



INTERNATIONAL CATHOLIC STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL  
**CATHOLIC STEWARDSHIP**

January 2016 • e-Bulletin

**A STEWARDSHIP PRAYER**  
*for the New Year*

Gracious and Loving God,

The old year has passed and  
a new year begun.

We thank you for Your active  
presence in our busy lives,  
for the opportunities given,  
and for blessings received.

As we embrace a new year,  
breathe freely through us  
and renew our spirits  
with fresh resolve and purpose.

Give us the grace to be good stewards  
of all that You have entrusted to us  
and to serve You with  
generous, compassionate  
and loving hearts.

Bless our days ahead.  
Give us the courage to be faithful.  
And show us how to  
proclaim the Good News  
of Your Son, Jesus Christ  
who lives and reigns with You  
and the Holy Spirit, one God  
forever and ever.

Amen.

## Stewardship in the New Year: Making Commitments to the Lord

Stewardship is a commitment of mind and heart to the Lord; a way of life that needs constant renewal and transformation. This time of year has always been one of looking forward to a new year, reflecting on the changes we need to make in our lives and resolving to follow through on those changes. Perhaps those who seek to make resolutions to be better stewards might find inspiration in one or more of the following examples:

**Stewardship of Prayer:** Resolve to strengthen your relationship with the Lord through prayer. Notice how often you pray and what hinders you from praying. If you are a beginner, commit to short, daily prayer times.



**Stewardship of Family:** Resolve to set aside more time to stay connected with your family. Eat dinner together, schedule regular dates with your spouse, plan family outings, and go to Mass together. Practice patience and forgiveness.

**Stewardship of Health:** Resolve to get those medical and dental checkups. Adopt healthier eating habits. Add exercise and other physical activity to your daily routine.

**Stewardship of Possessions:** Resolve to possess a little more “lightly” this year. Consider ways you can reduce the amount of all that stuff you own. Distinguish between those items that are necessary and those that are considered luxurious and unnecessary.

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**Stewardship of the Parish Family:** Resolve to serve your faith community in some way this year such as at liturgy, in the parish's outreach or education and formation efforts. Is it time to enhance your generosity to the parish?

**Stewardship of Money:** Resolve to render sacred your annual budget. Reprioritize your financial goals to ensure that the Lord comes first in your spending. Take positive steps to improve your financial health.



**Stewardship of Work:** Resolve to be faithful to your daily, work-related tasks and offer them up to the Lord. Cultivate your skills. Deepen your knowledge. Be mindful of how you are building the Kingdom of God.

**Stewardship of Mind:** Resolve to keep your mind active. Commit to being more informed on the issues of the day. Read your Bible. In this presidential election year in the United States, become even more familiar with Catholic social teaching.

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**Stewardship of Neighbor:** Resolve to be a person of hospitality and mercy. Make time and space for others who enter your life. Be more aware of those times when a neighbor, co-worker, fellow parishioner or stranger, needs a moment of kindness, a little attention or an affirming gesture on your part.

**Stewardship of the Poor:** Resolve to live with more compassion and in solidarity with those less fortunate. Remember the poor in prayer, and commit to helping relieve in some way the plight of those who are impoverished or marginalized.

# Save the Date

*and Save the Cost!*

## 2016 Annual Conference

October 2-5, 2016

MEMBERS ONLY  
Holiday Special

Conference  
Registration Rate

# \$399\*

*\*To take advantage of this special offer, register before January 31, 2016*

## CONTACT US

Call (800) 352-3452

or email

[ICSC@catholicstewardship.org](mailto:ICSC@catholicstewardship.org)

## Saint Angela Merici

Angela Merici was born in a small town in the Republic of Venice around 1470. She was orphaned when she was ten years old and moved in with relatives in the city of Brescia, in northern Italy.

When Angela Merici returned to her hometown, she began to devote her life to the education of impoverished young women. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, education for women was reserved for the wealthy, and for nuns, who were the best educated.

Angela loved working with children, and she believed that education and Christian formation were especially needed for young girls. She devoted her time to teaching girls in her home, which she had converted into a school.

