

INTERNATIONAL CATHOLIC STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL

CATHOLIC STEWARDSHIP

e-Bulletin • December 2014

A STEWARDSHIP PRAYER for December

Lord,

As we journey through
this Advent season,
give us the wisdom to be
good stewards
of this time of grace, a time to be
more prayerful,
to listen more intently to Your Word;
a time to allow our faith to grow
and mature.

Show us how to give witness
to your Good News more fervently
among our families, friends
and those with whom we worship.

Help us be more aware
of those who are poor, lonely
or suffering;
and to serve them
as if we were serving You.
And fill our hearts with hope,
so that we may make straight
Your path
with confidence and zeal,
and prepare for the joy of
Your coming!

We pray this in Jesus' name.

Amen



Advent – A Season of Hope



Two Chaldean Catholic altar servers pray for peace at Mass in Amman, Jordan.

Advent is a time of waiting and expectation; a season of quiet anticipation and preparation. We are waiting for our Lord to come into the world as the baby Jesus, born of the Virgin Mary in Bethlehem. We are also preparing for His return, His second coming as the shepherd-king, to restore harmony and right relationship to all creation. Advent is a season yearning for God to come and set the world right with perfect justice, truth and peace. It is a season of hope.

Assuredly, during Advent we anticipate the Lord's coming with hope.

Advent is a time to emphasize preparation through prayer. While Lent emphasizes a spirit of repentance through prayer and fasting, Advent's prayers are prayers of humble devotion and commitment, prayers for deliverance, prayers of gladness and joyful expectation, prayers that await the light of Christ coming into the world.

We do not shrink from those Advent scripture readings that reveal a strong prophetic tone of accountability and judgment. Christ's disciples expect the Lord to hold them accountable for what has been entrusted to them just as a spouse, parent, teacher or supervisor holds us accountable. And just as the steward was found faithful in small matters by the master, we too are confident that we will be found faithful and will enter the joy of the Master. We have absolute trust in the Lord's countenance.

Assuredly, during Advent we anticipate the Lord's coming with hope. It is that hope, however faint at times, that keeps us from despair and the darkness of sin and its destructiveness. It is a hope that urges us to be kind, loving and compassionate toward one another. It is a hope that encourages our faith in a merciful God who continues to pour His grace upon us.

We don't know when Christ will come again to bring human history to its completion. But we celebrate with gladness the great promise of Advent and we rekindle that positive, joyful spirit within us because we know, as Zechariah prophesied, that the light of Christ will shine on all who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, and He will guide our feet into the way of peace.



STEWARDSHIP SAINT FOR DECEMBER | Saint Fabiola

Saint Fabiola is the patron saint of difficult marriages, divorced persons, abused spouses and victims of unfaithful spouses. She was a Christian, born in Rome in the mid-4th century to a powerful and wealthy family. She was married off at a young age to an abusive and adulterous husband.

Saint Jerome, the most famous biblical scholar in the history of the Church, knew her personally, as he was her teacher and spiritual director. He wrote: "So terrible were the faults imputed to her former husband that not even a prostitute or a common slave could have put up with them." Fabiola was able to secure a divorce from her husband under Roman civil law, and then she remarried, violating the ordinances of the Church.

While she was still young, Fabiola's ex-husband died, followed shortly thereafter by her second husband. Upon the latter's death, she appeared before the gates of Saint John Lateran Basilica, dressed in penitential garb and sought forgiveness for marrying outside the Church. Her public plea for reconciliation was said to have made a great impression upon the Christian population of Rome, and the

pope received her formally again into full communion with the Church.

Fabiola devoted her immense wealth to the needs of the poor, the sick and the homeless of Rome. She became a physician and practiced medicine, treating patients with illnesses other physicians would avoid. She also supported the needs of the Church and parish communities throughout Italy.

In 395 Fabiola made a pilgrimage to Bethlehem, an experience which deepened her faith even more dramatically. She lived in a hospice for a time with a religious community, spent hours in prayer, performed menial tasks and cultivated a profound devotion to the simplicity and poverty of the Nativity.

