



CALLED BY CHRIST GIFTED BY THE SPIRIT

An Invitation to Christian Stewardship

SECOND EDITION



Developed by the Department of Development and Stewardship
Archdiocese of Detroit
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To Share Christ in and through the Church

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This manual is a revision of the stewardship education manual, *Called by Christ, Gifted by the Spirit*, which the Archdiocese of Detroit Department of Development and Stewardship originally published in 1997. Since much of the material in the original manual has been carried over into this current revision, we have included the page of acknowledgments from that 1997 version as a tribute to the legacy of Christian stewardship education in the Archdiocese of Detroit. Not appearing on that page are Michael Murphy, then the Director of Development, and Karen Williams of the department staff, who were leaders in developing the original manual and whose foundational work was vitally important to this revised version.

We are grateful for the leadership of our shepherd, Most Reverend Allen H. Vigneron, Archbishop of Detroit. In revising this manual on Christian stewardship, we have been mindful of his encouraging us to be focused on our mission — *To Share Christ in and through the Church*.

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INTRODUCTION

Christian stewards recognize God as the origin of life and the source of all that they have, are, and will be. They are grateful for what they have received and eager to cultivate and share their gifts out of love for God and one another. This manual offers a theology of Christian stewardship and an invitation process for Catholic individuals and parishes hoping to enjoy a deeper relationship with God.

In 1992, the United States Catholic Bishops issued a Pastoral Letter, *Stewardship: A Disciple's Response*, a coordinated and substantive treatment of the life of Christian stewardship. Following the Pastoral Letter's publication, a group of priests and lay people with stewardship experience in their own parishes were gathered under the guidance and inspirational leadership of Cardinal Adam Maida, then Archbishop of Detroit. The Archdiocese of Detroit Department of Development and Stewardship has embraced that group's mission of fostering an environment in which Christian stewardship is understood, accepted, and practiced throughout the local Church.

The department promotes the concept that Christian stewardship is a way of life, not simply an appeal for money to support the Church. Through its workshops, publications, and newsletters, the department emphasizes that all members of our family of faith are called to be Christian stewards, and to share their gifts in many ways and in proportion to the blessings they have received from God.

This second edition manual is designed to be a resource for pastors and parish leaders interested in introducing and nurturing Christian stewardship in their parishes. Just as Christian stewardship is a journey, so too, is this manual a work in progress and will continue to be revised. New ideas are always welcome.

The many organizational materials and samples provided in this manual are intended to assist a parish in introducing and renewing Christian stewardship. Samples of pastor's letters and brochures are included, as well as suggested bulletin announcements, acknowledgment letters, prayers of the faithful, and Scriptural texts. These materials are also available in electronic format and on the Archdiocese of Detroit Web site, www.AODonline.org.

Please keep in mind that these materials are only samples. Pastors and parish leaders may simply use them for ideas, or as working outlines when writing their own more personalized materials.

We have added new sections to this second edition. First are stewardship thoughts for all the readings in the Liturgy of the Word for Cycles A (Matthew), B (Mark), and C (Luke). Another new section deals with family finances, an often overlooked aspect of Christian stewardship. Finally, we have added materials and suggestions for introducing Christian stewardship to children and youth.



We hope this manual will assist you when you ask the faithful in your parish to respond to the challenge of Christian stewardship. We join you in prayer that the Holy Spirit, Who brings us closer to Jesus Christ, will help us all to become more faithful disciples and stewards of God's bountiful gifts.

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PART ONE:

Considering a Life of Christian Stewardship

PART ONE: CONSIDERING A LIFE OF CHRISTIAN STEWARDSHIP

STEWARDSHIP: TURNING CULTURAL VALUES UPSIDE DOWN

Many Catholics wince when they hear the word “stewardship.” It is a reaction prompted by a mistaken notion that stewardship is just another way the Church asks for money. This is not true.

The Life of a Christian Steward

The decision to share our financial resources with our communion of faith is an important aspect of being a Christian steward. But that is only part of the story. Christian stewardship is the commitment made in response to God’s generosity — to live a life of gratitude, to make daily decisions to glorify God, and to share ourself and our gifts generously as circumstances and talents allow.

A life of gratitude is the first mark of a Christian steward. God has endowed His followers with more gifts than we can imagine — life and faith, time and relationships, health, talents and skills, and material goods. Everything we are and have is a gift from God, and a Christian steward thanks God daily for these blessings.

Stewardship Involves Daily Choices

Stewardship means making daily, conscious choices that glorify God. These decisions reveal a person’s priorities. The axiom, “Tell me to what you pay attention and I will tell you who you are,” holds true. There are such things as self-glorification and the exaltation of wealth, social status, success, power, peace of mind, and security. However, we should be recognizable as a Christian disciple by the place God has in our daily life.

Christian stewards regard success, a high standard of living, and the accumulation of material objects as secondary to loving God and a life of generosity, hospitality, and the primacy of personal relationships. In making these decisions, we turn culture’s values upside down.

We Give Thanks for God’s Blessings

The best way to respond to God’s loving generosity is by reflecting that generosity day by day. Take time for prayer; nurture relationships with family and friends; participate in the worship life of the communion of Christians; and act out of loving concern on behalf of others in the world. What God does in Jesus’ human life is a much magnified version of what happens when our personal schedule is rearranged to be with someone who is lonely or despairing, or when creative ways are devised to volunteer talents for the parish, or when family budgets and spending habits are reprioritized in light of the Gospel. The stewardship question is not, “Should I do these things?” but rather, “How much should I do?”

The Decision is Ours

Ultimately, stewardship comes down to personal decisions about how each of us lives, and how each of us will respond to God’s gifts based on our experience, our self-knowledge, and the call of God’s grace. There is the paradoxical truth, hallowed in the New Testament, that by giving ourselves to someone or something beyond ourselves, we discover our own best self: *“He who loses himself for My sake will find himself”* (Matthew 10:39).



Living as Christian stewards should bring a deeper and more solid joy and confidence about being disciples of Jesus Christ. Though Christians, we have not seen Christ, but we are assured — by faith truly lived and generously practiced — the joy, the peace, and the life that comes to those who dare to believe and trust in Him.

TO BE A CHRISTIAN STEWARD

A Summary of the United States Bishops' Pastoral Letter, *Stewardship: A Disciple's Response*

“As each one has received a gift, use it to serve one another as good stewards of God's varied grace.” (1 Peter 4:10)

What identifies a steward? Safeguarding material and human resources and using them responsibly is one answer; so is generous giving of time, talent, and treasure. But being a Christian steward means more. As Christian stewards, we receive God's gifts gratefully, cultivate them responsibly, share them lovingly in justice with others, and return them with increase to the Lord.

Disciples as Stewards

Let us begin with being a disciple — a follower of our Lord, Jesus Christ. As members of the Church, Jesus calls us to be disciples. This has astonishing implications:

- Mature disciples make a conscious decision to follow Jesus, no matter what the cost.
- Christian disciples experience conversion — life-shaping changes of mind and heart — and commit their very selves to the Lord.
- Christian stewards respond in a particular way to the call to be a disciple. Stewardship has the power to shape and mold our understanding of our lives and the way in which we live.

Jesus' disciples and Christian stewards recognize God as the origin of life, giver of freedom, and source of all things. We are grateful for the gifts we have received and are eager to use them to show our love for God and for one another. We look to the life and teaching of Jesus for guidance in living as Christian stewards.

Stewards of Creation

The Bible contains a profound message about the stewardship of material creation: God created the world, but entrusts it to human beings. Caring for and cultivating the world involves the following:

- joyful appreciation for the God-given beauty and wonder of nature;
- protection and preservation of the environment, which is the stewardship of ecological concern;
- respect for human life — shielding life from threat and assault, doing everything that can be done to enhance this gift and make life flourish; and
- development of this world through noble human effort — physical labor, the trades and professions, the arts and sciences. We call such effort work.

Work is a fulfilling human vocation. The Second Vatican Council points out that, through work, we build up not only our world but the Kingdom of God, already present among us. Work is a partnership with God — our share in a divine-human collaboration in creation. It occupies a central place in our lives as Christian stewards.

Stewards of Vocation

Jesus calls us, as His disciples, to a new way of life — the Christian way of life — of which stewardship is part.

But Jesus does not call us as nameless people in a faceless crowd. He calls us individually, by name. Each one of us — clergy, religious, lay person; married, single; adult, child — has a personal vocation. God intends each of us to play a unique role in carrying out His divine plan.

The challenge, then, is to understand our role — our vocation — and to respond generously to this call from God. Christian vocation entails the practice of stewardship. In addition, Christ calls each of us to be stewards of our personal vocations, which we receive from God.

Stewards of the Church

Stewards of God's gifts are not passive beneficiaries. We cooperate with God in our own redemption and in the redemption of others.

We are also obliged to be stewards of the Church — collaborators and cooperators in continuing the redemptive work of Jesus Christ, which is the Church's essential mission. This mission — proclaiming and teaching, serving and sanctifying — is our task. It is the personal responsibility of each one of us as stewards of the Church.

All members of the Church have their own roles to play in carrying out its mission:

- parents, who nurture their children in the light of faith;
- parishioners, who work in concrete ways to make their parishes true communities of faith and vibrant sources of service to the larger community; and
- all Catholics, who give generous support — prayers, time, money, and personal service according to their circumstances — to parish and archdiocesan programs and to the universal Church.

Obstacles of Stewardship

People who want to live as Christian disciples and Christian stewards face serious obstacles.

In the United States and other developed nations, a dominant secular culture often contradicts religious convictions about the meaning of life. This culture frequently encourages us to focus on ourselves and our pleasures. At times, we can find it far too easy to ignore spiritual realities and to deny religion a role in shaping human and social values.

As Catholics who have entered into the mainstream of American society and experienced its advantages, many of us also have been adversely influenced by this secular culture. We know what it is to struggle against selfishness and greed, and we realize that it is harder for many today to accept the challenge of being a Christian steward.

It is essential, therefore, that we make a special effort to understand the true meaning of stewardship and live accordingly.

A Steward's Way

The life of a Christian steward models the life of Jesus. It is challenging and even difficult, in many respects, yet intense joy comes to those who risk living as Christian stewards. Women and men who seek to live as stewards learn that *“all things work for good for those who love God”* (Romans 8:28).

After Jesus, we look to Mary as an ideal steward. As the Mother of Christ, she lived her ministry in a spirit of fidelity and service; she responded generously to God's call.

We must ask ourselves: Do we also wish to be disciples of Jesus Christ and Christian stewards of our world and our Church?

Central to our human and Christian vocation, as well as to the unique vocation each one of us receives from God, is that we be good stewards of the gifts we possess. God gives us this divine-human workshop, this world and Church of ours.

The Holy Spirit shows us the way.

Stewardship is a part of that journey.

THE MANUAL'S APPROACH

“Jesus is the supreme teacher of Christian stewardship”
(United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. *Stewardship: A Disciple's Response*.
Tenth Anniversary Edition, 2002, p. 19)

As Catholics, we have an approach to teaching Christian stewardship that adds something from our own rich tradition to existing teachings. This manual's approach is to relate stewardship to the faithful by emphasizing the fundamentals of the sacramental life.

Christian Stewardship and the Sacramental Life

Sacraments empower us to live in right relationship with God, with ourselves, and with others. The sacramental life gives us ongoing personal transformation and renewal, a new capacity for relationship, so that our true selves can be more perfectly expressed. The sacramental life gives us a new way of being who and what we are, not just with respect to ourselves but in relation to every other creature as well as to God. The sacramental life describes how God's grace and presence are concretely transforming us continually from darkness into light, from death to life, from slavery to time and preoccupations toward freedom and joy. Jesus Christ is the ultimate sacrament, and by embracing Christian stewardship, we are invited to live the sacramental life that Jesus lived.

The Liturgical Year

The liturgical year provides us with the opportunity to share our hope for eternal life — a life revealed in Christ, His birth, His public ministry, His death, His resurrection, the sending of the Spirit, and the foundation of the Church. The liturgical year also helps the Christian community deepen its identity as a people, and to give thanks to God for its past, present, and future.

Eucharist as the Way to Christian Stewardship

How do we propose to employ the sacramental principle to teach Christian stewardship? By teaching the concept of Christian stewardship through the celebration of the Eucharist. God moves toward us so that we may move toward each other and thereby toward God. The way God comes to us is also our way to God and to each other — through Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit. This is our faith, confessed in creed and celebrated in the sacraments. The Eucharistic rituals of the Church take place within the context of the liturgical year. The Church's liturgical seasons unfold the life-producing mysteries of the salvation that comes through life in Christ. It is the Eucharist, therefore, that we look to provide the basis for Christian stewardship. Christ's life and death, words and deeds, knowledge and dedication to His Father are the model standards for Christians. Therefore, we believe that the power of God's Spirit to convert the hardened heart and make the blind see is absolutely essential to the teaching of Christian stewardship.

Fundamentals for a Life of Stewardship

Living the way of the Christian steward means living the way Jesus lived — living from and for God, from and for others. Our approach in this manual is to recapture four of the basic foundations that we profess underlie stewardship and the sacramental life. The process set out in this manual asks the faithful to recognize these fundamentals as gifts from God and to

make personal commitments to each one of them. The fundamental principles of the role of the Christian steward can be summarized very simply:

As Christian Stewards, We Live Each Day . . .

- **Praying** . . . to God with grateful hearts;
- **Nurturing** . . . our family with time and love;
- **Sharing** . . . our God-given gifts with the parish communion; and
- **Giving** . . . back to God the first fruits of our labors.

On pages A-9 through A-19, more extensive reflections on each of these four fundamental principles of Christian stewardship are provided. It will be these fundamentals that we suggest be emphasized in the parish when Christian stewardship is introduced to the faithful.

