line of scripture's Latin translation which means "My soul magnifies the Lord" ("*Magnificat anima mea Dominum*"). The *Magnificat* is a beautiful stewardship prayer used by the Church every day since the fifth century. It is a hymn at Evening Prayer in the Liturgy of the Hours.



The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches us that the *Magnificat*:
... is the song both of the Mother of God and of the Church; the song of the Daughter of Zion and of the new People of God; the song of thanksgiving for the fullness of graces poured out in the economy of salvation and the song of the "poor" whose hope is met by the fulfillment... (#2619).

Among the many stewardship themes in this reading, the prayer helps us realize that God's stewardship plan turns the world's values upside down. God comes to the aid of the poor and lowly, to the detriment of the rich and powerful. And for those who entrust their lives to the Lord, they are filled with good things. As a young woman, humble and poor, Mary becomes an interpreter of God's plan of salvation, she reveals to us the fundamentals of good stewardship, and she becomes a prophetic witness to social justice for all future generations who "will call me blessed" (Luke 1:48). Mary was the first disciple, the first Christian steward of God's plan.

Take a few moments and pray this stewardship prayer. Consider its implications for your life. How do you magnify the Lord? How do you make God "bigger" in your day-to-day world? How do you bring God's compassion to the poor?



The Good Samaritan, Vincent van Gogh,
oil on canvas, 1890 (from the Gospel of St.
Luke 10:25-37), Kröller-Müller Museum.

2016 | STEWARDS OF GOD'S MERCY

October 2-5 | New Orleans, Louisiana

How are we inspired by the Year of Mercy to become better stewards and disciples of Jesus Christ?

Join the ICSC family in New Orleans and together we will discover and learn!

Who should attend?

Clergy, parish staff, lay parish leaders, diocesan stewardship and development staff, and anyone desiring a closer relationship with the Lord!

Join hundreds of Catholic stewards from around the world and discover how:

- The Year of Mercy leads to more effective evangelization
- Stewardship can transform your parish
- Digital communication encourages more parishioner involvement
- Pastors use stewardship to inspire youth and young adults
- Parish business managers can enhance their effectiveness

REGISTER TODAY!

For Registration and Conference Information call us at 800-352-3452 or check our website at catholicstewardship.com

Stewardship: Nurturing and Cultivating Our Gift of Faith

by Julie Kenny, ICSC Director of Member Benefits.



The need for ongoing formation and catechesis is not just for the young. It's vital for everyone, throughout our lives.

Saint John Paul II wrote "Life is entrusted to man as a treasure which must not be squandered, as a talent which must be used well" (*Evangelium Vitae*, 52).

Our late pontiff also wrote:

It is Jesus who stirs in you the desire to do something great with your lives, the will to follow an ideal, the refusal to allow yourselves to be ground down by mediocrity, the courage to commit yourselves humbly and patiently to improving yourselves and society, making the world more human and more fraternal (Prayer Vigil, World Youth Day, August 19, 2000).

Another year of learning begins soon. Teachers everywhere will assemble students, engaging and encouraging them to discover their talents, recognize and focus on their potential, and understand more about life, faith, and the world. Likewise, the New Evangelization calls each of us to commit ourselves to learning more about our faith.

The need for ongoing formation and catechesis is not just for the young. It's vital for everyone, throughout our lives. We respond to the call for a New Evangelization and gratefully receive the gift of our faith and cherish it. However, before we can share our faith with others in justice and love, we must tend to it, in a responsible and accountable manner.

What are some ways we could tend to our faith? Here are a few ideas from some of our ICSC members:

- Join, or lead, a parish Bible study group.
- Start a book club reading religious books about saints, liturgy and Catholic practices.
- Subscribe to or download an app for a daily devotional with reflection and commentary.
- Participate in a diocesan faith-formation course.
- Check a nearby seminary for courses available to laity.
- Read religious pamphlets and the diocesan newspaper or magazine.
- Visit a library and check out Catholic educational audiotapes or DVDs.
- Search for and read online the documents and summaries from the Second Vatican Council.
- Talk to your pastor, parish life director, or pastoral associate.
- Pray every day, often.

As regards to prayer, it would be a good idea to set aside time routinely for complete silence in order to listen for God's still, small voice, like Elijah waiting in the cave. He too was humbly and patiently waiting to improve himself and society. The Lord called Elijah with a whisper, sending him on a mission to Damascus (1 Kings 19:12-16).

We, too, are summoned to fulfill a role only we can play using the gift of faith entrusted to us. What is God pressing on your heart to do with your faith? How will you respond?



A STEWARDSHIP MOMENT

Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time Weekend of August 6/7, 2016

In today's Gospel reading, Jesus concludes his teaching about those who are "faithful and prudent stewards" with that classic stewardship teaching: "Much will be required of the person entrusted with much, and still more will be demanded of the person entrusted with more." Christian stewards recognize that God is the ultimate source of their gifts, talents, resources and aptitudes, and that God wants them to use these varied gifts in his service. This week might be a good time to reflect on our God-given gifts. Are we using those gifts to serve the Lord? If Christ came back to us unexpectedly tomorrow would we be able to give a full accounting of how we have exercised stewardship over these gifts?

Twentieth Sunday in Ordinary Time Weekend of August 13/14, 2016

In today's second reading, we hear the author of the letter to the Hebrews liken the daily life of the Christian steward to a race, a long-distance race perhaps, certainly not a sprint; requiring endurance and a single-minded focus on Jesus at the finish line. Good stewards are firmly committed to running the race, to live the Christian life to the fullest, to keep their eyes focused on Jesus. They don't grow weary. They don't lose heart. They know there is immense joy waiting for them at the finish line. Are you fully committed to living each day for Christ? Are you running the race, or are you simply jogging? Just walking? Sitting? Going backwards? Going nowhere? Some of us may want to reflect on what we can do to run the race with even more conviction. Others may want to reflect on how to simply enter the race and start running.

Twenty-first Sunday in Ordinary Time August 20/21, 2016

The Gospel reading today starts with a question: "Lord, will only a few people be saved?" Jesus offers only a simple reply: Strive to enter through the narrow gate. Many will try to enter and will not be able. Good stewards know there is only one, narrow gate. Not everything will fit. This narrow gate has no room for our accomplishments. No room for our money. No room for our possessions. No room for anything else but those who've been good stewards of the Gospel. We can't custom build our own gates either. There is only one, narrow gate that happens to be open for a time, but for how long? What is our plan of action to get through that gate?

Twenty-second Sunday in Ordinary Time August 27/28, 2016

In today's Gospel, Jesus challenges the social structure of the Pharisees and teaches his hosts and their guests some profound lessons in humility. Pharisees maintained deep social divisions between who they considered "holy" and "unholy," rich and poor, honored and despised. They didn't invite someone to a banquet or dinner who couldn't reciprocate. And the lowly, the poor, the crippled, the lame and the blind had no capacity to reciprocate.

Good stewards realize that if they embrace a humility that allows them to be generous to those who cannot repay them, they give evidence of having the kind of heart that will enjoy the Lord's intimate friendship. This week let's reflect on our attitude towards those who cannot repay our generosity. What is the extent of our hospitality toward others? Are we generous with those who cannot repay us?