Angela brought together a group of unmarried women who went out into the streets to gather up the girls they saw to teach them and offer religious instruction in their homes. These women had little money, but were bound together by their dedication to education and commitment to serving Jesus Christ. She would remind her group that they had a greater need to serve the poor than the poor had of their service. She embraced a prayerful and simple lifestyle.

Angela's group was so successful that Angela was asked to bring her innovative approach to educating young women to other cities. Her ministry impressed many, and was brought to the attention of Pope Clement VII. In 1535, Angela Merici chose twelve young women and formally started the Company of Saint Ursula in a small house in Brescia. Although it was never a recognized religious order in her lifetime, Angela's Company of Saint Ursula, or the Ursuline nuns, was the first group of women religious to work outside of a cloister and the first teaching order of women.

Among some of the last pieces of advice she gave her fellow sisters was a stewardship message: that they should do in life what they would have wanted to do in death. She died on 27 January 1540 at seventy years of age. Her feast day is January 27.



In 1535, Angela Merici chose twelve young women and formally started the Company of Saint Ursula in a small house in Brescia.



## What is this Jubilee Year of Mercy?

If there's one word we have come to identify with Pope Francis, it's the word "mercy." It's a compelling, consoling, generous word. We have seen the Holy Father applying this word as he washes the feet of prisoners and embraces the disfigured. Last month Pope Francis opened the Jubilee Year of Mercy.

What's a jubilee year, and how does it impact those of us in the pews in Peoria or San Diego, Perth or Vancouver? Jubilee years have been around since 1300, and usually occur every 25 to 50 years. Like all things Catholic, they're steeped in history. There's even a Holy Door at the Basilica of St. Peter's which is opened by the pontiff to begin the jubilee year. But we know that with Pope Francis, the jubilee will take on meaning far beyond mere historical formalities. Hopefully, it will deeply affect our own spiritual lives.

In proclaiming the Jubilee Year of Mercy, the Holy Father cited the Gospel of Saint Matthew on the subject of forgiveness. When Peter asks Jesus if he must forgive someone as much as seven times, Jesus replied that we are to forgive not seven times, but instead, seventy-seven times (18:21-22). "This is a profound teaching,"

said Pope Francis. "Jesus affirms that mercy is not only an action of the Father, it becomes a criterion for ascertaining who his true children are."

The year of mercy began on the feast of the Immaculate Conception, which coincides with the 50th anniversary of the conclusion of the Second Vatican Council, an event about which Pope Francis said, "The walls which too long had made the Church a kind of fortress were torn down." Francis clearly wants walls between people to come down; he wants doors other than ceremonial ones opened.



"Jesus affirms that mercy is not only an action of the Father, it becomes a criterion for ascertaining who his true children are."

What can we do to make this year special? We can start by extending mercy to ourselves, a sometimes difficult task. Perhaps we've been neglecting the Sacrament of Reconciliation. This is the perfect time to return. Maybe there is a family rift or torn relationship that needs healing. Pope Francis especially beckons us towards those who live on the margins of society: We must open our hearts "to those living on the outermost fringes of society, fringes modern society itself creates." We must challenge ourselves to reach out beyond our comfort zone. The Pope challenges us. He proclaims that mercy is the central function of the Church and the key aspect of Jesus' ministry and work.

## Helping Your Parish Enhance Its Life of Stewardship in the New Year

by Leisa Anslinger



Turning the page to a new year offers us the opportunity to review time that has passed and to look forward to newness of life and ministry in the year to come. As individuals, we recognize our many blessings, give thanks for God's merciful love, and re-commit ourselves to living as disciples and stewards, with resolutions to solidify our commitment to Christ and one another. In our parishes,

we can do the same: look back on the year that has just passed while looking toward the one to come. While the reflection itself may lead to enhanced pastoral life, a more focused examination of past and current practice will be great fruit. I suggest we do so by using the phrase Curt Liesveld coined in directing people's reflection of and building upon their God-given talents: name it, claim it, aim it!