THE WORD OF GOD AND CHRISTIAN STEWARDSHIP

Christians profess a belief in being called by God to the role of the good steward. Understood in the context of Sacred Scripture, stewardship calls us to a highly significant relationship with God, with our neighbors, with the Church, and with all creation.

That is why the approach taken in this manual is to teach the concept of Christian stewardship through the words of Sacred Scripture, in the Liturgy of the Word during the celebration of the Eucharist. Because God's reign is proclaimed in the readings of the Eucharistic celebration, God speaks to us of the mystery of salvation, thereby nourishing our collective spirit. Through the Word of God, Christ Himself is present in our assemblies to speak to us about stewardship.

The Eucharist is the center of Catholic faith. It is the source of our unity and strength in Christ. It is the sign of our communion of faith *par excellence* as the living sign of God's redemptive reign, proclaimed and promised in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The Liturgy of the Word proclaims God's Word and elicits a response of faith from us. For by responding to the spoken word, we respond to Christ. *"He (Christ) is present in His Word, since it is He Himself who speaks when the Holy Scriptures are read in church"* (Vatican II, *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, n. 7).

In the readings of Cycles A, B, and C, the Word of God, as proclaimed in the Gospels of Matthew (A), Mark (B), and Luke (C), has serious things to say about Christian discipleship and how that discipleship is expressed by our stewardship.

Although these readings are proclaimed in order to inform, instruct, and inspire us, their first significance is that they make Jesus Himself present to us. Without God's presence through the Word, we are not able to recognize God's presence in the breaking of the bread.

If we keep in mind that we are in the presence of Christ when Scripture is proclaimed, we have a better understanding of this manual's methodology.

"Indeed, God's Word is living and effective, sharper than any two-edged sword. It penetrates and divides soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the reflections and thoughts of the heart. Nothing is concealed from Him; all lies bare and exposed to the eyes of Him to Whom we must render an account." (Hebrews 4:12-13)

Many people are slow to trust Christ's invitation to stewardship. That is why listening to God's Word is so integral to teaching the concept of stewardship.

FOUR FUNDAMENTALS OF CHRISTIAN STEWARDSHIP

Christians are called by God to the role of the steward. Our stewardship “vocation” is therefore something we accept and grow into, as we continue to grow in our relationship with God. Growth in stewardship means growth in our ability to see the whole of life as a sacred trust. Growth in stewardship is our developing response as whole persons to the creative activity of God as it is encountered in personal experience, in the Church, and in the world. This manual emphasizes the teaching of four fundamental principles of Christian stewardship. They are:

I. Praying to God with Grateful Hearts

The decision to enter more fully into a life of prayer is a deeper commitment than people realize. However, in order to be good stewards of our relationship with the Lord, we must commit time, which should include setting aside periods for prayer, for the reading of Scripture, and for full participation in the celebration of the Eucharist and other sacraments.

II. Nurturing Our Family with Time and Love

Families have stewardship responsibilities of great importance in the domestic Church, the home. Within the family, relationships must be nurtured, forgiveness and reconciliation must be presumed, and Christian values must be shared, especially in the face of pressures to conform to a sometimes hostile, secularized society.

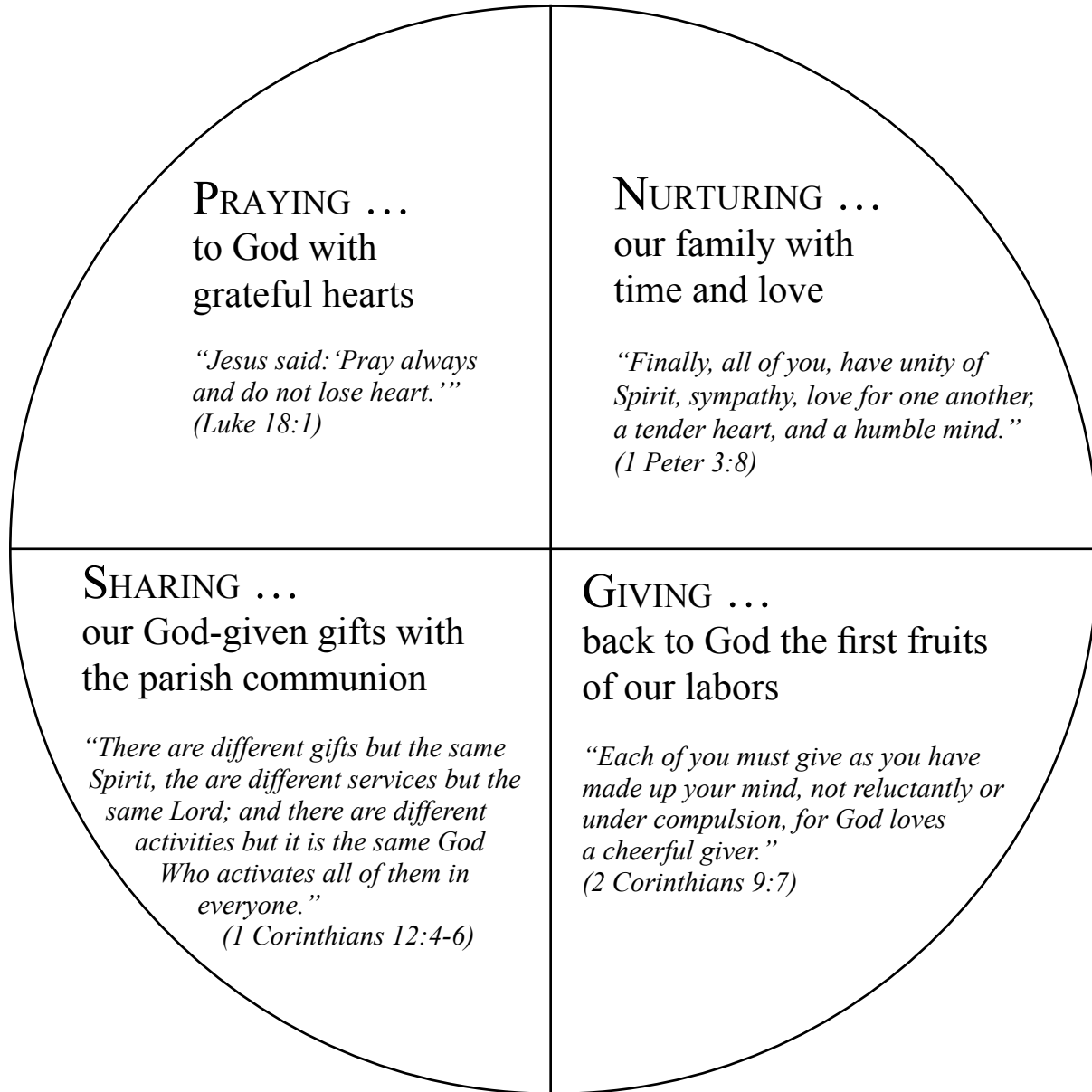
III. Sharing our God-Given Gifts with the Parish Communion

As Christians, we recognize that our gifts of talents and skills are meant to be cultivated and shared with others, beginning with our family and friends, with those whom we gather to share the Eucharist, and with the world. The gift of ourselves blesses the particular community of Christians we are involved with and blesses those whom our parish hopes to touch.

IV. Giving Back to God the First Fruits of Our Labors

The Christian steward acknowledges with gratitude that even our material goods and financial resources come from God. Sacrificial giving is how we as Christians describe returning the first portion of our financial resources back to God.

FOUR FUNDAMENTALS OF CHRISTIAN STEWARDSHIP



I. PRAYING TO GOD WITH GRATEFUL HEARTS

“Pray always and do not lose heart.” (Luke 18:1)

Prayer is the first fundamental principle of Christian stewardship. A necessary part of the Christian disciple’s vocation is to pray. Prayer makes us aware of God and opens us to God’s love. Prayer gradually makes us realize our complete dependence on God. It makes us appreciate how utterly bound we are to God’s grace. Prayer also makes us realize the great power we have as disciples to use our own gifts in a meaningful way.

Prayer is a Gift

The desire to pray is a gift from God. So radical is our dependence on the graciousness of the Lord that we cannot even desire to pray unless God invites us. Even the beginnings, the urges to pray, are a sheer gift. Among other signs, the desire to pray is a clear sign of God’s presence in our lives, for without God’s presence, we could not desire God.

The Ancient Notion of Blessing

The teachings on stewardship that Moses tendered to Israel in the Old Testament Book of Deuteronomy did not begin with sacrificial giving or the tithe. The teaching began with the stewardship of prayer time:

“Hear, O Israel: The Lord, our God, is one Lord, and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. And these words which I command you this day shall be upon our heart; and you shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise” (Deuteronomy 6: 4-7).

The ancient and traditional notion of stewardship was intimately linked to the notion of prayer as blessing. A gift was blessed and made holy when a person acknowledged to God in prayer that God had provided it as a most purposeful and personal gift. Thus, God was prayed to and blessed for the gift. When the rain was not simply water that fell down, but God’s dewing of the earth for fruitfulness so that the Hebrews might have bread and wine, it became holy for them when they acknowledged God’s gift.

Stewardship gives us a lifetime of progressive insight into what God has provided for us. What is sacred is what we have come to discover as God’s gift. We have a life of blessing not when we receive new things but when we notice that they have been there all the time. We bless God for what we have and bless ourselves for receiving it.

Jesus and the Stewardship of Prayer

The Gospels are replete with occasions when Jesus paused from His public ministry, departed from the crowds, went off to a lonely place, and prayed. After Jesus had cured Simon Peter’s mother-in-law, *“in the morning, a great while before day, He rose and went out to a lonely place, and there He prayed”* (Mark 1:35-36). After great crowds gathered to listen to Him, *“He withdrew to the wilderness and prayed”* (Luke 5:16). After the

multiplication of the loaves, He sent the crowd away and “*went into the hills to pray*” (Mark 6:46). Again, before the appointment of the Twelve, “*He went out into the hills to pray; and all night He continued in prayer to God*” (Luke 6:12). The work of each day was closely bound up with prayer as Jesus Christ showed us that prayer was the center of His Messianic ministry and Paschal death.

The Christian Steward Makes Time to Pray

The early Christian community made a habit of constant and persevering prayer. Indeed, Luke ends his Gospel story with a picture of the apostles “*continually in the temple praising God*” (Luke 24:53). Today’s Christian emulates the early apostolic community and makes specific commitments to daily prayer, pausing during each day to glorify God. The Christian disciple’s prayer is joined with that of Christ, and it is the Holy Spirit Who is praying with us.

Making time to pray is not only a reminder of God’s divine presence, but also a means of expressing the divine life, with all that this implies about the fullness of time and Jesus Christ drawing near and calling into our hearts. By taking time out for prayer, we are following Christ — not only learning to be His disciples, but also sharing our experience of God.

If you are already a person who spends time each day devoted to prayer, you understand why it is vitally important that those who are to be invited to Christian stewardship must first learn the fundamental importance of taking time to pray and bless God for all that we have and all that we are.

*“Jesus said, ‘Let us go off . . . to some place where we will be alone . . .’
So they started out in a boat by themselves to a lonely place.”* (Mark 6:31-32)

II. NURTURING OUR FAMILY WITH TIME AND LOVE

“Finally, all of you, have unity of spirit, sympathy, love for one another, a tender heart, and a humble mind.” (1 Peter 3:8)

The second fundamental principle of Christian stewardship is, after prayer, nurturing our family with time and love. We characterize Christian families as communities whose faith in Christ brings and keeps them together. A Christian family’s existence makes sense only because Jesus and His Father are real for its family members. Similarly, we believe that the Holy Spirit refreshes the faith that brings us closer to God and to each other in family life.

Family Identity

The term “family” brings a rich dimension to our understanding of community life — whether the reality is that of two-parent families, single-parent families, childless married couples, couples whose children are grown and away from home, single and widowed persons in their extended family networks, blended families, and men and women in religious communities. All of these constitute “family.”

Families give us an identity in community larger than our own personal lives and our work. Thinking of ourselves as members of a family can bring a deeper consciousness of a shared life of permanent commitment. This is especially helpful in today’s culture, which places less value on permanent commitments to others, especially in times of hardship. Likewise, families also may bring a deeper awareness of shared work in a culture that places more importance on the self and individual pursuits.

Stewardship and the Family

As members of a family community, Christians are called to exercise good stewardship by nurturing family relationships. Christian stewardship presumes a spirit of love, forgiveness, and reconciliation among family members. Christian families work at open communication, develop a sensitivity to the needs and feelings of others, and foster love for one another.

Marriage

Christian marriage is a dynamic sign of Christian stewardship because it gives witness to a public expression of deep, personal, and spiritual commitment. The practice of authentic stewardship helps us to summon up a great deal of needed patience, effort, sacrifice, and determination, especially during difficult times. Guided and strengthened by the exercise of faithful stewardship, marital love thrives in an atmosphere of freedom and trust, where each is allowed and encouraged to grow, to be more creative in their love, and to draw closer to God.

Parents and Children

Parents exercise stewardship over the gifts of their children, remembering that they are micro-images of God to their children, and that they are, by word and example, the first preachers of the faith for their children. They give their children a genuine sense of trust and security, making their home a safe, welcome place, and giving them a sense of shared responsibility for the family’s decisions. They take time to do things together with their children as a family, and they try to be sensitive to their children’s own growing preferences and skills. Parents also

allow their children to make choices, and by letting them know that as stewards themselves, they are responsible and accountable for those choices.

We are the stewards of parents, especially aging parents, encouraging them to feel confident that we consider their lives not only meaningful but sacred by allowing them to live out their lives in dignity and with respect.

Outside the Family

The Christian family looks beyond its immediate circle to reach out in love to others who come into their lives, as much as is practical, rather than become selfishly absorbed in only their family relationships. Stewardship also calls the family to be aware of the needs of their neighborhood, and of the poor and underprivileged in their area and the outside world. Stewardship encourages families to develop a Christian world-view.

