

INTERNATIONAL CATHOLIC STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL CATHOLIC STEWARDSHIP

November 2015 • e-Bulletin

A STEWARDSHIP PRAYER *for November*

We stand before you, Holy Spirit,
conscious of our sinfulness,
but aware that we gather in your name.

Come to us, remain with us,
and enlighten our hearts.

Give us light and strength
to know your will,
to make it our own,
and to live it in our lives.

Guide us by your wisdom,
support us by your power,
for you are God, sharing the glory of Father and Son.

You desire justice for all;
enable us to uphold the rights of others;
do not allow us to be misled by ignorance
or corrupted by fear or favor.

Unite us to yourself in the bond of love
and keep us faithful to all that is true.

As we gather in your name, may we temper
justice with love,
so that all our words and deeds
may be pleasing to you, and earn the reward
promised to good and faithful stewards.

We ask this of You who live and reign with the
Father and the Son, one God, forever and ever.

Amen.

*Adapted from a Prayer of the Second Vatican Council and contributed by
Barbara Dowding, Archdiocese of Vancouver, Canada*



November: A Month to Focus on Gratitude

November brings raking leaves, mid-term exams, plenty of football, and the beginning of our Christmas plans. But for those in the U.S., November's highlight is that great national holiday, Thanksgiving. It's wonderful to have a day to call attention to the need for gratitude, but this holiday also reminds

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the Christian steward that every day should include thanksgiving because gratitude is essential to discipleship. Feeling a deep appreciation for the giftedness of our lives can't be confined to one holiday when we spend a few minutes around a laden table remembering our many blessings. Neither can gratitude become a rote response.

Gratitude is good for our spiritual lives in so many ways. It reminds us of our neediness before the Lord, without whom we have nothing. The mere daily act of focusing on our blessings makes us more mindful, more present to God's mystery and gifts, and more aware of the needs of others around us. Gratitude is best achieved by daily, focused attention. So perhaps a good exercise for November would be to write down,

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each day, some things for which we are truly grateful. Your list will no doubt include people – a teacher who inspired you, a coach who believed in you, an aunt who made you feel special, an employer who mentored you. Your notes might include simple things – the aroma of freshly ground coffee, a lunch invitation that brightened your day, a phone call that brought a smile. Focus on things you sometimes take for granted – the warm home in which you live, the sunshine that peeked through a cloudy day, the bright redness of a leaf on the lawn, the faithful presence of your spouse.

And during this month of thanks, remember to give thanks to the risen Lord:

Let the peace of Christ control your hearts, the peace into which you were also called in one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, as in all wisdom you teach and admonish one another, singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or in deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him (Colossians 3:15-17).

Good Stewardship Includes Saying “Thank You!”

Of all of our national holidays, my favorite is Thanksgiving. For the week of the holiday, it feels as though every person is focused on gratitude. From giving thanks for our family and friends, our parish communities, and beyond, for just a moment, it seems all is about good stewardship. We recognize the gifts which are entrusted to us, and we call to our minds and hearts the bounty that surrounds us, even in moments of job scarcity, economic insecurity, or loss of a loved one or of a relationship. Thanksgiving invites us to “say aloud” the ways in which we are blessed, and to give thanks for them.

As stewardship leaders, this month may be one in which to acknowledge with appreciation all that is accomplished through the stewardship of parishioners. One of the elements of building more engaged communities of disciples and stewards is recognizing the ways in which parishioners contribute to the parish. It isn't so much about the recognition (we do not serve in order to be recognized), but about acknowledging that every sharing of time, every giving of talent and strength, every gift of financial or material resource, makes a difference. And surely if the gift is of value, we will acknowledge the giver and thank him or her.

How might we give thanks this month for the many blessings in our parish and local communities that result from the good stewardship of parishioners? Here are a few ideas:

Hold a gratitude reception for all who serve in any capacity in the parish. It can be a potluck — perhaps invite people to share an appetizer or dessert and the recipe for their contribution to the feast. Send a personalized thank you note from the pastor, pastoral council, staff, or ministry coordinators. Acknowledge the many ways in which your parish would not be the same without the selfless sharing of time, talent and treasure by inviting all who serve to stand and be recognized at the end of Mass. Invite someone who has received service from parishioners to share a brief witness before or at the end of Mass, or ask a person of ministry to witness to the impact of parish stewardship on recipients of service or sharing.

Through such practices, we who lead others to embrace stewardship as a way of life may help people to grow as good stewards by our “thank you!”



