



STEWARDSHIP THOUGHTS FOR PARISH BULLETINS

Cycle B (Mark) | 2011-2012

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First Sunday in Advent

The Advent themes of hope, vigilance, and repentance are present in today's First Reading and Gospel. Isaiah hopes that his people will repent their sinful ways and turn back to God. In St. Mark's Gospel, Jesus warns us to be watchful, and to be ready, for we do not know when He will return. As we begin the Advent season, St. Paul reminds us that fellowship with Jesus Christ strengthens us. May we, as faithful stewards, put our hope in the Lord and repent of our sins. Advent is an excellent time to participate in the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Second Sunday of Advent

The prophet Isaiah proclaims, *A voice cries out: In the desert prepare the way of the Lord!* In his Gospel, St. Mark uses these words in reference to St. John the Baptist, who proclaimed a baptism of repentance of sins in preparation of One mightier than he to come. St. Peter also teaches us to be prepared to meet the Lord. During this Advent season, are we being good stewards by making time to prepare our hearts, minds, and souls to reconcile with God at Christmas?

Third Sunday of Advent

Rejoicing in the Lord ties together the Scripture passages found in today's readings. In St. John's Gospel, St. John the Baptist proclaims the Light (Christ), and that through Him all people may believe. St. Paul encourages us to *rejoice always, never cease praying, render constant thanks; such is God's will for you in Christ Jesus*. Do we, as Christian stewards baptized in Christ, respond in gratitude to this tremendous gift — our life in Christ Jesus?

Fourth Sunday of Advent

God's promise that the line of David will be everlasting links the Scripture passages from Samuel and St. Luke's Gospel. Nathan's prophecy to David is fulfilled when our Blessed Mother Mary consents to God's great plan, proclaimed by the angel Gabriel, that by the Holy Spirit, the Messiah would be conceived in her womb and born of the house of David. Mary fully embraced God's call and sacrificed everything to do His will. Do we, as Christian stewards, strive to follow Mary's example of true discipleship?

Christmas

Isaiah, in the ancient prophecy, refers to the Christ-child as Wonder-Counselor, God-Hero, Father-Forever, and Prince of Peace. St. Paul and the Gospel passages teach us that the Child is truly Emmanuel — God is with us. He is the *Light of the World* Who pierces the darkness and gives us hope. On this Christmas day, do we, as faithful stewards, stand in awe of His glory and gratefully praise God for this gift of His Son — our path to eternal salvation?



Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God

In St. Luke's Gospel, shepherds find Mary, Joseph, and the infant Jesus in a stable in Bethlehem. The shepherds understand what they have been told — that Mary, the Mother of God, has given birth to Jesus, the Word made flesh. Mary becomes the first disciple of Christ, along with Joseph. St. Paul teaches that through Jesus, the Son of God, born of Mary, we become children of God. Stewardship begins with accepting discipleship in the Lord. Do we follow Mary's example of fully trusting in God's call and doing His will in our lives?

The Epiphany of the Lord

St. Matthew's Gospel narrates the Magi's visit and adoration of the newborn King. The three offer gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh — symbolizing royalty, divinity, and His suffering to come — to the Christ-child. The passages from Isaiah and St. Paul further describe how the Good News is to be proclaimed to all people. Do we, as Christian stewards, follow the Magi's example of offering praise and glory to God and gratefully honoring Him by returning a generous portion of His many gifts to build the Kingdom of God?

Second Sunday in Ordinary Time

Today's passages from Samuel and St. John's Gospel describe answering God's call — His will in our lives. St. Paul teaches that we are all part of the Body of Christ. God gives each of us unique gifts with which to serve Him in carrying out His divine plan. Through conversion of heart and mind, good stewards discern their vocational call from the Lord. That call may be to religious life, marriage, or single life. Are we open to the Lord's call in our lives, like Eli, Samuel, John, Peter, and Andrew were?

Third Sunday in Ordinary Time

In today's readings, God, through Jonah's preaching, causes the people of Nineveh to answer His call, turn away from evil, and repent. In St. Mark's Gospel, Jesus calls Simon-Peter, Andrew, James, and John to be His disciples. They respond immediately, leaving their fishing businesses and families — basically, sacrificing everything — to follow the Lord. Their actions were considered radical in Jesus' day, and would also be by today's standards. As disciples striving to embrace stewardship as a way of life, are we, too, willing to sacrifice all to further His Kingdom?

Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time

In today's Old Testament passage, Moses speaks of another prophet God will raise from among the Israelites. In St. Mark's Gospel, that prophecy is fulfilled in Christ Jesus, Who speaks, heals, and casts out evil spirits with authority in the synagogue at Capernaum. As faithful stewards, we not only acknowledge Christ as the Great Prophet, but also support the popes and others who speak out against the moral relativism and injustices present in our time.



Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time

The Scripture passages today are linked by the subjects of suffering and healing, faith, preaching the Good News, and prayer. Job experiences tremendous suffering but keeps his faith in God. In St. Mark's Gospel, at the disciples' urging, Jesus heals Simon-Peter's mother-in-law. Jesus teaches us, His disciples, the importance of prayer and knowing through faith that He is always present to strengthen us and to heal us from our afflictions.

Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time

In today's passage from Leviticus, the Lord instructs Moses and Aaron on how to handle leprosy cases. In St. Mark's Gospel, Jesus shows great compassion to a leper's request for healing and cures the man, who then publicly proclaims the wonder of his healing. St. Paul encourages us to imitate Christ in all things; do we show compassion and love to the outcasts of our day?

Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time

Through the prophet Isaiah, God promised the Israelites *something new*: freedom from sin and exile. St. Paul reminds us that God's promises are fulfilled in Jesus. This theme of "newness" continues in St. Mark's Gospel, when Jesus cures the paralytic — astonishing the people of His time and confirming His power to forgive sins. They had never seen anything like this before. As followers of Christ today, we seek "newness" through the renewal of our lives by discerning God's will. When we seek to do the Lord's work, we are moved to perform acts of charity and mercy that we may not have thought possible.

First Sunday of Lent

Baptism and repentance are the themes of today's readings. In Baptism, we are saved and called to be Christ's disciples. Stewardship is how we act out this call to discipleship. At Easter, we strengthen our discipleship by renewing our baptismal promises, including committing to reject the glamour of evil in our lives. Today's Gospel inspires Christian stewards when Jesus, in the desert, repeatedly stands firm against the devil's temptations. May we also seek the Lord's guidance and strength during times of weakness so we, too, can avoid temptation that leads to sin.

Second Sunday of Lent

A common theme links today's First and Second Readings: sacrifice. Abraham is willing to sacrifice his only son, Isaac. To encourage the Christian community in Rome, St. Paul reminds them that God sacrificed His only Son for the good of all. In St. Mark's Gospel account of the Transfiguration, God clearly identifies Jesus as His Son, and Jesus alludes to His death and Resurrection. Our own sacrifice of the "first fruits" of our time, talent, and treasure to God through the Church and greater community are solid acts of Christian stewardship, and bring great peace and joy to those who embrace stewardship as a way of life.



Third Sunday of Lent

(Use Cycle A readings and corresponding Cycle A Stewardship Thought if your parish has RCIA catechumens and candidates.)

The reading from the Book of Exodus recites the Ten Commandments, the guidelines for us to follow on the path to holiness. The readings from St. Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians and St. John's Gospel both describe the people's demand for signs or miracles in order to attain faith in Christ. But faith based on signs and miracles did not last. Only after the Resurrection did the disciples believe what Jesus taught. As Christian stewards seeking discipleship in Christ, belief in His death and Resurrection, and communion with Him in the Holy Eucharist, are the avenues to true faith and eternal life.

Cycle A Stewardship Thought

The subject of water links the passages from the Book of Exodus and St. John's Gospel. The Israelites grumbled to Moses about bringing them into the desert to die of thirst. Moses prayed to the Lord and, miraculously, life-giving water flowed from the rock, symbolic in a sense of the Sacrament of Baptism. In the Gospel, Jesus discussed with the Samaritan woman the *living water* that He provides, but not the same water found in Jacob's well. His promise of eternal life is made to Jew and Gentile alike, to all faithful stewards who strive to be His disciples.

Fourth Sunday of Lent

(Use Cycle A readings and corresponding Cycle A Stewardship Thought if your parish has RCIA catechumens and candidates.)