The Family Reflects Christ's Presence

Could it be possible that the Holy Spirit is working through Christian families to establish a more visible and conscious sign of Christ's presence in the world today and for the future? Indeed, the Christian family is a counter-cultural sign today. What family members face together rather than individually or alone, nurtures and even ensures their commitment to the Lord and to one another.

III. SHARING OUR GOD-GIVEN GIFTS WITH THE PARISH COMMUNION

“There are different gifts but the same Spirit; there are different services but the same Lord; and there are different activities but it is the same God Who activates all of them in everyone. To each person the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.” (1 Corinthians 12:4-7)

As St. Paul teaches, the Lord endows each of us with unique and special gifts. Some of us have gifts for leadership, some for healing, others for administering. Some of us have gifts for building or growing things, some for nurturing or consoling others, still others for teaching or serving as mentors. But whatever gifts we are blessed with, as Christians we recognize that these gifts come from God. We bless these gifts and we bless the Lord for His goodness.

As Christian stewards, we also recognize that our gifts are meant to be cultivated and shared with others, beginning with our family and friends, with those whom we gather to share the Eucharist, and with the world. The challenge for us is recognizing the sacredness of our gifts and acknowledging the importance of sharing them.

How Americans Spend Their Time

It has been reported that by the time the average American reaches 50 years of age, he or she will have spent a full 10 of those years in front of the television set. Other studies reveal sobering insights into how the average American chooses to spend his or her “free” time each week:

• Television viewing	18 hours
• On the Internet	15 hours
• Socializing, eating and drinking	14 hours
• Shopping and self improvement	6 hours
• Sports, exercise and recreation	2 hours
• Religious activities and volunteering	1 hour

How we gather together as Christians to live, work, minister to one another, and worship together is a sign of how we anticipate the coming reign of God. It also gives evidence of the third fundamental principle of Christian stewardship — sharing our talents and skills with our parish communion. The list of activities above reveals something significant about how Americans choose to spend their time. For Christian stewards, re-prioritizing time in order to share our God-given gifts means confronting cultural values.

Participating in the Life of Our Parish

Celebrating the Eucharist means more than just attending Mass for one hour on the weekend. We are called to participate in the life of our parish communion. Christ calls us to make His presence known in concrete ways. That call requires involvement, and the gift we give of ourselves blesses the particular community of Christians we are involved with and blesses those whom our parish hopes to touch.



Christ has called us to use our gifts “to love and serve the Lord” — to be sent forth. Sharing our God-given gifts by actively participating in the life of our parish communion is an expression of stewardship. Christians contribute their talents in whatever way they can. A commitment to stewardship motivates us to use our gifts to serve our community of faith. If we are going to love and serve God’s people and thus God, a particular place and specific group of people help assure us that such service is real and responsible.

Building Up the Body of Christ

The life of a parish communion is animated by the life of God because it is the embodiment of the presence of the risen Christ. The parish further embodies the presence, fruits, and work of the Holy Spirit. In short, the parish lives a life appropriate to Christian stewardship. It is the vocation of all of us who gather together around the Eucharistic table to live lives of gratitude by serving others, proclaiming the reign of God, and promoting communion among ourselves.

It is important to remember that our mission as Christians entails first going to those we know, those who share communion with us — our family, our friends, and those with whom we celebrate the Eucharist. The parish communion is where we most profoundly experience the many ways in which Jesus is made present. First and foremost, our task is to build up the Body of Christ, sharing with others who also believe that Christ is risen.

Stewardship and Evangelization: Offering Hope to the World

Having entered into communion with Jesus and created community with those who know that He is present among us, we are enabled to proclaim together as one body of faith to all people that God is indeed active in the world. *“Every member of the Church is called to evangelize, and the practice of authentic Christian stewardship inevitably leads to evangelization”* (Stewardship: A Disciple’s Response, p. 33).

From the commitment we make to our brothers and sisters with whom we gather, we are able to move in all directions and reach out to all people. The Archdiocese of Detroit’s publication, *The Parish Pastoral Council Guidelines and Handbook*, teaches:

“For most of us, an important way we experience communion and mission is in our respective parishes. It is there that we hear God’s Word and are nourished by the Eucharist so that we can live the reality of our communion with God and each other. In the Parish setting we experience power in the Eucharist. Its energy sends us forth in mission to evangelize and serve, inviting others to share our life.”

A commitment to Christian stewardship by our parish communion allows us to teach, heal, inspire, and offer hope to the world as an expression of our faith in Jesus Christ that all we have to give comes from Him who brought us together.

*“This is how all will know that you are my disciples,
if you have love for one another.”* (John 13:35)

IV. GIVING BACK TO GOD THE FIRST FRUITS OF OUR LABORS

The fourth fundamental principle of Christian stewardship is acknowledging with gratitude that even our material goods and financial resources come from God. The Christian steward not only recognizes the gifts of assets and income, but also commits to giving God the very “first fruits” of these resources. This commitment is referred to as “sacrificial giving.”

American Spending Priorities

Many consider Americans to live in the most profligate consumer society in the world. Consider how the average American spends his or her discretionary income. According to studies completed within the last few years, Americans annually spend their discretionary income in some of the following ways:

- \$92.9 billion on soft drinks, including bottled water
- \$60 billion on diets
- \$40 billion on pets
- \$32.5 billion on sports activities
- \$28.2 billion on candy
- \$21 billion on beauty care products
- \$12.3 billion on specialty coffee
- \$9.9 billion on video games
- \$5.4 billion on cut flowers

This list is truly a reflection of our culture’s priorities. It is a great challenge to practice Christian stewardship in our modern culture, which considers these spending habits as desirable and “good for the economy.” The question that challenges us is: Does this list suggest something about our own patterns of spending?

Freedom from Consumption

Our culture encourages us to believe that we are what we have and consume. In this culture, the capacity to consume is the essential proof of a successful life, and the consumption of goods becomes a demonstration of status to oneself and to society. In contrast, Jesus invites His disciples to practice inward freedom from consumption. Those who aspire to embrace Christian stewardship will heed the Beatitude, “*Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven*” (Matthew 5:3), and will renounce a preoccupation with possessions and consumption.

The Christian message makes clear that avoiding the compulsion to consume brings freedom regarding consumption. The Christian argument makes the case for not constructing our happiness on the basis of consumption and material prosperity alone. Moreover, Christian stewardship compels us to manage all of our material goods effectively and efficiently, to avoid waste, and to invest prudently.

Putting God First

The Christian steward understands that the slavery to consumerism must be challenged by consciously deciding to give God the first fruits of our labors. Sacrificial giving is how we,



as Christian stewards, describe giving to God the first portion of our material wealth, our financial resources, our money. Implicit in sacrificial giving is the recognition by Christian disciples that everything that we have — our time, our health, our relationships, our material possessions, our money — are gifts from God. The Holy Spirit helps us recognize the need we have in our hearts to give a portion of these gifts back to God with a generous heart.

We practice sacrificial giving most concretely by giving generously to the local Church, to our parish communion, and to the community at large through charitable and civic organizations. As the Bishops' Pastoral Letter states: "*And parishioners must accept responsibility for their parishes and contribute generously, both money and personal service — to their programs and projects*" (*Stewardship: A Disciple's Response*, p. 32).

Sacrificial Giving

After conscious decisions have been made to make prayer a daily habit, to spend time nurturing our family relationships, and to give something of ourselves to the worshiping communion, it is now time to reflect on these essential elements of sacrificial giving:

Sacrificial giving is a prayerful decision. The first element of sacrificial giving is that it is a decision borne out of prayer, recognizing the Holy Spirit urging on our need to return to God the "first fruits" of the material wealth we have earned or acquired. This step means taking time out to pray and make a deliberate decision to change our spending habits in order to make God the first recipient of our income.

Sacrificial giving is deliberately planned. The second element of sacrificial giving means being responsible to budget a certain amount to give back to the Lord, taking care to account for family needs and obligations, and taking into consideration the family's resources and personal circumstances.

How much should we give? There is no magic number. But we can start with an assessment of our level of giving now. Is the proportion of our income that we give back to God the first portion? And does that portion adequately reflect our gratitude for God's generosity?

Some people use the biblical tithing of the first 10 percent of their income as a guideline. Many Christian thinkers in the area of stewardship recommend that we give 5 percent to our parish through the offertory collection, 1 percent to the Archdiocese and 4 percent to other charities that serve the poor and needy and support the common good in our communities.

The chart on the next page gives guidance of how total household income translates into percentages of giving to the offertory collection. Again, there is no "right" answer. Our gift is our return to God of a portion of the gifts God has given us, which we choose to share with our parish and other charities. Our decision about the amount we give will be one that makes sense and truly reflects our gratefulness to God for the gifts we have received.

"Every one shall give as they are able, according to the blessing of the Lord your God which God has given you." (Deuteronomy 16:17)

Sacrificial giving calls for sacrifice. The third element is that a commitment be made that requires us to go beyond our consumer behavior’s “comfort zone.” The proportion of our gift becomes sacrificial when it causes us to cut back on other spending habits. When we give out of our need, like the Gospel story of the Widow’s Mite, then we experience spiritual transformation.

Perhaps the most important lesson we can take from this third element is that if we can give our gift and not notice it, it is not a sacrificial gift. The element of sacrifice is present when something about our life has to change in order for us to be able to give the gift. We re-prioritize our spending habits, we reconsider our values. Then, every time we make our sacrificial gift, we are able to recall the reasons why we chose to give.

Sacrificial giving is the steward’s way of following the Lord, who sacrificed everything so that we might have eternal life. We give up something of ourselves so that others can flourish. Then, we, in turn, experience an even deeper relationship with Christ.

When giving becomes sacrificial, it compels us to look toward our true source of security — God. When we give away something we think we need to survive, we acknowledge that our material gains will not take care of us, will not save us. Only God will make us safe, and recognizing this reality helps to raise our consciousness about discipleship.

“Let each one do just as He has purposed in his heart; not grudgingly or under compulsion; for God loves a cheerful giver.” (2 Corinthians 9:7)

GUIDE FOR GIVING

HOUSEHOLD INCOME		WEEKLY GIVING TO THE PARISH		
MONTHLY	YEARLY	3% WEEKLY	4% WEEKLY	5% WEEKLY
\$ 500.00	\$ 6,000.00	\$ 3.50	\$ 4.50	\$ 5.75
\$ 835.00	\$10,000.00	\$ 6.00	\$ 8.00	\$10.00
\$1,665.00	\$20,000.00	\$12.00	\$15.00	\$19.00
\$2,085.00	\$25,000.00	\$14.00	\$19.00	\$24.00
\$2,500.00	\$30,000.00	\$17.00	\$23.00	\$29.00
\$2,915.00	\$35,000.00	\$20.00	\$27.00	\$34.00
\$3,335.00	\$40,000.00	\$23.00	\$31.00	\$38.00
\$3,750.00	\$45,000.00	\$26.00	\$35.00	\$43.00
\$4,165.00	\$50,000.00	\$29.00	\$38.00	\$48.00
\$5,000.00	\$60,000.00	\$35.00	\$46.00	\$58.00
\$5,835.00	\$70,000.00	\$40.00	\$54.00	\$67.00
\$6,665.00	\$80,000.00	\$46.00	\$62.00	\$77.00
\$7,500.00	\$90,000.00	\$52.00	\$69.00	\$87.00
\$8,335.00	\$100,000.00	\$58.00	\$77.00	\$96.00





SCRIPTURAL TEXTS

SCRIPTURAL TEXTS

Sacred Scripture is a storehouse of messages — that instruct us on stewardship and what it means to be good stewards of God’s gifts to us. Following are some verses for your reflection:

Old Testament

- Genesis 1:30-31 *“... and to all the animals ... birds ... and all the living creatures ... I give all the green plants for food.’ And so it happened. God looked at everything that He had made, and He found it very good.” [Stewardship, environment]*
- Genesis 2:15 *“The Lord God then took the man and settled him in the garden ... to cultivate and care for it.” [Stewardship, environment]*
- Genesis 28:22 *“Of everything you give me, I will faithfully return a tenth part to you.” [Jacob on tithing]*
- Leviticus 27:30 *“All tithes of the land, whether in grain from the field or in the fruit from the trees, belong to the Lord, as sacred to Him.”*
- Deuteronomy 4:9 *“However, take care and be earnestly on your guard not to forget the things which your own eyes have seen, nor let them slip from your memory as long as you shall live, but teach them to your children and to your children’s children.” [Family]*
- Deuteronomy 8:18-19 *“Remember then, it is the Lord, your God, Who gives you the power to acquire wealth, by fulfilling, as He has now done, the covenant which He swore to your fathers. But if you forget the Lord, your God, and follow other gods, serving and worshipping them, I forewarn you this day that you will perish utterly.”*
- Deuteronomy 14:22, 29 *“Each year you shall tithe all the produce that grows in the fields you have sown ... so that the Lord, your God, may bless you in all that you undertake.”*
- Deuteronomy 15:10 *“When you give to him [needy kinsman], give freely and not with ill will; for the Lord, your God, will bless you for this in all your works and undertakings.” [Sacrificial giving, sharing]*
- Deuteronomy 16:16-17 *“... No one shall appear before the Lord empty-handed, but each of you with as much as he can give, in proportion to the blessings which the Lord, God has bestowed on you.”*