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The Great American Smokeout: A Steward's Challenge

The Venerable Matt Talbot, an Irish ascetic whose victory over alcoholism inspires people to pray to him about their alcohol addiction, once said that giving up tobacco was harder for him than quitting drinking. This won't come as a surprise to the millions of people who still smoke. Smoking is a tough addiction. And we all know that few smokers are happy with this habit, which is the leading preventable cause of disease and premature death in the U.S. Today, most people smoke in privacy, ashamed of their cravings but feeling helpless. As Christian stewards, we know we must be good stewards of our health, but smoking presents

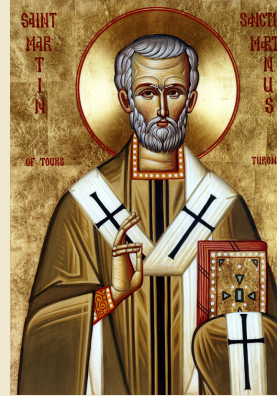


As Christian stewards, we know we must be good stewards of our health, but smoking presents a great challenge.

a great challenge. The annual American Smokeout is Thursday, November 19. It offers hope and community to inspire quitting. It's an opportunity to join with as many as one-third of the 42 million smokers in the U.S. who take this day off from smoking as it focuses attention on smoking's dangers, including cardiovascular disease and cancer. The Smokeout also helps us acknowledge the social ills of smoking – no matter how private your smoking, you can't hide the smell and are a nuisance if not a danger to those with smoke allergies or asthma, and a danger to others through second and even third hand smoke. That's not to mention the money that goes up in smoke – literally—every day. Every smoker knows there are a hundred good reasons to quit and not one good reason to smoke. The American Cancer Society (ACS) wants to help. Its website provides information and strategies for quitting, and shows nonsmoking friends and family members how to be supportive. Take heart – most people quit many times before achieving success. Plan for November 19, and as a Christian steward, consider asking the Venerable Matt Talbot for help. He understands addiction.

STEWARDSHIP SAINT *for November*

St. Martin of Tours



St. Martin of Tours was born around 316 in a territory that is now part of Hungary. His father, an officer in the Roman army, conscripted Martin into military service at the age of fifteen.

While Martin was still a soldier, there occurred the famous incident memorialized by many artists. One day while at the gates of the city of Amiens he saw a scantily clad beggar. Martin cut his own military cloak in half and shared it with the beggar. That night Martin dreamed that Jesus was wearing that same half-cloak he had given away. Martin had for some time considered becoming a Christian. He was promptly baptized and made the decision to dedicate his life to Christ.

Martin became a follower of St. Hilary of Poitiers (January 13) who gave him land where the first monastery in Gaul (present-day France) was established. It is the first monastery known to be established north of the Alps. Christianity was largely confined to urban areas, and Martin saw monasteries as rural spiritual centers from which evangelization in the countryside could take place. He was zealous in bringing people to Christ.

In 371, a time when bishops were chosen by the faithful, Martin was tricked into coming to Tours to be elected bishop. He was well-known for his evangelizing, personal holiness, healing ministry and compassion toward the poor. It was also well-known that Martin would never agree to be a bishop. A man from the city came to Martin and begged him to visit his sick wife. When the kindhearted Martin got to Tours crowds of people came out of hiding and surrounded him. Unable to escape, he was swept into the city and, overwhelmed by the will of the crowds, became their bishop.

Martin maintained his lifestyle as a monk and exercised stewardship of the diocese on foot, horseback and by boat. His profound personal witness met with great success in an area that was largely pagan. Martin died on November 8, 397, and his feast is November 11, the day he was buried in Tours. He is a patron saint of France.



In the Footsteps of Pope Francis

by Mary Ann Otto, Stewardship Director, Diocese of Green Bay, WI



It is difficult to believe that it has already been over a month since Pope Francis' visit to the United States and a couple of weeks since the 53rd annual conference of the International Catholic Stewardship Council (ICSC) whose theme was, In the Footsteps of Pope Francis. Like many, I was impacted by actions and comments of the Holy Father. There is no doubt in my mind that the Holy Spirit was holding him up as

he invested so much of his time and energy in us. Many of us want to walk in his footsteps because he walks with Jesus.

To me one of the most memorable statements was one given to Congress. Pope Francis said: *When you dream dreams for your own children, dream them for other children as well.* What an incredible request so lovingly and authentically spoken. Through the secular ear, we heard "do what is right for all the people in your care." From the faith perspective, we heard love at a level that transcends something that is self-centered and finite.