The Gospel verse John 3:16, *For God so loved the world that he gave His only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him might not perish but might have eternal life*, creates a common thread of God's love for us throughout today's Scripture passages. The First Book of Samuel describes how God, following the people's exile to Babylon because of their sinfulness, mercifully invites them home through an edict by King Cyrus. As disciples of Christ, we will find our eternal home with God through His gift of salvation. In the Second Reading, St. Paul reminds us that we will be raised up with Christ through His gift of faith to us. As disciples of Christ, we are destined to do good works of stewardship through Him.

Cycle A Stewardship Thought

Light is the common theme in St. Paul's Letter to the Ephesians and St. John's Gospel. St. Paul proclaims: *Christ will give you light*. In the Gospel, Jesus refers to Himself as the *Light of the World*. While Jesus cured the blind man of physical blindness, the Pharisees remained blind to Jesus' message. In both readings, light is contrasted with darkness. Darkness represents evil, while the light symbolizes virtue and salvation. Faithful stewards strive to live in Christ's light in order to draw closer in discipleship with Jesus.



Fifth Sunday of Lent

(Use Cycle A readings and corresponding Cycle A Stewardship Thought if your parish has RCIA catechumens and candidates.)

Through the prophet Jeremiah, God promises a new covenant with the house of Israel, who shall be His people. St. Paul reminds us that Christ is the source of our salvation. In St. John's Gospel, Jesus proclaims that His Father will honor those who serve Him. This is a powerful statement to Christian stewards, as we strive to give our time, talent, and treasure in service to God through the Church and the needy in hope of obtaining eternal life.

Cycle A Stewardship Thought

In his Gospel, St. John tells of Lazarus dying and Jesus raising him from the dead. This miracle foretells Jesus' own Resurrection. Jesus showed His power and glory by giving Lazarus back the gift of life. Through the centuries, the Church has unwaveringly embraced the sanctity and preservation of human life, adamantly stressing that life must be protected from conception to natural death. As Christian stewards, we know life is a gift from God and uphold the Church's teachings on the sanctity of life against the "culture of death" of modern society that tolerates the destruction of life at all stages, from embryonic stem cells to euthanasia.

Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion

The procession Scripture passage from St. Mark's Gospel retells Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem. Riding on a colt symbolizes that He is not a conqueror or Roman king, but a Messianic King — a humble, suffering servant Who, as described in St. Mark's Passion, will give His life for all seeking salvation. The prophet Isaiah proclaims how God guides and strengthens all who trust in Him. St. Paul reminds us how Christ humbled Himself so God could exalt Him. Do we, as Christian stewards, acknowledge God's tremendous gift of His Son and, in heart-felt gratitude, return to the Lord a generous share of our time, talent, and financial blessings?

Easter Sunday

According to the Gospel, Mary of Magdala arrived first at the empty tomb. Prompted by Mary, Peter and John arrived next and viewed the burial wrappings. Scripture tells us that St. John *saw and believed*. This is the same beloved disciple positioned at Jesus' side at the Last Supper; the same John who stood at the foot of the cross and, according to the Gospel, was one of the first to believe in the Risen Christ. Like John, may the gift of Easter grace strengthen our faith and deepen our discipleship in the Lord so we may also proclaim, *Christ is risen. Alleluia!*



Second Sunday of Easter (Divine Mercy Sunday)

The Acts of the Apostles describe how the early Christians shared all of their possessions, claiming no ownership over them. Everything was held in common and distributed according to need. St. John, in both his First Letter and Gospel, teaches us the power of faith in Christ. As Christian stewards, we can find inspiration from these beautiful passages and motivation to share our abundant blessings with the Church and those less fortunate among us.

Third Sunday of Easter

Our Lord's call to avoid sin by following His commandments, to repent, and to seek forgiveness are the common themes in today's Scripture passages. Through His death and Resurrection, Jesus freed us from sin. Christian stewards acknowledge His true presence in the Eucharist, as did the disciples on the road to Emmaus in the breaking of the bread. The Church has long taught that partaking of the Eucharist strengthens us on our journey as Christ's disciples, and that participating in the Sacrament of Reconciliation can draw us closer to Him, bringing peace to our lives.

Fourth Sunday of Easter

In today's Gospel, Jesus describes Himself as the *Good Shepherd*. Unlike the hired hand in the story, He will never abandon His flock. This is evidenced in the Eucharist where we, as Christian stewards, believe in His true presence. When we partake of His Body and Blood, we receive His constant protection through grace against evil and the strength to carry out His will to build up the Church — the Kingdom of God on earth.