Deuteronomy 26:2-4	<i>“... you shall take some first fruits of the various products of the soil which you harvest from the land which the Lord, your God, gives you, and putting them in a basket ... you shall go to the priest ... (who will) set it in front of the altar of the Lord, your God.”</i>
1 Chronicles 29:14	<i>“... For everything is from You, and we only give You what we received from You ...”</i>
1 Chronicles 29:16	<i>“O Lord our God, all this wealth that we have brought together to build You a house in honor of Your holy name comes from You and is entirely Yours.”</i>
2 Chronicles 31:5	<i>“As soon as the order was promulgated, the Israelites brought, in great quantities, the best of their grain, wine, oil and honey, all the produce of the fields; they gave a generous tithe of everything.”</i>
Psalms 24:1	<i>“The earth is the Lord’s and all it holds, the world and those who live there.”</i>
Psalms 103:2-5	<i>“Bless the Lord, my soul; do not forget all the gifts of God, Who pardons all your sins, heals all your ills, delivers your life from the pit, surrounds you with love and compassion, fills your days with good things ...” [Trust in God]</i>
Psalms 104:14-15	<i>“You raise grass for the cattle and plants for our beasts of burden. You bring bread from the earth, and wine to gladden our hearts, oil to make our faces gleam, food to build our strength.” [Trust in God]</i>
Psalms 116:12	<i>“How can I repay the Lord for all the good done for me?”</i>
Proverbs 3:9-10	<i>“Honor the Lord with your wealth, with first fruits of all your produce; then will your barns be filled with grain, with new wine your vats will overflow.”</i>
Proverbs 11:25	<i>“He who confers benefits will be amply enriched, and he who refreshes others will himself be refreshed.”</i>
Proverbs 12:14	<i>“From the fruit of his words a man has his fill of good things, and the work of his hands comes back to reward him.”</i>

- Ecclesiastes 2:18-19, 21 *“And I detested all the fruits of my labor under the sun, because I must leave them to a man who is to come after me. And who knows whether he will be a wise man or a fool? Yet he will have control over all the fruits of my wise labor under the sun. This also is vanity ... For here is a man who has labored with wisdom and knowledge and skill, and to another, who has not labored over it, he must leave his property. This also is vanity and a great misfortune.”*
- Sirach 7:10 *“Be not impatient in prayers, and neglect not the giving of alms.”*
- Sirach 35:7-10 *“In generous spirit pay homage to the Lord, be not sparing of freewill gifts. With each contribution show a cheerful countenance, and pay your tithes in a spirit of joy. Give to the Most High as He has given to you, generously, according to your means. For the Lord is One Who always repays, and He will give back to you sevenfold.”*
- Isaiah 49:15 *“Can a mother forget her infant, be without tenderness for the child of her womb? Even should she forget, I will never forget you.” [Trust in God, respect life]*
- Isaiah 58:7 *“Sharing your bread with the hungry, sheltering the oppressed and the homeless; clothing the naked when you see them, and not turning your back on your own.”*
- Jeremiah 17:7-8 *“Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, whose hope is the Lord. He is like a tree planted beside the waters that stretches out its roots to the stream: It fears not the heat when it comes, its leaves stay green; In the year of drought it shows no distress, but still bears fruit.” [Trust in God]*
- Micah 6:8 *“You have been told, O man, what is good, and what the Lord requires of you: Only to do the right and to love goodness, and to walk humbly with your God.” [Prayer and sharing]*
- Malachi 3:10 *“... Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse. That there may be food in my house, and try me in this, says the Lord of Hosts: Shall I not open for you the floodgate of heaven, to pour down blessings upon you without measure?”*
- New Testament**
- Matthew 3:2, 8 *“Reform your lives ... Give some evidence that you mean to reform.”*

Matthew 5:1-12	Beatitudes
Matthew 5:16	<i>“Just so, your light must shine before others that they may all see your good deeds and glorify your heavenly Father.”</i>
Matthew 5:23-24	<i>“Therefore, if you bring your gift to the altar, and there recall that your brother has anything against you, leave your gift there at the altar; go first and be reconciled with your brother, and then come and offer your gift.”</i> [Offertory gifts, reconciliation]
Matthew 6:2-4	<i>“When you give alms, do not blow a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets to win the praise of others ... But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right is doing, so that your almsgiving may be secret and your Father who sees in secret will repay you.”</i>
Matthew 6:19-21	<i>“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth ... But store up treasures in heaven ... For where your treasure is, there also will your heart be.”</i> (See also, Luke 12:34)
Matthew 6:24	<i>“No man can serve two masters. He will either hate one or love the other or be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.”</i> (See also, Luke 16:13)
Matthew 6:25-34	Dependence on God [Birds of the air, flowers in the field]
Matthew 7:24, 26	<i>“Everyone who listens to these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock. And everyone who listens to these words of mine but does not act on them will be like a fool who built his house on sand.”</i> [Way of life, discipleship]
Matthew 10:8	<i>“Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, drive out demons. Without cost you have received; without cost you are to give.”</i>
Matthew 10:42	<i>“You can be sure that whoever gives even a drink of cold water to one of the least of my followers, will certainly receive a reward.”</i>
Matthew 13:4-23	The Parable of the Sower
Matthew 13:31-32	The Parable of the Mustard Seed (See also Mark 4:30-32)
Matthew 13:44	The Parable of The Hidden Treasure

Matthew 13:45-46	The Parable of the Costly Pearl
Matthew 14:16	<i>“Give them something to eat yourselves.”</i> [Miracle of loaves and fish, sharing]
Matthew 16:27	<i>“... He will repay everyone according to his conduct.”</i>
Matthew 19:19	<i>“... and ‘you shall love your neighbor as yourself.’”</i> [Sharing]
Matthew 19:21-24	<i>“Jesus said (to the young man), ‘If you wish to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; Then come follow me.’ When the young man heard this statement, he went away sad, for he had many possessions. Then Jesus said ... ‘it will be hard for one who is rich to enter the kingdom of heaven ... it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for one who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.’”</i> (See also, Mark 10:21-25)
Matthew 20:1-16	The Parable of the Generous Employer and Workers in the Vineyard
Matthew 20:26	<i>“‘But it shall not be so among you. Rather, whoever wishes to be great among you shall be your servant.’”</i> [Service] (See also, Mark 10:43-44)
Matthew 22:15-22	Story of <i>“... repay to Caesar what belongs to Caesar ...”</i> (See also, Mark 12:13-17; Luke 20:20-26)
Matthew 22:37-40	<i>“He said to him, ‘You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the greater and first commandment. The second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. The whole law and the prophets depend on these two commandments.’”</i> (See also, Mark 12:30-31)
Matthew 24:45-47	<i>“Who, then, is the faithful and prudent servant, whom the master has put in charge of his household to distribute to them their food at the proper time? Blessed is that servant whom his master on his arrival finds doing so. Amen, I say to you, he will put him in charge of all his property.”</i> [Stewardship] (See also, Luke 12:42-43)
Matthew 25:14-30	Parable of the Silver Pieces (Talents)
Matthew 25:40	<i>“... Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.”</i> [Sharing, justice]

Mark 12:43-44	<i>“... this poor widow put in more than all the other contributors to the treasury. For they have contributed from their surplus wealth, but she, from her poverty, has contributed all she had, her whole livelihood.” (See also, Luke 21:3-4)</i>
Mark 13:34	<i>“He leaves home and leaves his servants in charge, each with his own task.” [Stewardship]</i>
Luke 3:11	<i>“Let the man with two coats give to him who has none. The man who has food should do the same.”</i>
Luke 5:27-28	<i>“(Jesus) said to him, ‘Follow me.’ And leaving everything behind, he got up and followed him.” [Discipleship]</i>
Luke 6:38	<i>“Give and it shall be given to you ... For the measure you measure with will be measured back to you.”</i>
Luke 6:43-44	<i>“A good tree does not bear rotten fruit any more than a rotten tree bears good fruit. Each tree is known by its fruit.”</i>
Luke 7:41-43	The Parable of the Two Debtors [Forgiveness, love]
Luke 10:25-37	The Parable of the Good Samaritan [Sharing, compassion]
Luke 11:5-8	The Parable of the Friend at Midnight [Sharing]
Luke 12:15	<i>“Then He said to the crowd, ‘Take care to guard against all greed, for though one may be rich, one’s life does not consist of possessions.’”</i>
Luke 12:16-21	The Parable of the Rich Fool
Luke 12:48	<i>“Much will be required of the person entrusted with much, and still more will be demanded of the person entrusted with more.”</i>
Luke 13:7-9	<i>“(A person) said to the gardener, ‘For three years now I have come in search of fruit on this fig tree but have found none ...’ He said to him in reply, ‘Sir, leave it for this year also, and I will cultivate the ground around it and fertilize it; it may bear fruit in the future. If not, you can cut it down.’”</i>
Luke 14:28-30	The Parable of the Tower Builder [Prudence]
Luke 14:33	<i>“... none of you can be My disciple if he does not renounce all his possessions.”</i>

Luke 15:3-7	The Parable of the Lost Sheep
Luke 15:8-10	The Parable of the Lost Coin
Luke 15:11-32	The Parable of the Prodigal Son
Luke 16:1-8	Parable of the Dishonest Steward
Luke 16:19-31	Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus
Luke 18:1-8	The Parable of the Persistent Widow
Luke 18:9-14	The Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector
Luke 19:8	<i>“Behold, half my possessions, Lord, I shall give to the poor.”</i> [Repentance, sharing]
John 6:27	<i>“You should not be working for perishable food but for food that remains unto life eternal.”</i> [Eucharist]
John 9:4	<i>“We must do the deeds of Him who sent Me while it is still day.”</i>
John 12:26	<i>“Whoever serves Me must follow Me, and where I am, there also will My servant be. The Father will honor whoever serves Me.”</i>
John 14:21	<i>“He who obeys the commandments he has from Me is the man who loves Me. And whoever loves Me will be loved by My Father ...”</i>
John 15:12, 16	<i>“This is My commandment: love one another as I have loved you ... it was I who chose you to go forth and bear fruit that will remain, so that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you.”</i>
John 19:26-27	<i>“When Jesus saw His mother and the disciple whom He loved, He said to His mother, ‘Woman, behold your son.’ Then He said to the disciple, ‘Behold your mother.’ And from that hour the disciple took her into his home.”</i> [Caring for family]
John 20:21	<i>“As the Father has sent Me, so I send you.”</i>
John 21:15-17	<i>“Jesus said, ‘Tend My sheep ... Feed My sheep.’”</i>
Acts 2:44-45	<i>“... Those who believed shared all things in common; they would sell their property and goods, dividing everything on the basis of each one’s need.”</i>

- Acts 4:35 *“... to be distributed each according to his needs.”*
- Acts 20:35 *“... recall the words of Jesus: ‘There is more happiness in giving than receiving.’”*
- Romans 12:6 *“We have gifts that differ according to the favor bestowed on each of us.”*
- 1 Corinthians 3:7-9 *“Therefore, neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God, Who causes the growth. The one who plants and the one who waters are equal, and each will receive wages in proportion to his labor. For we are God’s co-workers; you are God’s field, God’s building.”*
- 1 Corinthians 4:1-2 *“Men should regard us as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God ... Moreover, it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful to his gifts.”*
- 1 Corinthians 4:7 *“What do you possess that you have not received?”*
- 1 Corinthians 12 Chapter on Spiritual Gifts and the Body of Christ
- 1 Corinthians 16:2 *“On the first day of the week each of you should set aside and save whatever he can afford ...”*
- 2 Corinthians 8:2-5 *“... for in a severe test of affliction, the abundance of their joy and their profound poverty overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. For according to their means, I can testify, and beyond their means, spontaneously, they begged us insistently for the favor of taking part in the service to the holy ones, and this, not as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord ...”*
- 2 Corinthians 9:6-10 *“Consider this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each must do as already determined, without sadness or compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. Moreover, God is able to make every grace abundant for you, so that in all things, always having all you need, you may have an abundance for every good work. As it is written: ‘He scatters abroad, He gives to the poor; His righteousness endures forever.’ The One Who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed and increase the harvest of your righteousness.”*

- Philippians 1:3-5 *“I give thanks to my God at every remembrance of you, praying always with joy in my every prayer for all of you, because of your partnership for the Gospel from the first day until now.”*
- Colossians 1:10-12 *“... to live in a manner worthy of the Lord, so as to be fully pleasing, in every good work bearing fruit and growing in the knowledge of God, strengthened with every power, in accord with his glorious might, for all endurance and patience, with joy giving thanks to the Father, who made you fit to share in the inheritance of the holy ones in light.”*
- 2 Thessalonians 1:11 *“To this end, we always pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of His calling and powerfully bring to fulfillment every good purpose and every effort of faith ...”*
- 1 Timothy 5:8 *“And whoever does not provide for relatives and especially family members has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.”*
- 1 Timothy 6:6-10 *“Indeed, religion with contentment is a great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, just as we shall not be able to take anything out of it. If we have food and clothing, we shall be content with that. Those who want to be rich are falling into temptation and into a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires, which plunge them into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is the root of all evils, and some people in their desire for it have strayed from the faith and have pierced themselves with many pains.”*
- 1 Timothy 6:17-19 *“Tell the rich in the present age not to be proud and not to rely on so uncertain a thing as wealth but rather on God, Who richly provides us with all things for our enjoyment. Tell them to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous, ready to share, thus accumulating as treasure a good foundation for the future, so as to win the life that is true life.”*
- Titus 2:14 *“(Jesus Christ), Who gave Himself for us to deliver us from all lawlessness and to cleanse for Himself a people as His own, eager to do what is good.”*
- Titus 3:14 *“But let our people, too, learn to devote themselves to good works, to supply urgent needs, so that they may not be unproductive.”*

Hebrews 13:16

“Do not neglect good deeds and generosity. God is pleased by sacrifices of that kind.”

James 2:14-17

“What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister has nothing to wear and has no food for the day, and one of you says to them, ‘Go in peace, keep warm, and eat well,’ but you do not give them the necessities of the body, what good is it? So also faith of itself, if it does not have works, is dead.”