When she returned to Rome, Fabiola sold all her belongings and co-founded what is known to be the first hospital in the Western world. Saint Jerome later wrote that this innovative institution became famous from Britain to Parthia (modern day Iran). And she continued to work tirelessly to treat patients that no one else would treat.

Fabiola died on December 27, 399, of natural causes, and her death was marked by an enormous procession befitting a state funeral. Roman citizens turned out by the thousands to express their gratitude for the life and ministry she had embraced in the city of Rome.

Her feast day is December 27th.



Save the Date

and Save the Cost

SPECIAL DECEMBER OFFER
FOR ICSC MEMBERS

33% off

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2015 Annual Stewardship Conference

October 22-25 | Chicago, Illinois

visit catholicstewardship.com to register TODAY!



Advent: *Exercising Good Stewardship of Our Spiritual Lives*



When you say the word “Advent,” what immediately pops into mind? A feast of color, a traditional manger scene bathed in soft candlelight, glistening snowflakes falling on festive trees, a yearning for the One who is to come.

But sometimes, the season brings other images: crowded stores, treats that tempt us to too many calories, limitless to-do and to-buy lists. Yet in the back of our minds, we hear the call to conversion. Christ is calling us to be good stewards of all that we have and all that we are. How can we keep Advent in such a way that it is a time to focus on the fundamentals of stewardship; of spiritual growth and preparation for the coming of Jesus Christ? Here are a few suggestions, not meant to be another to-do list, but rather a way to remind ourselves daily of our call to prepare a way for the Lord in our lives.

Christ is calling us to be good stewards of all that we have and all that we are.



- Begin the season with a list to prioritize what you really want spiritually, and in relation to friends and family, from Advent. Discard all the “extras” and the fantasy of the perfect Hallmark Christmas. List clear goals that bring growth and peace and quality time.
- Take time to read the daily readings each day of Advent. The beautiful words of Isaiah are guaranteed to inspire, and the commitment will guarantee you a bit of quiet and reflective time.
- Do you send Christmas cards? Even if they are the standard signature only or newsletter variety, try to personalize one a day, writing a nice note to an elderly relative or a friend you haven’t seen in a long time.
- Go to the Sacrament of Reconciliation. This will encourage you to reflect on your life, your gifts and where you fail to utilize them for the good of others. It’s a beautiful preparation for the coming of Jesus and the beginning of a new year.
- Pray for patience. As you drive over icy streets or navigate through a crowded store, take time to pray for those around you and for those who struggle with much less. Become aware of people around you and lift them in prayer rather than see them as obstacles to your goals.
- In the midst of a season of abundance, do not forget the poor in your community.





This is the fourth in a series of Stewardship reflections by Leisa Anslinger for parish stewardship leaders. Leisa is an author and co-founder of Catholic Strengths and Engagement Community (CSEC).

Join Leisa and Stephanie Moore for their new Bridges Live series beginning December 9. Bridges Live is a monthly free live-virtual conversation, exploring ways parishes can build bridges to the heart of discipleship, leading people to live their lives as good stewards of all they are and have. Register for Bridges Live here:

<http://www.bridges2faith.net/this-month/>

Leadership: *Calling Others to Become Faithful Stewards*

“Leadership is about setting a direction. It’s about creating a vision, empowering and inspiring people to want to achieve the vision, and enabling them to do so with energy and speed through an effective strategy. In its most basic sense, leadership is about mobilizing a group of people to jump into a better future.” This description of the leader from Dr. John Kotter presents much upon which we may reflect as people who desire to lead others to live as good and faithful stewards. Let us explore this description with our leadership role in mind.

Setting a direction, creating a vision: In a certain sense, it is not we who create the vision. The vision is actually God’s, shown to us most fully in Jesus Christ. It is our responsibility and privilege to bring this vision to our parish communities, however, and this is an important aspect of what we do. We all know it is not enough to talk about stewardship once and consider the message sent! However, at times most of us feel as though we are repeating ourselves. Jesus probably felt that way, too, as he talked about love of God and love of neighbor over and over again!