Fifth Sunday of Easter

The common theme of today's readings is building up the Church through Christ and love for one another. In St. John's Gospel, Jesus states, *I am the vine, you are the branches*. In this imagery, Jesus is the vine giving the gifts of life and salvation to His disciples, the branches. In turn, we are encouraged to follow His commands and live in Him. We do this through regular participation in His Eucharistic banquet. As faithful stewards in Christ, we will bear "good fruit" for God's Kingdom.

Sixth Sunday of Easter

God's love for us is found throughout today's Scripture passages. His love is manifested through the gift of His Son, Jesus, Who commands us to love one another as He has loved us. Jesus proclaims that *there is no greater love than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends*. In gratitude for God's gifts, how are we, as good stewards, returning this love to our God and our neighbor?



The Ascension of the Lord

(Celebrated Thursday following the Sixth Sunday of Easter, or on the Seventh Sunday of Easter.)

On this day, the Scripture passages are fittingly linked by the theme of the Lord's Ascension and His charge to disciples to *go into the whole world and proclaim the Good News to all creation*.

We, as Christian stewards, place our hope in the Lord, knowing He is always with us as we answer His call to discipleship. Through His gift of the Holy Spirit, we use our time, talent, and treasure to boldly proclaim His Gospel to the world, witnessed by how we live our lives.

Seventh Sunday of Easter

(When the Ascension is not celebrated on Sunday)

In St. John's First Letter, he reminds us that God loves us and commands us to love one another.

In St. John's Gospel, Jesus prays to His Father, asking for His disciples' protection and strength as He sends them forth into the world to preach God's Word. Jesus prays for acceptance of the Good News His disciples will preach, and that their converts will believe in Him. This communication with the Father sets the example of prayer for us. Prayer is a fundamental principle of Christian stewardship; we express our love of God and neighbor through prayer.

Setting aside time for daily prayer is essential for good stewards who desire a deeper relationship with the Lord. As St. Padre Pio stated, *Prayer is the oxygen for the soul*.

Pentecost Sunday

It is fitting on this Pentecost Sunday that the Scripture passages speak of the works of the Holy Spirit in the early Christian community. In St. John's Gospel, Jesus gives His disciples the gifts of the Spirit, peace, and the power to forgive sins. In his First Letter to the Corinthians, St. Paul encourages the faithful to live in unity and to appreciate each other's gifts, service, and works granted by the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as one body in Christ. As Christian stewards, what do we bring weekly to the Eucharistic table through our God-given gifts of time, talent, and treasure to serve our parish communion — to build up the Body of Christ?

Trinity Sunday

In the reading from Deuteronomy, Moses proclaims the greatness of God. The Trinity theme — three persons in one God — links today's Second Reading and Gospel. According to St. Paul, the Spirit allows us to enjoy new life and become adopted children and heirs through Christ. In St. Matthew's Gospel, Jesus commissions the Apostles to go out and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Do we, as faithful stewards, acknowledge our baptismal call to discipleship in the Lord? Inspired by the Holy Trinity, do we act out this discipleship through our sharing of time, talent, and treasure to build up our parish communion — to serve the Kingdom of God?

Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ (Corpus Christi)

Today's Scripture passages focus on the old and new covenants. In Exodus, Moses and the ancient Israelites seal a covenant with God through the blood of sacrificial animals. St. Paul contrasts Old Testament sacrifices with the new covenant sealed in the Blood of Christ. In the Gospel, St. Mark describes Jesus' institution of the Eucharist at the Last Supper, which formed the new covenant with His disciples, a covenant that continues today. As Christian stewards, we acknowledge Christ's true presence in the consecrated Eucharist. In the regular partaking of this ultimate gift, we find strength to live lives that are holy, and out of gratitude, to return our gifts of time, talent, and treasure to God through our parish communion and those in need.

Eleventh Sunday in Ordinary Time

Today, Ezekiel describes how God nurtures the trees to provide shade and a dwelling for birds. This reading is linked to Jesus telling the parable of the mustard seed in St. Mark's Gospel. This seed is one of the smallest of seeds, yet grows to a plant large enough for birds to nest in. Faith in Christ may start out small, but grows to be very powerful when nurtured through the Eucharist and other sacraments, prayer, and the Word of God. We, as faith-filled stewards, know that as our discipleship in Christ grows, so, too, does our stewardship obligation in building the Kingdom of God.