James 4:3

“You ask and you do not receive because you ask wrongly, with a view to squandering what you receive on your pleasures.”

1 Peter 4:9-10

“Be hospitable to one another without complaining. As each one has received a gift, use it to serve one another as good stewards of God’s varied grace.”



PART TWO:

Invitation to Christian Stewardship

PART TWO: INVITATION TO CHRISTIAN STEWARDSHIP

THE IMPORTANCE OF PARISH LEADERSHIP

Stop! Read this First!

Effectively introducing the parish to Christian stewardship requires long, hard work. Some parishes will be tempted to leap headfirst into the process without really preparing, treating this introduction as just another program. This blind attempt without adequate formation and preparation of the leadership will prove frustrating. The attempt will surely fail, and the parish will have a hard time persuading its parishioners to trust enough to accept the invitation again for a long time.

Three groups of parish leaders must believe that inviting the parish to accept Christian stewardship is the right thing to do if the effort is to succeed. They are:

- First** **—————>** **The Pastor**
- Second** **—————>** **The Stewardship Commission**
- Third** **—————>** **The Parish Pastoral Council**

If the pastor is not thoroughly convinced, if the Stewardship Commission is not converted and willing to work, or if the Parish Pastoral Council is not sufficiently informed of the efficacy of introducing Christian stewardship, do not accept the invitation to introduce the full concept of Christian stewardship this year. If either the pastor, or the Stewardship Commission, or the Parish Pastoral Council is not ready, then the parish will not be ready. Instead, introduce the concept of Christian stewardship gradually over the course of the year to the parish leadership first.

In order to be ready to extend the invitation to a life of Christian stewardship to the entire parish, we suggest the parish leadership and the other interested parishioners spend time studying the Bishops' Pastoral Letter, *Stewardship: A Disciple's Response*. The Tenth Anniversary Edition of the document includes appendices with parish study guides to assist you in this process. See also Appendix III of this manual for a parish study program.

The Parish as a Model of Stewardship

The parish leadership cannot insist on individual parishioners making prayerful acts of faith toward embracing a life of stewardship without there being a real sense of reciprocity on the part of the parish. Indeed, the parish will make the leap of faith only after parish leadership has embraced the principles of Christian stewardship. It must be a sign of Christian stewardship to those people to whom it calls to the Eucharistic table.



The Catholic Bishops urge parishes to be models of Christian stewardship:

“Parishes, too, must be, or become, true communities of faith within which this Christian way of life is learned and practiced. Sound business practice is a fundamental of good stewardship, and stewardship as it relates to church finances must include the most stringent ethical, legal, and fiscal standards. That requires several things: pastors and parish staff must be open, consultative, collegial, and accountable in the conduct of affairs. And parishioners must accept the responsibility for their parishes and contribute generously — both money and personal service — to their programs and projects. The success or failure of parish programs, the vitality of parish life or its absence, the ability or inability of a parish to render needed services to its members and the community depend upon all.” (Stewardship: A Disciple’s Response, p. 32)

The parish must be a place that models Christian stewardship. It must be a place that provides hospitality, is committed to enriching liturgy, and practices justice and peace in the community. On the following pages, we will review the role and responsibilities of each of the three sets of parish leaders necessary before the parish invitation to Christian stewardship should be undertaken.

THE PARISH INVITATION TO CHRISTIAN STEWARDSHIP BEGINS WITH THE PASTOR

The pastor's commitment and active involvement in the invitation process is vital if Christian stewardship is to be infused in the life of the parish. Without the pastor's leadership and participation, the invitation to stewardship in the parish will fail. Parishioners will be inspired to accept Christian stewardship in direct proportion to the pastor's ability to give inspirational leadership. It is the pastor who will be key in helping the faithful respond to Christ's call.

The Role of the Pastor

A pastor will successfully foster Christian stewardship if he is committed to the spirituality of stewardship as a way of life for himself and the parish. In addition he will:

- Understand that prayer is central to stewardship, and also pray that the people in the parish will grow spiritually as a result of embracing stewardship.
- Focus on being faithful, not successful, in stewardship.
- Promote hospitality.
- Share with the parish his personal commitment to Christian stewardship and show tangible signs of his commitment to give witness to parishioners.
- Support the Stewardship Commission in its own formation in stewardship.
- Use the witness of lay parishioners to give testimony about stewardship.
- Conduct annual invitations to Christian stewardship.
- Encourage involvement in the life of the parish community.
- Be accountable, providing adequate reporting in the weekly bulletin of the benefits derived from using parishioners' gifts, and submitting a regular reporting of sacramental activity, community outreach as well as income and expenses to the parish.
- Personally participate and encourage the parish leadership to participate in an annual Archdiocesan Stewardship Day.
- Embrace Scripture passages that affirm the principles of stewardship.
- Encourage ongoing parish outreach and giving to the poor.
- Thank people for all they do to serve God by serving others.

The pastor should not attempt to work this process by himself! He should use the Stewardship Commission and the Parish Pastoral Council to make the invitation a priority.

THE STEWARDSHIP COMMISSION

The Archdiocese of Detroit's *Parish Pastoral Council Guidelines and Handbook* defines the mission of the Stewardship Commission as being the service group to the Parish Pastoral Council that, with council approval, implements actions on understanding Christian stewardship as well as on parish financial support and the effective management and use of parish resources. These resources include parishioners' time, skills and talents and financial support.

The Stewardship Commission is the working group that takes lead responsibility for introducing Christian stewardship to the parish.

PRELIMINARY REFLECTIONS FOR THE STEWARDSHIP COMMISSION

1. An appropriate disposition

It is important that commission members make their own commitment to prayer and understand that their primary motivation should be the concern for parishioners' relationships with God, not about the needs of the parish or raising more money — as important as those temporal concerns may appear to be.

2. Personal commitment to stewardship

Commission members should become personally committed to Christian stewardship. The Stewardship Commission should have its own formation sessions on the importance of Christian stewardship. The study materials in the Tenth Anniversary Edition of *Stewardship: A Disciple's Response* and Appendix III are valuable resources for this purpose.

3. Envision where Christian stewardship can take the parish

The commission should be able to reflect on how the parish's commitment to Christian stewardship can cause the parish to grow both spiritually and materially.

COMMISSION RESPONSIBILITIES FOR THE STEWARDSHIP FORMATION EFFORT

1. Establish a Stewardship Implementation Committee as a standing committee of the commission. Monitor the committee's work.
2. Help the pastor recruit lay witnesses.
3. Prepare a "ministry and service opportunities" list or catalog of parish activities and organizations, and keep the list or catalog current.
4. Ensure that the invitation to Christian stewardship is renewed annually.
5. Evaluate parish stewardship and awareness efforts on an annual basis.
6. Publicize stewardship thoughts in the parish bulletin on a weekly basis.

7. Publish stewardship reflections in a parish newsletter.
8. Encourage support for stewardship through the prayers of the faithful.
9. Establish a welcoming program for parishioners. Work with the appropriate parish commissions to develop programs for welcoming parishioners, whether it be by personal visits, in group meetings, or through the mail. Be sure to include a discussion of, and materials about, Christian stewardship in the presentation and/or the packet.

THE PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL

The third group to have on board when a Christian stewardship invitation process is being considered is the Parish Pastoral Council (PPC). A final decision to implement a parish-wide invitation to Christian stewardship must ultimately come from the PPC. Remember, an important task of the PPC is to encourage and enable the sharing of gifts and resources by everyone in the parish. This is a vital stewardship function. These functions of encouraging and enabling are vital to the life of stewardship in a parish.

Providing Leadership

The PPC is the leadership body within the parish communion. Its mission is to set the broad direction for the parish. As the Archdiocese's *Parish Pastoral Council Guidelines and Handbook* indicates, the PPC safeguards and promotes the unity of the parish family and assists in the growth and development of the parish as a people of faith. Because the infusion of stewardship is so vital to the formation of the entire parish communion, the PPC must be involved to affirm this infusion.

Prayer and Discernment

Before stewardship is introduced to the parish, the PPC must commit the process to prayer and discernment. An important aspect of the PPC mission is to reflect on the vision, the hopes, and the needs of the parish communion. Therefore, since the first fundamental aspect of Christian stewardship is prayer and discernment, it is appropriate that the PPC discerns the movement of the Holy Spirit among the people in the parish.

Pastoral Planning

If the PPC decides that the parish is ready for the infusion of Christian stewardship, it should then engage in planning, to give direction to the Stewardship Commission. As a consultative body to the pastor, it is the coordinating and unifying structure of the parish communion. It will determine the direction the stewardship effort will take and it will oversee that the process is implemented by the parish commissions and committees. The PPC is the means of achieving the participation of the entire parish in its mission. All existing groups, organizations, societies, clubs, and committees within a parish communion relate directly, or indirectly, to the PPC. It is at the commission level that the PPC's decision is implemented. The commissions are where the real work of the stewardship effort will take place, particularly in the follow-up phase.

If Not This Year . . .

If the PPC does not yet understand the concept of Christian stewardship, or if it is not convinced of the efficacy of stewardship for the parish at the present time, or if the PPC does not believe this year is the time to invite the parish to Christian stewardship, stop right now and concentrate on a program of stewardship education and discernment for the PPC this year.

THE STEWARDSHIP IMPLEMENTATION COMMITTEE

1. The Stewardship Commission should select parishioners to serve on the special Stewardship Implementation Committee who have demonstrated personal qualities that contribute to success. Look for individuals who are accountable (they do what they say they are going to do when they say they are going to do it), persistent, optimistic, organized, and patient.
2. The Stewardship Implementation Committee should take the lead in ensuring that the parish leadership studies the Bishops' Pastoral Letter, *Stewardship: A Disciple's Response*, and understands the concepts of Christian stewardship described in it. One approach we suggest the committee consider for this process of education and discernment is to encourage the members of the Parish Pastoral Council, commissions, and other parish leadership committees to incorporate reading passages of the Pastoral Letter as the education segment at each of their meetings. The questions for discussion and reflection at the end of each section of the Pastoral Letter will be a helpful resource in this education effort. When your parish first embarks on the journey to embrace Christian stewardship as a way of life, this suggested process of education and discernment will take several months.
3. The members of this Stewardship Implementation Committee will need to be empowered by the pastor, the Parish Pastoral Council and the Stewardship Commission to coordinate the preparation, the weekends, and the follow-up of the Christian stewardship invitation process. This empowerment must be communicated to all council commissions, committees, and parish organizations and clubs. There must be a clear understanding among parish leaders that the Committee members are empowered to hold the organizations accountable for their work in the stewardship process.
4. During the follow-up phase, the Stewardship Implementation Committee members must ensure that those who commit to volunteer their time, talents, and skills in the parish are contacted and personally asked to become involved by the appropriate organization. This activity of the committee is probably its most challenging task. If people are not personally contacted, and instead just have their names put on a shelf or in a computer, they are unlikely to get involved in the stewardship effort in future years. They will also start to believe that all that was wanted was their money.

THE THREE PHASES OF THE INVITATION TO CHRISTIAN STEWARDSHIP

The following pages will give you the framework of the invitation to Christian stewardship in three phases. On pages D-1 through D-3, you will find a comprehensive timetable that allows you to see the activity that is to take place in each of the phases. The phases are described briefly as follows:

Phase I is the preparation stage for the invitation process that begins perhaps as long as a year prior to and with Week 1.

Phase II of the invitation process begins in Week 2 with the mailing of Pastor Letter #1 and follows through the succeeding stewardship weekends up to and including Commitment Weekend. It is most effective when the Pastor Letters and other correspondence are personalized using computer document merge techniques.

Phase III is the follow-up process. This phase begins with the sorting of Commitment Forms that parishioners return on Commitment Weekend, sending acknowledgment letters, acknowledging volunteers in bulletin announcements, and following-up with non-respondents.



PHASE I
Preparation

PHASE I – PREPARATION

TIMETABLE I – CALENDAR FOR CONDUCTING A CHRISTIAN STEWARDSHIP INVITATION

To allow your parish flexibility in conducting your stewardship invitation at any time of the year, we suggest that you first establish the date of your Commitment Weekend then fill in the dates working backward from there. We suggest the following timetable for introducing Christian stewardship to the parish:

Week 1

- Insert 1st Bulletin Announcement.
- Pastor and Stewardship Commission begin recruitment of lay witnesses to speak at all Masses on Weekend 4 and Weekend 7.
- Order parish letterhead and envelopes from local printer.
- Schedule volunteers to help with mailings to parishioners.
- Design or order stewardship brochures.
- Plan special activities, such as making posters or banners.
- If a “ministry fair” is to take place, inform all groups of the scheduled weekend.

Week 2

- Insert 2nd Bulletin Announcement.
- Lay witnesses meet with pastor to coordinate remarks for Lay Witness Presentation #1.
- Prepare a list of ministry and service opportunities in the parish.
- Mail: (1) Pastor Letter #1 (middle of Week 2).
(2) Brochure #1, *Christian Stewardship* (with Pastor Letter #1).

Weekend 2

- Pastor Homily #1 on Christian Stewardship and Prayer.

Week 3

- Insert 3rd Bulletin Announcement.
- Prepare text of Lay Witness Presentation #1 for mailing.
- Mail: (1) Pastor Letter #2 (middle of Week 3).
(2) Brochure #2, *Praying to God with Grateful Hearts* (with Pastor Letter #2).

Week 4

- Insert 4th Bulletin Announcement.
- Mail: (1) Pastor Letter #3 thanking lay witnesses (end of Week 4).
(2) Brochure #3, *Nurturing Our Family with Time and Love* (with Pastor Letter #3).
(3) Lay Witness Presentation #1 text (with Pastor Letter #3).



Weekend 4

- Lay Witness Presentation #1.