**Name it:** In what ways has your parish helped people to understand the meaning and spiritual underpinnings of stewardship as a way of life? What annual rhythm of stewardship education, lay witnesses, homily connections, and invitation to commitment has been established? How do you help people recognize stewardship as a disciple's response, by pointing their attention to Christ's way of self-giving love?

**Claim it:** List the practices you already have in place. Where is there room for growth? Are there aspects of your stewardship formation that have become stale or have never quite taken hold? What might you learn from effective practices, yours or someone else's, in order to address these areas of potential growth?



**Aim it:** Gather your parish advisory group (committee, commission, task group) to reflect and discuss. Invite members to tell their stories of stewardship insights and challenges in living as a disciple and steward. Together, give thanks to God for what has been, and ask for guidance, insight, blessing and strength as you discern future possibilities; celebrate the year that has been; acknowledge the gaps or areas in need of attention; plan new or enhanced strategies for calling people to grow as good stewards in the year that is just beginning. Your parish will grow in response to God's grace and blessing, and you and all with whom you minister will grow as servant leaders, stewards of the mysteries of God.



## A STEWARDSHIP MOMENT

### **The Epiphany of the Lord January 2/3, 2016**

Today we hear Saint Paul proclaim that he exercises stewardship of “God’s grace” for the benefit of the Christian community. Earlier in this letter to the Ephesians, he prayed they would come to realize the actual value of “these riches” of God’s grace they inherited. This letter was written to remind, encourage, and spiritually motivate this Eucharistic community to appreciate just how immeasurably wealthy they had become to inherit a life in Christ. What value do we place on our life in Christ? If someone asked us to put a price on this life in today’s currency, how would we respond? \$100 million? \$100 billion? Priceless? Do we live as though our life in Christ is priceless?

### **Feast of the Baptism of the Lord January 9/10, 2016**

In today’s reading from the Gospel of Luke we hear the proclamation of the baptism of Jesus with “all the people.” Indeed, “heaven was opened,” and the Father announced his special favor. Whenever we partake of the body and blood of Christ, heed his call in our daily lives, share his Good News, become instruments of his transforming justice and peace, heaven is opened to us, and through the Holy Spirit, the Lord announces his special favor on us as well. A good stewardship reflection this week might be this: How, or in what ways, have we personally experienced God’s special favor in our lives?

### **Second Sunday in Ordinary Time January 16/17, 2016**

In today’s second reading, Saint Paul makes a list of gifts dispensed to members of the Christian community by the Holy Spirit. Each gift bestowed has a specific purpose for the person for whom it is intended: wisdom, knowledge, faith,

healing, mighty deeds, prophecy, discernment, tongues, and interpretation. Good stewards know these gifts are not meant to be kept hidden by the recipient but to be shared with the community and beyond. As we begin a new year, let us reflect on the gift the Holy Spirit has given to each of us. Do we recognize this gift? How was it intended that we use this gift? Are we being good stewards of this gift?

### **Third Sunday in Ordinary Time January 23/24, 2016**

Today’s reading from the Gospel of Luke offers us the first words of Jesus as he begins his public ministry. The words reflect his understanding of his Spirit-anointed mission. His words are his “Mission Statement.” Good stewards rejoice in being followers of Jesus. They realize that Jesus’ commission is their commission as well. They embrace it and adopt it as their own. We, too, have “glad tidings” to bring to a suffering world. This year, how will we fulfill Christ’s commission in the world in which he has placed us, using the gifts he has entrusted to us?

### **Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time January 30/31, 2016**

In today’s second reading we find one of the most beautiful and familiar passages in the Bible; a recitation of fifteen characteristics of Christian love typically read at weddings and anniversary celebrations. Of course, this was not what Saint Paul had in mind when he was chastising the Christian community at Corinth for its lack of love. He admonished the members of the community to exercise better stewardship of Christian love. The practice of patience, humility, joy, truth, peace, affirmation, and hope are ways good stewards put love into action. Might there be one or two of these attributes we can work on in order to grow in our love for God and others?

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We encourage you to check out the ICSC Forum at [www.catholicstewardship.org](http://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.