Twelfth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Stormy seas link the reading from Job and St. Mark's Gospel. God speaks to Job through a storm. St. Mark retells Jesus scolding His disciples for their lack of faith after He calms the sea. In turn, they were in great awe of Jesus' power over wind and sea. St. Paul teaches that in Christ, we are a new creation. As Christian stewards, we find comfort in knowing that the Lord is always there to calm the storm during challenging times and to bring peace in our lives.

Thirteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

In his Second Letter to the Corinthians, St. Paul reminds them that they are rich in all things through Christ and encourages them to give, out of their abundance, to the Church in Jerusalem, which was in great need at the time. The Book of Wisdom teaches us that our generous God made us in His image. Do we, as Christian stewards, strive to take to heart this teaching and that of St. Paul, and from our many blessings, gratefully give back to the Lord our sacrificial gift through our parish offertory and to those less fortunate?



Fourteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

The passages from the prophet Ezekiel and St. Mark's Gospel describe Ezekiel and Jesus as prophets rejected by their own people. The Church today has many prophetic voices embracing teachings on the sanctity of life, marriage, and other moral issues. Jesus Himself inspires the Church's teachings; St. Paul reminds us that He gives strength to our human weaknesses. As Christ's faithful disciples, we should strive to listen to these prophets today and follow the Church's moral teachings in an effort to counteract modern day society's belief in moral relativism.

Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

In today's readings, those called to do God's work find it difficult to complete their mission. God commands the prophet Amos to prophesy to the people of Israel, in spite of the priest Amaziah's opposition. In St. Mark's Gospel, Jesus commissions the Apostles to go out and preach repentance, heal the sick, and drive out demons. He warns that they, too, will encounter resistance and even rejection. St. Paul reminds us of the strength we have in Christ's blessings. As Christian stewards, we know discipleship comes at a cost. Our efforts to do God's will may also be resisted or rejected. However, the gift of the Lord's grace encourages and strengthens us to carry out the work He calls us to do.

Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

In today's Gospel passage from St. Mark, Jesus invites His weary Apostles, returning from His commission, to a quiet place for much-needed rest. But to their surprise, the crowd beats them to the secluded location. The prophet Jeremiah indeed foretold of Jesus as the Good Shepherd, and St. Paul reminds us how, through Christ, we are brought together in Him. In the Gospel, Jesus takes pity on the crowd and begins to teach them. So it is with teaching Christian stewardship to our parish communion. Once the congregation is introduced to the meaning of stewardship as a way of life, the education process never ends. Following the example of Christ the teacher, parish leadership must tirelessly profess stewardship of time, talent, and treasure at every opportunity. Stewardship education is a year-round effort.

Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Today's Scripture passages are linked by God's miraculous multiplication of food for His people. In the First Reading, the Lord works through the prophet Elisha to provide food for His people. In St. John's Gospel, near the time of Passover, Jesus multiplies a few loaves and fish to feed 5,000 followers. Both readings have Eucharistic implications. The Eucharist is the "source and summit" of our faith. We become what we consume — consuming Christ in the Eucharist leads us to discipleship in Him. St. Paul reminds us we have received a calling from the Lord. We answer His call to discipleship through the stewardship of sharing our time, talent, and treasure with our parish communion and the poor among us.

Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Today, Jesus, in St. John's Gospel, ties His teaching to the reading from Exodus. He tells the crowd that their ancestors ate manna in the desert provided not by Moses, but by His heavenly Father. Jesus reveals in the Gospel that He is the *Bread of Life*. Those who come to Him will be filled spiritually. St. Paul teaches us that through Christ, we will acquire a fresh, spiritual way of thinking. As Christian stewards, we acknowledge Jesus' presence in the Eucharist, which translated from Greek means "thanksgiving." We stand in awe and gratitude for this tremendous blessing, which gives us strength and courage to find and do God's will.

Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

In today's First Reading, God provides a weary and distressed prophet Elijah with physical food and drink to sustain him on his pilgrimage to Mt. Horeb. In St. John's Gospel, Jesus proclaims He is the spiritual *Bread of Life*; those who eat this bread will live forever. As we partake of the Lord's consecrated Body and Blood, we become one in discipleship with Him. St. Paul teaches us to follow the way of love through Christ. On our journey to eternal life, our Lord gives us grace to live good Christian lives by making stewardship a way of life.

Twentieth Sunday in Ordinary Time

In the passage from the Book of Proverbs, Wisdom encourages the people to forsake foolishness and partake in the food and drink that God has "mixed." This foretells today's Gospel account where St. John continues to develop the theology of Jesus' sacrifice of Himself and His institution of the Eucharist as the true source of strength and unity for the Christian community. Christian stewards strive to become one with the Lord by regularly partaking in His Eucharistic banquet. This strengthens us to embrace stewardship as a way of life and to share our abundant blessings with our parish communion and the needy. St. Paul reminds us to do this in gratitude to God through Christ.

Twenty-First Sunday in Ordinary Time

In the First Reading, Joshua gives the ancient Israelites a choice to either serve God or the pagan gods of the Amorites. He boldly proclaims that he and his family will serve the Lord. In St. John's Gospel, after many disciples turn away from His teaching on His everlasting gift of His Body and Blood, Jesus asks the Apostles if they, too, want to leave Him and go back to their old way of life. Simon-Peter professes that Jesus has the *words of eternal life*; where else would they go? Serving the Lord as a Christian steward is not easy. There is a cost to follow Christ, but He gives us the strength to accept that cost.



Twenty-Second Sunday in Ordinary Time

Today's readings have a common theme: God, through His commandments, gives us guidance on how to live good and holy lives. Moses makes clear how blessed are God's people to be called close to Him. In St. Mark's Gospel, Jesus teaches that following strict rituals may actually lead to disregarding the spirit of God's commandments themselves. St. James expresses two important stewardship principles: First, that all good gifts come from God and, second, that good Christians are to act on His Word. Christian stewards acknowledge God's abundant gifts and strive to embrace Christian stewardship as a way of life. We witness this through gratefully giving back to God our gifts of our time, talent, and treasure — feeding and clothing the needy, giving shelter to the homeless, and visiting the sick and those in prison. These Corporal Works of Mercy put our faith into action for Christ.

Twenty-Third Sunday in Ordinary Time

The prophet Isaiah foretells the mighty deeds Christ will perform. The Gospel passage from St. Mark cites a powerful healing by Jesus, and together with the Letter of St. James, makes clear that God does not discriminate about who is accepted into the Christian community. Good stewards acknowledge that all who are willing to follow the Lord as His disciples are welcome into His Kingdom.

Twenty-Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time

The prophet Isaiah teaches us that the Lord God is our help in the face of opposition. In St. Mark's Gospel, Jesus proclaims that we must take up our cross and follow Him. St. James gives us a practical lesson on sacrifice when he states, *faith of itself, if it does not have works, is dead*. What a powerful stewardship message! As Christ's disciples, we are called through our Baptism to serve the Church by giving our time, talent, and treasure back to God through our parish communion. Our responsibility, as faithful stewards, is to use God's abundant gifts wisely. How are we responding to His call to service?

Twenty-Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time

The Book of Wisdom foretells Christ's suffering and death, as Jesus describes to His disciples in St. Mark's Gospel. Both the readings from St. James and St. Mark warn us against false ambition and seeking rank while appearing to serve the Lord. Jesus teaches us that true discipleship requires the first to be last and servants to all. As Christian stewards, what is our motivation in serving the Lord?

Twenty-Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time

St. James, in the Second Reading, condemns the wealthy because they have cheated their laborers of wages and selfishly stored up treasures and wanton luxury on earth. Wealth in itself is not bad. But we, as Christian stewards belonging to Christ, acknowledge that all things, including financial resources, come from God. Moses, in the Book of Numbers, and Jesus, in St. Mark's Gospel, both teach us how blessed it is to belong to Christ. In a spirit of thanksgiving and gratitude, we return a portion of these monetary gifts back to the Lord through our parish offertory, the Catholic Services Appeal, and other worthy causes.