Week 5

- Insert 5th Bulletin Announcement.
- Lay witnesses meet with pastor to coordinate remarks for Lay Witness Presentation #2.
- Mail: (1) Parish Pastoral Council (PPC) Letter (middle of Week 5).
(2) List of ministry and service opportunities (with PPC Letter).
(3) Brochure #4, *Sharing Our God-Given Gifts with the Parish Communion* (with PPC Letter).

Weekend 5

- Optional — Hold a “ministry fair.”

Week 6

- Insert 6th Bulletin Announcement.
- Prepare text of Lay Witness Presentation #2 for mailing.

Week 7

- Insert 7th Bulletin Announcement.
- Mail: (1) Pastor Letter #4 thanking lay witnesses (end of Week 7).
(2) Brochure #5, *Giving Back to God the First Fruits of Our Labors* (with Pastor Letter #4).
(3) Lay Witness Presentation #2 text (with Pastor Letter #4).

Weekend 7

- Lay Witness Presentation #2.

Week 8

- Insert 8th Bulletin Announcement.
- Mail: Lay Witness Acknowledgment Letter (middle of Week 8).

Weekend 8

- Pastor Homily #2 on Sacrificial Giving.

Week 9

- Insert 9th Bulletin Announcement.
- Mail: (1) Pastor Letter #5 (beginning of Week 9).
(2) Commitment Form (with Pastor Letter #5).
- Optional — Place Commitment Forms and pencils in the pews.

Weekend 9

- COMMITMENT WEEKEND
- Present completed Commitment Forms at Mass.
- Optional — In pew solicitation.

Week 10

- Insert 10th Bulletin Announcement.

Week 11

- Insert 11th Bulletin Announcement (can be run more than one week).
- Mail: (1) Commitment Form Acknowledgment Letters to parishioners who have returned Commitment Forms (beginning of Week 11).
(2) Follow-up Letter to those who have not responded.
- Optional — Telephone call to those who have not responded.

Volunteer Acknowledgment

- Insert Volunteer Acknowledgment Bulletin Announcement (can be inserted Week 10 or Week 11).

MATERIALS NEEDED FOR THE INVITATION PROCESS

A. Letters

1. Pastor Letter #1 – middle of Week 2
2. Pastor Letter #2 – middle of Week 3
3. Pastor Letter #3 – end of Week 4
4. Letter from Parish Pastoral Council (PPC) – middle of Week 5
5. Pastor Letter #4 – end of Week 7
6. Lay Witness Acknowledgment Letter – middle of Week 8
7. Pastor Letter #5 – beginning of Week 9
8. Commitment Form Acknowledgment Letter – beginning of Week 11
9. Follow-up Letter

B. Brochures

1. Brochure #1, *Christian Stewardship* (with Pastor Letter #1)
2. Brochure #2, *Praying To God with Grateful Hearts* (with Pastor Letter #2)
3. Brochure #3, *Nurturing Our Family with Time and Love* (with Pastor Letter #3)
4. Brochure #4, *Sharing Our God-Given Gifts with the Parish Communion* (with PPC Letter)
5. Brochure #5, *Giving Back to God the First Fruits of Our Labors* (with Pastor Letter #4)
6. Commitment Form (with Pastor Letter #5)

C. Text of Lay Witness Testimonies

1. Lay Witness Presentation #1 text mailed (with Pastor Letter #3)
2. Lay Witness Presentation #2 text mailed (with Pastor Letter #4)

D. Bulletin Announcements

- 1st Bulletin Announcement – Week 1
 - 2nd Bulletin Announcement – Week 2
 - 3rd Bulletin Announcement – Week 3
 - 4th Bulletin Announcement – Week 4
 - 5th Bulletin Announcement – Week 5
 - 6th Bulletin Announcement – Week 6
 - 7th Bulletin Announcement – Week 7
 - 8th Bulletin Announcement – Week 8
 - 9th Bulletin Announcement – Week 9
 - 10th Bulletin Announcement – Week 10
 - 11th Bulletin Announcement – Week 11
- Volunteer Acknowledgment Bulletin Announcement

E. Banners/Posters

F. List of Ministry and Service Opportunities (with PPC Letter)

VOLUNTEERS

At the very outset of the Christian stewardship invitation, every parishioner should be made to feel that he or she is important; that everyone has something of deep significance to contribute. The invitation to stewardship must go out to everyone in the parish: young and old, healthy and homebound, rich and poor. Stewardship extends into every area of human life. The smallest act of kindness, Jesus told us, will not go without its reward.

A stewardship invitation in your parish reminds people that opportunities for prayer and for service to God and neighbor are all around us all the time. Most people are only waiting to be asked. Even those who might be suffering from ill health can offer their prayers and their suffering in solidarity with other members of the faith communion.

Volunteers and the Stewardship Effort

The act of helping to conduct the parish stewardship invitation is in itself an act of stewardship. There are many tasks that need to be performed when the concept of Christian stewardship as a way of life is initially presented. In conducting a stewardship invitation in your parish you will need individuals for:

- Designing artwork, posters and banners
- Preparing text of lay witnesses for distribution
- Printing cover letters
- Organizing materials for mailings
- Stuffing envelopes, affixing stamps or preparing mail for bulk mailing
- Tabulating commitment results
- Placing Commitment Forms in the pews
- Sorting information on the sharing of God-given gifts portion of the Commitment Form and subsequent distribution to the appropriate commission or committee for follow-up
- Conducting follow-up contact by letter
- Conducting follow-up contact by phone
- Sending thank you notes to all who took their time to return completed Commitment Forms
- Reporting results to the Parish Pastoral Council and a general report on the results to be printed in the parish bulletin or newsletter
- Preparing for the annual renewal effort

THE LAY WITNESS TESTIMONY

The most effective means of inviting people to embrace Christian stewardship is to have people with whom they share the Eucharist get in front of the congregation and give testimony, to tell the story of their life of grace.

The purpose of the lay witness testimony is to inspire people to accept the invitation to Christian stewardship. The lay witness has a simple message — to share their own personal stories of living the life of the Christian steward. Lay witnesses convey powerful stories of transformation, from Eucharist to mission. People are motivated by hearing that Christian stewardship is a source of joy and peace for those who give testimony. Hearing personal stories can lead to changes of heart and authentic conversion.

We suggest that the testimony of the lay witness come right after the Word of God is proclaimed and then preached. This gives the congregation a clear, communications continuum from **Proclamation to Preaching to Testimony**.

Selecting the Lay Witnesses

Careful consideration should be given to selecting the lay witnesses.

Testimony can be given by individuals, couples, and, in some cases, even children.

The lay witnesses should be people who are considered to be practicing Christian stewardship in their own family lives. Keep the following points in mind when selecting lay witnesses:

- Is the lay witness a person of prayer?
- Is the lay witness a person who is committed to the family?
- Is the lay witness a person who shares his or her talents with the parish?
- Is the lay witness a person who supports the Church financially?
- Is the lay witness articulate about his or her faith and can speak to a group?

Sample Outline for Composing a Lay Witness Talk

1. Introduce yourself

While many of your fellow parishioners will know you, some may not. Give a description of your family, the number of years in the parish, etc.

2. Properly define Christian stewardship

Christian stewardship is a response we make in gratitude to God for what He has given to us. It is a deliberate, conscious decision to commit overall to the fundamentals of Christian stewardship: prayers, family life, sharing skills and talents, and giving financially to your parish.

3. **Discuss how you began practicing Christian stewardship**

When did you first become aware of the concept? Did you have reservations? Be honest about your first reactions. People relate to any feelings of discomfort. How did your family react to the idea? Was the initial “plunge” difficult? How did you go about it?

4. **Share when you began to experience the benefits**

Speak of the effect that Christian stewardship has had on your faith life. Use anecdotes from your own family life if possible. How do you and your family practice stewardship?

5. **Urge your fellow parishioners to get involved**

Invite the congregation to join you and your family in making your parish a stewardship parish. Ask them to look at all that God has given to them and make a generous response to His many gifts.

Tips for Presenting a Lay Witness Talk

An important part of people’s acceptance of the concept of Christian stewardship is the personal witness and individual testimony you provide with your presence, as well as the way you give your talk. The following are tips you should consider in preparing your comments:

- Prepare your personal remarks so you are comfortable with them. Use your own style, wording, and delivery. Write out your talk word-for-word. If you feel comfortable with the approach, use notes or key words to guide you through your presentation so that it is more natural.
- For you to give a good presentation, it is best to rehearse your talk aloud. Reading it silently will not have the same effect. If it is possible, practice it in the church when no one is there, using the sound system. Be comfortable enough with your material so that you can look up from your notes and make eye contact. In a large church, remember to turn to the sides occasionally to include everyone.
- Make sure that the pastor sees a copy of your remarks and offers suggestions.
- Nervousness can make your throat dry. If you think this may happen, have a glass of water in an unobtrusive place — and take a sip if you need it.
- Above all, be sincere, enthusiastic, and friendly.

DO (if time permits and if any of these “fit” into your talk):

- Emphasize that Christian stewardship begins with gratitude to God for all His gifts — in other words, an energetic prayer life.
- Explain that Christian stewardship means giving of the “first fruits,” not what is left over.
- Talk about the personal need of each Christian to give of their time, talent, and treasure.
- Stress, “Many of you know from your own giving experience that what I have told you is true.” (In thanks to those who are already generous.)
- Stress the sense of joy and fulfillment that comes to those who give God the first share of their time, talent, and treasure as a way of expressing their gratitude and trust in God.
- Talk about intentional, planned, and proportionate giving. Explain what it means to you to give from your substance.

- Emphasize that it is important to give all three — time, talent, and treasure.
- Explain that Christian stewardship involves not only Church (parish and archdiocese); it also includes community.
- Ask parishioners to consider giving a percentage of their time and treasure.

DON'T

- Talk in bargaining terms (such as, “I gave this much time or treasure and God gave me this in return.”).
- Stress parish needs or budget.
- Talk in dollar or time amounts: “If everyone could give \$10 a week” ... “we need \$5 more a week” ... “give our fair share” ... “if everyone could give 3 hours per week.”
- Use threats of possible consequences stemming from the failure to give: “We won’t be able to heat or air-condition the church” ... “We’ll have to close the school.”
- Suggest that Christian stewardship is an obligation.

Getting Started and Ending Up

Many find that the hardest part of the talk is getting started and winding up. To open your stewardship talk, introduce yourself: “Good morning (evening), I’m Jane Smith and this is my husband, John. We are parishioners here at St. Joseph along with our three children, Anne, Jennifer, and Kevin. We’d like to share with you what Christian stewardship means to our family and how it has affected our lives.”

The following is a suggested closing paragraph: “As we continue with our liturgy today, and our gifts are brought forward, let each of us ask ourselves if this gift of our treasure that we offer today is truly a measure of the gratitude we have for what God has given us. Let us look at what we give to our Church and the community in terms of time and service, and ask ourselves if this, also, is proportionate to God’s gifts to us.”

Examples of Lay Witness Presentations

The following are actual presentations given by lay witnesses. While these presentations are individualized and obviously cannot be used as they are, they serve as models for how lay witness presenters can express their thoughts.

Lay Witness Sample Presentation #1

Stewardship means different things to different people. Let me share with you what Christian stewardship has come to mean to me.

Reflecting back on the time spent growing up in Ohio, I’ve realized more and more not only how loving my parents were but also how wise they were. I learned a lot from my parents, but there are four things I learned from their example that have had a particular impact on my life. First was that God loves us. He is good and we can trust Him. Second was that each of us is given certain gifts and talents and one of our responsibilities in life is to discover what those gifts and talents are, develop them, and use them to benefit others. Third was that to whom more is given, more is expected. Fourth was that having a job and spending time with your

family is important, but not enough. We also need to spend time being with and helping others.

With that kind of learning and my parents' kind of example, I did not have a great deal of difficulty in grasping the concept of stewardship of time and talent. I didn't call it that, but I did it. From the time I was in high school onward, I made sure I spent time doing things for and with other people, mostly through different types of volunteer work. As I continued to give of my time and talent, I realized that I was growing spiritually. God and other people became a more important part of my life.

After graduating from college and moving to Charlotte, I continued to give of my time and talent through various Church groups and community boards. Yet something was still missing. You see, I gave of my time and talent but not my treasure. I reasoned that I spent so much time in Church and community activities that I didn't need to give regularly to the Church or other community groups. Sure, I gave some, but it was sporadic and unplanned.

It wasn't until my wife and I made an Engaged Encounter seven years ago that I started to look even more seriously at my relationship with God. We realized that we couldn't hold back on any area of our giving because God wasn't holding back on any area of His giving. We also decided that we wanted God to be the center of our marriage. That led us to a decision to start giving of our treasure in a planned and proportionate way. We then started giving 2 percent of our income to the Church and other charities. Now, five years later, we are giving at 8 percent of our income to the Church and to other charities.

As we continued to give, we've learned that we are growing more spiritually and that our faith is deepening. By giving as we have, we have tried to place material things and money in their proper perspectives. That has caused us to look at what we need versus what we want. For example, when we bought a new home almost two years ago, we bought a somewhat smaller house than we might have if we hadn't been practicing stewardship of treasure.

Stewardship has become a way of life for us. It's not always easy, but we try to live it. Presently, I am spending eight hours a week in volunteer work outside of my job and my wife is spending three hours per week in volunteer work. In the area of treasure, 80 percent of our giving is Church-related while the other 20 percent goes to community agencies. My wife and I are planning to move to the biblical tithe, 10 percent of our income, next month. Stewardship of time, talent, and treasure has been and will continue to be an important part of our lives.

Lay Witness Sample Presentation #2

Stewardship: What is it? How do we do it? Will we like it? Does it hurt? Will it work for us? Why should we do it?