Empowering and inspiring people to want to achieve the vision: A number of years ago, my then-pastor, Fr. Jan Schmidt, said something that has had lasting impact on me, which I now share with you. He said that he had come to realize that when we animate the ministry and service of others, it is not so much about “empowerment,” since our service is not about power. Rather, we entrust ministry to one another, recognizing that each of us has something unique and powerful to contribute.

Developing an effective strategy: Many parish leaders struggle to move from reaction mode to a pro-active stance through careful discernment and planning. A plan creates a framework that serves as a springboard for action and response, and is a vital aspect of good leadership.

Mobilizing people to jump into a better future: We know the impact of growing and living as disciples and stewards. This life of stewardship touches others and changes us. The steward’s way is the better way, for individuals, for our faith communities, and for the world!

SAVE THE DATE!



2015 ICSC STEWARDSHIP INSTITUTE

March 16-18, 2015

Franciscan Renewal Center, Scottsdale, Arizona

The Institute is perfect for 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 nine sessions which offer key spiritual and practical components of parish stewardship. There is ample time for networking with presenters and other attendees. Good for priests, deacons, parish staff, lay leaders and all interested in teaching stewardship!

For more information and to register, visit catholicstewardship.com



A STEWARDSHIP MOMENT

Second Sunday of Advent

Weekend of December 6/7, 2014

Today's second reading is about Christ's coming again, "The day of the Lord," Peter calls it, but that day isn't December 25th. It's that other day, that second-coming-day about which Peter is concerned. He waits with great hope and anticipation for God to remake the earth into a place of perfect justice and peace. And he sets some demanding goals for the Christian community as it awaits that final day of accounting and reconciliation: strive to be at peace, without spot or blemish. Christian stewards work for peace. As we await the coming of Christmas, what can we do to promote peace in our homes, workplaces, community and world?

Third Sunday of Advent

Weekend of December 13/14, 2014

In today's second reading Paul concludes his letter to the Christian community at Thessalonica by providing it with actions to take as its members wait for the return of the Lord. The first action is to rejoice always and give thanks in all circumstances. This sounds easy but it's not. The two words that make this task difficult are "always" and "all". This means giving thanks and rejoicing even when our circumstances are not always moments of joy and thanksgiving, or when we are confronted with a broken world. Prayerful stewards rejoice and give thanks in all circumstances because they are people of hope. A good reflection this week would be how the season of Advent can give you reason to hope.

Fourth Sunday of Advent

Weekend of December 20/21, 2014

In today's Gospel reading we hear proclaimed the story of the Annunciation, when the angel of the Lord announced to Mary that she would give birth to Christ through the intercession of

the Holy Spirit. Mary allowed God's messenger to speak to her. She was attentive, not afraid to enter into a dialogue, then unconditionally obedient. Mary's acceptance of this mystery is a stewardship model for us. Good stewards remain open to the incursions of divine life into the normal course of their daily lives. How open are we to the promptings of the Holy Spirit in our own lives? What might we do this last week of Advent to be more attentive to the Lord?

The Nativity of the Lord (Christmas Day)

Thursday, December 25, 2014

In today's Christmas Mass at dawn we hear from the Gospel reading that God has entered quietly into the world. Not into the great city of Jerusalem, but into a small village about five miles south. Not into a noble family, but to an outcast couple keeping the newborn in a manger. Not announced by royal edicts, but to common shepherds, the first human heralds of Christ's birth. As Christian stewards we simply allow Christ to live in us no matter what our circumstances happen to be. We allow Christ to share his love with us and reflect that love out to others. We now are the heralds of Christ's Incarnation. What an unimaginable gift from a generous Lord. Good stewards rejoice in this gift and give glory to God.

Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph

Weekend of December 27/28, 2014

When Jesus is presented in the Temple, our Blessed Mother formally offers him to God's service without reservation. It is a service that Simeon prophetically foretells: a service to God that will turn the old laws and cultural norms upside down. Are we destined to hold on to old habits and customs tightly, or like Jesus, are we willing to serve the Lord and proclaim the Gospel in new and creative ways?

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.

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