Twenty-Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time

Today's readings from the Book of Genesis and St. Mark's Gospel are linked by the common theme of sacred marriage. In the Gospel, Jesus, referring to Genesis, proclaims, *God made them male and female. For this reason, a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.* It is obvious from these Scripture passages that God's gift of marriage is a blessing between one man and one woman. This is the Church's teaching on Christian marriage, which faithful stewards embrace. They understand how the Sacrament of Matrimony strengthens husband and wife to love and serve the Lord and one another.

Twenty-Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Today's passage from the Book of Wisdom teaches us that the spirit of wisdom is more precious than gold or silver. This theme is repeated in St. Mark's Gospel where Jesus makes clear to the rich man that if he wants to be Christ's disciple, he must obey God's commandments as well as sell all that he has and give it to the poor. For the rich man, this is too much to ask and he walks away sadly. This is a radical Gospel and in complete contrast to today's materialistic culture. The Letter to the Hebrews also reminds us that we must render an account to God of our stewardship of His blessings. If we were the rich man, how would we respond to Christ's challenge? Are we willing to sacrifice a portion of our income to the Lord through giving to the Church and those in need?

Twenty-Ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Jesus states in St. Mark's Gospel, *whoever wishes to be great among you will be your servant.* The prophet Isaiah and the Letter to the Hebrews also describe the example of the humility of Christ for us to follow. In other words, greatness in God's Kingdom is not achieved through high status or rank, but through being a humble servant to others. As Christian stewards, we acknowledge that service to our Church and community is a key principle of stewardship, and we offer our time, talent, and treasure back to God in gratitude for His many blessings.



Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time

In today's Gospel, St. Mark retells the story of Jesus' healing of the blind man, Bartimaeus, who then chooses to be Christ's disciple by following Him to Jerusalem — to the Lord's passion and death. The prophet Isaiah also describes the journey to deliverance through the Lord. The Letter to the Hebrews describes God's call among men to the priesthood. In our quest for discipleship, do we have the faith and courage to answer God's call to our own life's vocation?

Thirty-First Sunday in Ordinary Time

The theme of loving God fully with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength echoes throughout the First Reading and St. Mark's Gospel. When Jesus is questioned in the Gospel, He quotes directly from the Book of Deuteronomy about fully loving God as the First Commandment, with the Second being love of neighbor. Through our discipleship, we, as Christian stewards, embrace both of these Commandments as the foundation for making stewardship a way of life.

Thirty-Second Sunday in Ordinary Time

Today's First Reading and Gospel passages are linked by two widows' extraordinary examples of sacrifice. The Old Testament prophet Elijah asks a poor widow to prepare him food out of her meager supplies of flour and oil in the midst of a drought. She does and, because of her generosity, the Lord blesses her and her son abundantly. In St. Mark's Gospel, Jesus observes the poor widow who gave all she had to the temple treasury. Jesus proclaims to His disciples that her contribution is significant because she gave from her need, not her surplus wealth as others did. We learn in the Letter to the Hebrews another form of sacrifice: Christ's sacrifice of Himself as our High Priest. These are all profound examples of sacrificial giving — giving of time, talent, and treasure — that we, as Christian stewards, should strive to imitate in serving our parish communion, discerning our life's vocation, and giving back to God through our parish offertory, the Catholic Services Appeal, and other worthy causes.

Thirty-Third Sunday in Ordinary Time

The Scripture passages from Daniel and St. Mark's Gospel speak of the end of time — the second coming of Christ. At that time, we know we will have to give an accounting of our stewardship of God's blessings to us. For those who have embraced Christian stewardship as a way of life and as a witness of discipleship in Christ to build God's Kingdom on earth, it will be a time of great joy and celebration of life eternal with God. If the end occurred today, would our stewardship allow us to be counted among God's elect?

Christ the King

For the Solemnity of Christ the King, today's Scripture passages proclaim Jesus' kingship. Jesus makes it clear to Pilate in St. John's Gospel that He is not a worldly king — His Kingdom is elsewhere. In the Book of Revelation, the Lord God states that He is the *Alpha and the Omega* — the "first and the last" — and will reign for all time. The Book of Daniel tells of Christ's dominion and glory. How should we revere our Lord and King? As good stewards, we fully acknowledge the true presence of the Body and Blood of Christ in the Eucharist and strive to receive Him during Mass in a prayerful and reverent manner. We also understand that through the Eucharist we are nourished and strengthened to serve the Lord as He has planned for us. What do we bring of our time, talent, and treasure to the Eucharistic table?