These are many of the questions that passed through my mind as we first considered stewardship in my parish. We looked at various programs in existence and the more I looked at them the more I became convinced stewardship was something our parish should do. I guess I was really experiencing my own conversion to stewardship as a way of life. I kept seeing that the Church could never flourish and grow if everyone was supporting it like I was, with a contribution each week that I would frequently miss.

As I look back at my own decision on stewardship and its maturation in the last five years, I notice that my ideals have changed some. There were lots of reasons that I felt we should begin stewardship in our family. God has been very good to us. My husband and I have two healthy, happy children.

We have finally passed through the struggling years in our own business and now had time to think about other things. As I began to think about the Church and what it meant to me, I realized that if everyone was making the kind of limited volunteer and financial commitment that I was then the Church would not be here for my children. There was no other way it could continue with no higher level of support from me and other parishioners.

Besides, I had great expectations of the Church. It should be well equipped to teach my children all about the wonders of God. It should be able to care for the sick, feed the needy, care for the elderly.

If my expectations were right, then I had to do my part to make them a reality. I was already giving some time to the Church and with that time, my talents. But there had to be a stronger commitment of time and a commitment of treasure if the Church was going to be able to do all the things I wanted it to.

Once I decided that perhaps stewardship was something our family needed to think about, I was rather hesitant to bring it up for family discussion. My husband is non-Catholic. Would he feel the same as I do? How would we handle contributions of time and treasure to two churches? After we talked about how we felt and agreed that it was something we would try, my husband offered a simple solution. We would give one fourth of our treasure to his church and three-fourths to my parish since our two children were members of our parish. We have never had a problem with this method.

Since we made our decision on stewardship, I think our outlook on lots of things has changed. We have become more supportive of various worthwhile needs and organizations in the community. I think it opened an avenue of thought that allows us to give without always questioning what we will get in return.

I came to embrace stewardship through the Church but I have grown in stewardship to include the entire community. I feel that God expects us to minister to all people. My gifts of stewardship may be given to anyone who needs it. It is the giving and the support of God's children that is important. The spiritual rewards, the feeling of accomplishment that you are following God's way are the important things that you will reap from stewardship. You will know you are succeeding when the spirituality and feelings of stewardship far surpass the questions of how much you should give.

SACRED MUSIC FOR STEWARDSHIP WEEKENDS

The following list of hymns is offered for the Worship Commission's consideration when planning the liturgies for stewardship weekends:

GIA's *Gather* hymnal:

At Evening
City of God
Gather Us In
Here I Am, Lord
The Harvest of Justice
One Bread, One Body
Song of the Lord's Supper
We Are Called
We Are Many Parts

GIA's *Worship III* hymnal:

Come to Us, Creative Spirit
Go Make Us All Disciples
Help Us Accept Each Other
Lord Whose Love in Humble Service
O God, Empower Us
Said Judas to Mary
Seek Ye First the Kingdom of God
This Is My Commandment
What Is This Place

NALR's *Glory & Praise* hymnal:

All that We Have
All the Ends of the Earth
Beginning Today
Bloom Where You're Planted
City of God
Earthen Vessels
Great Things Happen
Here I Am, Lord
O, That I Had a Thousand Voices
One Bread, One Body
Take, Lord, Receive

OCP's *Music Issue/Breaking Bread* hymnal:

Christ's Place
City of God
Come to the Water
Gather Us In
Here I Am, Lord
I Heard the Voice of Jesus
In Christ There Is No East or West
The Lord is My Hope
Prayer of St. Francis
Seek Ye First
Send Us As Your Blessing, Lord
Send Us Forth
Sent Forth by God's Blessing
Servant Song
Sing of the Lord's Goodness
What Is This Place
We Are Many Parts
Whatsoever You Do

Note: We encourage your Worship Commission to add to this list other stewardship related hymns as they become available.



PHASE II

Stewardship Weekends

PHASE II – STEWARDSHIP WEEKENDS

SAMPLE BULLETIN ANNOUNCEMENTS

Following are suggested bulletin announcements for use during the Christian stewardship invitation process. You should adapt them to your parish circumstances.

1st Bulletin Announcement

On the weekend of [DATE], our parish will begin an in-depth reflection on Christian stewardship as a way of life. Christian stewardship is based on the spiritual principles of the Old Testament and the teachings of Jesus in the New Testament. It is a way of thanking God through our prayers for all the blessings He has given us and by returning to Him a portion of our many gifts through sharing our time, talent, and treasure with our parish communion. Christian stewardship can change the spiritual lives of both individuals and our parish as a whole.

2nd Bulletin Announcement

Christ has called all of us to live lives of gratitude, thanking God for all that we have and all that we are. Christians respond to God's generosity by cultivating their gifts wisely, sharing them generously, and realizing that God deserves the first fruits of our blessings. In the coming weeks, we will be invited to learn more about what it means to be a Christian steward.

3rd Bulletin Announcement

Our parish family has been invited to reflect on the importance of Christian stewardship, which provides a spirituality you can take home from church, exercise at work, and express through involvement in the parish and community. The first fundamental principle of Christian stewardship is prayer. A Christian steward makes time to pray every day. By taking time to pray, we allow God to speak to our hearts. We also learn to be better disciples of Jesus. Let us begin a new habit: Be a good steward of our time and our relationship with the Lord. Make a commitment to pause each day to speak with God, listen to Him, and thank Him for His many blessings. At all Masses next weekend, we will hear from [NAMES OF LAY WITNESSES] who will share how Christian stewardship affects their lives.

4th Bulletin Announcement

Christian stewardship is the outward expression of Christian discipleship that fundamentally involves prayer, nurturing our families, and sharing our time, talent, and treasure with others. Next weekend, the Parish Pastoral Council will host a ministry fair in the [PLACE] after all the Masses. Please plan to join us that weekend to learn about the various parish ministries and organizations and the many volunteer opportunities that we have available for you. This weekend, we thank [NAMES OF LAY WITNESSES] for speaking with us about their personal experiences with Christian stewardship and what it has meant in their lives.

5th Bulletin Announcement

Where Christian stewardship has been implemented, it has changed the lives of both givers and receivers. Parishes depend on the generosity of their people, especially when it comes to the sharing of both time and talent. One of the fundamental principles of Christian



stewardship is sharing our God-given gifts of time and talents with our parish communion. As disciples of Jesus Christ, we are obliged to give some form of service to our parish family according to our skills. This week, after all Masses, the Parish Pastoral Council is hosting a ministry fair. Please join us in the [PLACE] and learn about our various parish ministries and organizations and the many volunteer opportunities that we have available to you. Then, please reflect this week on what you can do for the parish to share your love for the Lord.

6th Bulletin Announcement

“There are different kinds of spiritual gifts but the same Spirit; there are different forms of service but the same Lord” (1 Corinthians 12:4-5). In St. Paul’s first letter to the Christian community at Corinth, he instructs the faithful that through the Spirit, they are blessed with many gifts. As Christian stewards, we, too, realize that our numerous gifts come from God and that in gratitude, our calling is to discover, develop, and share these many blessings with our parish family.

7th Bulletin Announcement

“Give the Most High as He has given to you, generously, according to your means” (Sirach 35:9). This Scripture passage reiterates a teaching that is found many times in the Bible. God has been generous to us with many blessings. His generosity is never outdone. Christian stewardship begins with prayer, nurturing our families, and sharing our gifts of time, talent, and treasure with others. Stewardship also means being accountable for all God has entrusted in us. We thank [NAMES OF LAY WITNESSES] for speaking with us this weekend on how they are making Christian stewardship a way of life in their family.

8th Bulletin Announcement

Do our spending habits make room for God? Do we opt to give back to God before we make those daily specialty coffee purchases or second movie rentals? When we change our spending habits even a little, foregoing small non-essentials in order to offer something more to God, we are on the road to good Christian stewardship.

Besides praying and sharing our time and talent with others, Christian stewardship includes giving back to God some of our earnings through the parish offertory. Some Catholics choose the biblical norm by giving 10% (a tithe). Some, because of circumstances, give more than that. Others might start at 2 or 3% and work upward. After prayerful thought about the size of your gift, when you do not find yourself making excuses for its size, when you know in your heart that you have been completely honest with God and yourself, then your gift is the proper size.

Next weekend, [DATE], is Christian stewardship Commitment Weekend, the weekend everyone in our parish family is invited to give something of their time, talents, and income to the Lord. All of us can offer some service to the Lord through [NAME OF THE PARISH] and most of us can give more to the offertory collection. Commitment Forms will be available next weekend at all Masses. Please pray and consider giving more of yourself and your income to the Lord, Jesus Christ.

9th Bulletin Announcement

God has given us many gifts. How do you use them? How do you put them at the service of our Lord and our brothers and sisters at [NAME OF THE PARISH]? Today we are being asked to commit ourselves to be good stewards of the gifts God has entrusted to us, to share our time, talent, and treasure as a sign of the love and gratitude we have for Him.

This is Commitment Weekend. To the many parishioners who returned their Commitment Forms today, a heartfelt thank you. If you did not bring your Commitment Form to Mass today, it is not too late. Please return your forms by either dropping them off or mailing them to the parish office this week, or by returning them next week at Mass. Again, thank you for your participation in this important event for our parish family.

10th Bulletin Announcement

A sincere thank you to the many parishioners who returned their Commitment Forms last weekend. If you forgot to bring your Commitment Form to Mass today, it is not too late. Please drop them off at or mail them to the parish office this week. Again, thank you for your participation in this important event for our parish family.

Taking good care of our parish family is like taking good care of our immediate family. We nurture and bless our parish family when we join in prayer and song at Mass and when we offer to work in a ministry or volunteer for a service activity. We also help our parish family when we make a sacrifice and put our offering into the weekend offertory collection.

The purpose of the stewardship Commitment Form is to inform the pastor and our parish family that we intend to pray and participate in the life of the parish by giving our time to some ministry or service activity and that we will help the parish by promising to contribute to the offertory collection every week whether we use offertory envelopes or not.

If you have not completed your stewardship Commitment Form please stop by the parish office and do so. It serves as a testimony to your faith in God, it will help the parish understand the level of your commitment, and it will be a blessing to you.

11th Bulletin Announcement (can be run more than one week)

Again, a heartfelt thank you to those parishioners who have returned their Christian stewardship Commitment Forms over the last few weeks. For those parish members who have not, please return or mail them to the parish office.

Volunteer Acknowledgment Bulletin Announcement (can be run Week 10 or Week 11)

For several weeks, our parish communion has been learning what it means to practice Christian stewardship as a way of life. Preparations for the education and discernment process went on “behind the scenes” for several months before. The richness of this learning experience was made possible through the enthusiastic and dedicated work of many volunteers and the parish staff who shared their time and their talent in the many tasks required as we begin our stewardship journey. I am personally grateful for their efforts and pleased to acknowledge their contribution to this important enrichment of our parish life. Please join me in thanking: [NAMES OF VOLUNTEERS AND STAFF].

Sincerely yours in Christ,
[NAME OF PASTOR]



SAMPLE PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL

Prayers of the Faithful — Week 1

Lord, as our parish family begins its journey of making Christian stewardship a way of life, may we be open to share our time, talent, and treasure with one another, our parish and our neighbors

... we pray to the Lord ...

Prayers of the Faithful — Week 2

Lord, give our parish family the desire to do Your will, to live our lives with gratitude, and to recognize Your gracious presence in all that we have and all that we are

... we pray to the Lord ...

Prayers of the Faithful — Week 3

That we have the openness to be good stewards of God's many blessings

... we pray to the Lord ...

Prayers of the Faithful — Week 4

Lord, make us trustworthy stewards of Your abundant blessings. Show us ways that will enable us to fully embrace Your teachings

... we pray to the Lord ...

Prayers of the Faithful — Week 5

That the Spirit of love and compassion breathe the life of God into every ministry of our Church and parish community

... we pray to the Lord ...

Prayers of the Faithful — Week 6

That we, as good stewards, be willing to share our time and talents with our families, our parish, (our school) and our community

... we pray to the Lord ...

Prayers of the Faithful — Week 7

May we be good stewards by giving back to God a generous portion of our financial gifts

... we pray to the Lord ...

Prayers of the Faithful — Week 8

That we exhibit good stewardship of God's blessings of our time, talent, and treasure by returning to Him a portion of these blessings

... we pray to the Lord ...

Prayers of the Faithful — Week 9

For the many blessings which God has bestowed upon us and which are represented by our Commitment Forms collected today, that these gifts may enable us to carry out more effectively the mission of the parish, the archdiocese, and the mission of the universal Church

... we pray to the Lord ...

Prayers of the Faithful — Week 10

That our Church and parish communion be good stewards of God's abundant grace

... we pray to the Lord ...

Prayers of the Faithful — Week 11

That our parish communion continue every day to commit itself to Christian stewardship as a way of life

... we pray to the Lord ...

SAMPLE PASTOR LETTER 1

[DATE]

[FAMILY NAME]
[ADDRESS]
[CITY, STATE ZIP]

Dear [NAME]:

All of us are called by the Lord to be His disciples, and who among us does not want a closer relationship with God? Many times, however, we are so preoccupied with our daily affairs that we fail to see discipleship as God calling to each of us. As Christians, it is good to pause and take time out to listen to the Lord calling us.

During the next several weeks, our parish communion will learn more about how each one of us can become a better Christian, a disciple of Christ. We will be learning about Christian stewardship, the outward expression of Christian discipleship.

For many of us, stewardship has only one meaning — giving of our financial resources. The fact is, Christian stewardship can be a very beautiful and harmonious way of life. Its meaning is far more encompassing than simply giving. Stewardship involves prayer, nurturing our families, and sharing our God-given gifts with others.

Enclosed is a brochure, *Christian Stewardship*. As we begin our Christian stewardship journey, please take a few minutes to read the brochure and learn more about the true meaning of stewardship. I think you will find it helpful.