As ministerial leaders you and I have the opportunity to understand, live and share the Gospel in such a way that goes beyond setting goals and checking things off our bucket list.

When you consider it through the lense of stewardship, you can hear Jesus saying "stay close to me, be grateful for your abundance, nurture your gifts and dream big, but remember they are not just for you. Share your abundance and help me to build the joy that is my kingdom."

I believe this is one of the foundational blessings of living a stewardship way of life. I believe that this is why we take time each year to come together for the annual ICSC Conference. As ministerial leaders you and I have the opportunity to understand, live and share the Gospel in such a way that goes beyond setting goals and checking things off our bucket list. When people of faith dream dreams, we dream with God and the fruit of the dreaming becomes so much more than we could have ever imagined.

Thank you to everyone who came to the International Catholic Stewardship Conference in Chicago from near and far. Your presence there affirmed Pope Francis' message and example. Consider joining us next year in New Orleans. By becoming good stewards, everyone's dreams can come true including our own for a life of true joy.



Above: Images from October's 53rd annual conference of the International Catholic Stewardship Council



**For the weekend of October 31 and November 1, 2015
All Saints Day**

Listening to Jesus preach the Beatitudes is strong indeed for All Saints Day. The present state of affairs for believers may include poverty, broken spirit, persecution and mourning. Blessed are they, Jesus says, but clearly not because of their circumstances.

Their blessing lies in being a part of the kingdom of God that exists both in the present and in the future. The verbs “are” and “will” indicate that God is at work in the present world, bringing the kingdom to completion. Those within the present kingdom of God who “are” in difficult circumstances “will be” blessed when God brings about the new creation.

Their hope, however, is not merely a future one. It occurs in the present because such people are found living according to the values of God’s kingdom. These are good stewards of their faith who are humble and poor in spirit, merciful, peacemakers, pure in heart, and who endure mockery or harm for Jesus’ sake. The kingdom of heaven is for all good stewards not only in the future, but in the here and now.

**For the weekend of November 7/8, 2015
Thirty-second Sunday in Ordinary Time**

Jesus points out to his disciples the poor widow who has just dropped two simple copper coins into the temple treasury. He then delivers a teaching on stewardship. Despite her poverty, the poor widow in today’s Gospel does not refuse God her generosity. Out of her desperately impoverished life she contributes to an earthly institution to give God glory and praise. It is not the monetary value of the gift that was important, but the love, trust and gratitude expressed through the gift. The Gospel asks us similarly compelling stewardship questions: What do we value? In what or whom do we place our trust? How do our own contributions to our community of faith reflect our generosity toward God?

**For the weekend of November 14/15, 2015
Thirty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time**

How would you spend your day if you knew it was the last day you would spend on earth? Undoubtedly, it would not be a normal day. The point of today’s Gospel reading is that the end-time is always imminent. The good steward remains prayerfully alert, ready to give an accounting; and living each day in the awareness of the coming judgment and salvation. How do we exercise stewardship over our daily lives? Are we prepared to give an accounting? How will we allow Christ to work in and through us to prepare for the reconciliation of the heavens and the earth?

**For the weekend of November 21/22, 2015
Solemnity of Christ the King**

The exchange between Jesus and Pilate in today’s Gospel is, arguably, the most important exchange in all of literature. Pilate asks Jesus: “What have you done?” Jesus replies that he testifies to the truth. In the second reading we are reminded of the essence of that truth: Christ, ruler of all, loves us, liberates us from the bonds of sin, makes us a new kingdom. As we approach the Advent season, this week would be a good time to reflect on the question: What have we done in our daily lives, in our actions, words, private prayer, and in our interaction with others, to testify that Jesus is Lord?

First Sunday of Advent November 28/29, 2015

On this first Sunday of Advent, Jesus warns his disciples about the end-time. He urges them to pray, be vigilant, spiritually awake, avoid self-indulgence, spiritual malaise, and a pre-occupation with anxiety. Jesus advises against a lifestyle of earthly pleasures and worry. These will not matter when the Lord asks for an account of our stewardship. Stewards realize their lives are not just about the here and now. They know themselves to be reflections of God’s active presence in the world and witnesses of the Lord’s promises. As we begin this season of hope, let us reflect on the practical effect of having every waking moment in our lives dedicated to the Lord.

**INTERNATIONAL CATHOLIC
STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL**

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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.