In addition, we will be hearing in the future about Christian stewardship from people and their personal experiences with stewardship and what it has meant in their lives.

Please pray for our parish communion as we take this stewardship journey together in response to the Lord's call.

Sincerely yours in Christ,
[PASTOR'S NAME]
Pastor

Enclosure

SAMPLE PASTOR LETTER 2

[DATE]

[FAMILY NAME]

[ADDRESS]

[CITY, STATE ZIP]

Dear [NAME]:

As we come to learn more about the essence of Christian stewardship, it is important that we not neglect the significance of prayer in our daily lives. Prayer is the first fundamental principle of Christian stewardship. It is the foundation on which we base our most meaningful relationship with the Lord.

Prayer is one of God's greatest gifts to us. Just as Jesus Christ often paused from His ministry to pray, we, too, should find time in our busy lives to tune into God's presence and open ourselves to His love. We are disciples of the Lord, and prayer is a wonderful way for us to thank God for His many blessings and to ask Him for guidance and support.

Enclosed is a brochure, *Praying to God with Grateful Hearts*. I ask that you please read it and reflect on your life of prayer. I hope this brochure will inspire you to embark on a spiritual journey to Christian stewardship through prayer and to deepen your relationship with the Lord.

To continue our process of learning more about Christian stewardship and its value in everyday life, we will hear lay witness testimony from some of your fellow parishioners during the weekend Masses of [DATES]. Please join me in welcoming them as they share their personal experiences with stewardship and its impact on their daily journey.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

[PASTOR'S NAME]

Pastor

Enclosure



SAMPLE PASTOR LETTER 3

[DATE]

[FAMILY NAME]
[ADDRESS]
[CITY, STATE ZIP]

Dear [NAME]:

For the past couple of weeks, we have been learning about Christian stewardship. While prayer is the first fundamental principle of Christian stewardship, nurturing our family is the second.

Christians are called to exercise good stewardship by nurturing family relationships. With Christ as its center, the family is a sign of Christian love in the world today. The Holy Spirit strengthens family relationships, whether they are between husband and wife, parent and child, or brother and sister.

The hustle and bustle of today's hectic world often limit the amount of time families are able to spend with each other. But it is important that families make time to share in each other's lives. This period of "family time" brings families closer to each other and to God.

Please review and reflect on the enclosed brochure, *Nurturing Our Family with Time and Love*. I pray that this brochure will bring you to a deeper understanding of the family and its relationship to the true spirit of Christian stewardship.

This past weekend, we heard from [NAMES OF LAY WITNESSES]. I want to thank them for their witness. I enclose a copy of their testimony for your reflection. I hope that it will help provide some guidance and inspiration for you as we continue on our journey toward becoming faithful Christian stewards.

Sincerely yours in Christ,
[PASTOR'S NAME]
Pastor

Enclosure

SAMPLE LETTER FROM THE PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL

[DATE]

[FAMILY NAME]

[ADDRESS]

[CITY, STATE ZIP]

Dear [NAME]:

During the past few weeks, we have been introduced to two of the fundamentals of Christian stewardship. This week, our pastor, [NAME OF THE PASTOR], has asked me to write to you about another fundamental principle of Christian stewardship, sharing our time and talents with the parish communion. Enclosed for your reflection is a brochure, *Sharing Our God-Given Gifts with the Parish Communion*. As chair of the Parish Pastoral Council, I am pleased to provide some thoughts on this principle of stewardship and to invite you to consider how we might best answer God's call to share and give of ourselves.

All of us have been given unique and special gifts by God. Answering the call to discipleship means that we share these gifts with others, beginning with our families and friends and with those who are part of our parish communion.

There are many ways in which you can share your time and talent with our parish. A list of opportunities that are available at [NAME OF PARISH] is enclosed with this letter. Giving just a little of your time, or whatever your circumstances will allow, will not only be a blessing for our parish and for those whom these activities touch, but it can also provide you great personal joy and satisfaction as you help others and develop a closer relationship with God working through your parish family.

You will soon receive a Commitment Form that will prompt you to consider sharing your God-given gifts in the spirit of Christian stewardship. Please take some time between now and then to review the opportunities that are available and ask God for guidance as you reflect on this aspect of Christian stewardship.

On behalf of the leaders of the commissions and organizations that serve you at [NAME OF PARISH], thank you for considering how you might give of yourself to others for the glory of God and spiritual growth of our parish.

Sincerely yours in Christ,
[CHAIR'S NAME]
Parish Pastoral Council

Enclosure

SAMPLE PASTOR LETTER 4

[DATE]

[FAMILY NAME]

[ADDRESS]

[CITY, STATE ZIP]

Dear [NAME]:

For the last several weeks, we have been reflecting on the fundamentals of Christian stewardship. We have listened to testimony from parishioners and read about how to be good stewards of our prayer lives, our family lives, and our parish communion. It is now appropriate that we spend time reflecting on the fourth fundamental of Christian stewardship, giving back to God the first fruits of our labors.

As Christian stewards, we are aware that everything we have, including our financial blessings, come from God. As consumers, we are constantly tempted to use our financial resources in a way that is not consistent with the teachings of Sacred Scripture. While facing this challenge, it is our responsibility as Christian stewards to examine our spending habits and our priorities in light of the Gospel.

Enclosed is a brochure, *Giving Back to God the First Fruits of Our Labors*. Please review this brochure prayerfully and reflect on it with your family.

This past weekend, we heard stewardship testimony from [NAMES OF LAY WITNESSES]. I thank them for their witness. I enclose a copy of their testimony for your reflection. I hope that it will help provide some guidance and inspiration for you as we continue on our journey toward Christian stewardship.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

[PASTOR'S NAME]

Pastor

Enclosure

SAMPLE PASTOR LETTER 5 (COMMITMENT FORM LETTER)

[DATE]

[FAMILY NAME]

[ADDRESS]

[CITY, STATE ZIP]

Dear [NAME]:

For the past several weeks, we have been on a journey together as a parish communion — a journey to help us grow in our faith and love for God, our families, and one another. I pray that the outcome of our effort of learning and reflection will be one of celebration and joy as we become better stewards and better prepared to answer God’s call to discipleship.

The time has come to formalize our commitment to the fundamentals of stewardship. I ask you to reflect on the information we have provided over the past weeks, as well as the contents of the enclosed Commitment Form. I then ask you to respond to the statements provided in the form as your circumstances allow. God will bless you for your responses.

On [DATE], we will present the commitments we have made into the offertory and dedicate our commitments as a parish communion to God. Please bring your completed Commitment Form to one of the Commitment Weekend Masses and join with the rest of our parish in celebrating our growth and renewed relationship with God.

Thank you for your prayers and for your participation in this important event for our parish.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

[PASTOR’S NAME]

Pastor

Enclosure

(See Sample Christian Stewardship Annual Commitment Form, Appendix II.)

SAMPLE LIST OF MINISTRY AND VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

(See Sample Christian Stewardship Annual Commitment Form, Appendix II.)

The following list of ministry and volunteer opportunities provides you with a broad view of the many ways that you can offer your time and talent to your parish and community. Please take a few minutes to review this list and then respond on this Commitment Form. *(Note: Items marked * are suitable for youth).*

Worship

- Worship Commission*
- Prayer Leaders Committee
- Prayer Group
- Communion Service Leaders
- Minister of Hospitality (usher) *
- Minister to Sick/Home Bound
- Eucharistic Minister
- Lector *
- Altar Server *
- RCIA Sponsor
- Marriage Preparation Team
- Liturgical Preparation Committee
- Art and Environment Committee
- Musician *
- Choir *
- Children's Choir *
- Christmas Choir *
- Ecumenical Committee (Interfaith Dialogue)
- Parish Spiritual Renewal Committee
- Renewals
- Retreats
- Missions
- Altar Society
- Legion of Mary

Education

- Education/Faith Formation Commission*
- Youth Ministry Committee *
- Youth Sponsor
- Young Adult Committee
- Vocation Awareness Committee *
- Religious Education Committee
- Catechist (Religious Education Teacher)
- Baptism Preparation Team
- Confirmation Preparation Team
- Family Life Committee
- Catholic School Committee
- Adult Education Formation Committee
- School Booster Committee

- Dad's Club
- Mom's Club
- Adult Education Volunteer

Christian Service

- Christian Service Commission *
- Food Pantry Volunteer *
- Food Deliveries to Sick/Shut-Ins *
- Hospital/Hospice Volunteer*
- Justice and Peace Committee
- St. Vincent de Paul Conference
- Knights of Columbus Council
- Project Life Volunteer
- Project Rachel Volunteer
- Bread for the World Committee*
- Campaign For Human Development (CHD) presenter
- Legislative Action Committee Member
- AIDS Ministry Volunteer
- Blood Drive Assistant
- Respite Care Volunteer
- Driver for Seniors

Evangelization

- Evangelization Committee
- Faith Sharing Group
- Newcomers Welcome Committee *
- Home Visit Team
- Outreach to Inactive Catholics Committee

Stewardship

- Stewardship Commission *
- Stewardship Education Committee
- Volunteer Coordinator
- Communications Committee
- Parish Bulletin Writer
- Hospitality Committee *
- Festival/Fund Raising Committee
- CSA Volunteer
- Parish Dinner Committee



PHASE III
Follow-up

PHASE III – FOLLOW-UP

ACKNOWLEDGE THE COMMITMENT FORMS!

You are now beginning Phase III of your stewardship effort. The Commitment Forms have been returned, and it is time to begin the follow-up portion of your effort. Organization is key — for tabulating the Commitment Forms; contacting the appropriate commission and committee members with volunteer information; acknowledging those who have responded by submitting Commitment Forms; and contacting those who have not responded.

You will receive the Commitment Forms from your parishioners either through the Commitment Weekend celebration of the Eucharist, at the parish office, or through the mail.

Now, what do you do with them?

Rule #1 Personalize! Personalize! Personalize!

When you are asking people to commit themselves to prayer, to spend more time with their families, to share their talents with their Church, and to give their money, it is very important to acknowledge with personalized letters the sacredness of the commitments they are making. Whether you have an army of volunteers or computer technology at your disposal, it is essential to ensure that the people making commitments are shown in a very personal way that they are valued and appreciated.

Rule #2 Acknowledge All of a Person's Commitments in an Appreciation Letter from the Pastor.

Upon receiving the Commitment Form, send the parishioner an Acknowledgment Letter, signed by the pastor, that acknowledges back to the parishioner the commitments that person or family sent to you. DO NOT simply acknowledge the monetary gift. They will think they have been manipulated all along just to get their offertory gift. (*See Sample Commitment Form Acknowledgment Letter on page F-2.*)

SAMPLE COMMITMENT FORM ACKNOWLEDGMENT LETTER

[DATE]

[FAMILY NAME]
[ADDRESS]
[CITY, STATE ZIP]

Dear [NAME]:

Our parish has been truly blessed with a faith communion that is prepared to take some extra steps in the practice of our discipleship. I am pleased with the way our parish has responded to the invitation to Christian stewardship and your own response has played an important part. Thank you for reflecting on your own life with God and for returning your Commitment Form. You are among the first members of our parish family to do so, and your leadership is sure to inspire others to follow your lead and formalize their personal commitments as well.

I am grateful that you have committed to spend time in prayer each day and quality time with your family.

I sincerely thank you for the commitment you have made to share your God-given gifts of time and talent to the following ministries and activities in the parish: [MINISTRY AND SERVICE].

I also thank you for your commitment to give back to God through the offertory collection in the amount of [AMOUNT OF COMMITMENT] for the [YEAR] calendar year.

None of us can ever truly comprehend God's unending love for us. As you can see from our parish's response to the call to be better stewards of our gifts as published in the bulletin, we all are making a wonderful effort to show, by our own measure, that our love of God is also great and that we want to follow Him as disciples.

Sincerely yours in Christ,
[PASTOR'S NAME]
Pastor

ACKNOWLEDGE THE VOLUNTEERS

As we have learned through these materials, developing an “attitude of gratitude” is an important component of Christian stewardship. In that spirit, it is important that the parish acknowledge the dedication and commitment of parish staff and volunteers, who worked to make possible the parish invitation to parishioners to embrace the life of a Christian steward. These individuals include the lay witnesses and those who staffed tables at the ministry fair, organized mailing materials, stuffed envelopes, designed publicity materials, tabulated commitment responses, and performed all those other tasks so vital to a successful stewardship education effort.

Acknowledge the Lay Witnesses in an Appreciation Letter from the Pastor

It is not easy to be a lay witness; for many people, public speaking is the most daunting challenge one can face. It is even more challenging when called on to share very personal experiences in a large group setting like Mass, especially when many in the congregation are strangers. Therefore, it is very important that the parish, through a personal letter from the pastor, show the lay witnesses how much their testimony is valued and appreciated.

(See Sample Lay Witness Acknowledgment Letter on page F-4.)

Acknowledge the Parish Staff and Volunteers

Hard work by many people is involved in bringing the message of Christian stewardship as a way of life to the parishioners. People appreciate being thanked for their efforts and gratitude is a fundamental principle of Christian stewardship. At a minimum, the parishioners who devoted their time and talent to the stewardship education effort should be recognized and gratefully acknowledged in the parish bulletin soon after Commitment Weekend.

In addition to recognition in the parish bulletin, you might consider a parish gathering, such as a dinner, reception, or parish picnic, to focus your parish’s attention on the rewards and challenges of Christian stewardship, and as an opportunity to thank in a meaningful way the noteworthy participation of volunteers and parish staff in bringing the stewardship message to the parish.

This opportunity to call people together in a celebration of grateful sharing and giving can also serve as a time to remind everyone that stewardship is a journey requiring continuing education and discernment as we strive to become more devoted disciples of Christ. Holding such an event annually will acknowledge the continued participation of volunteers in keeping the stewardship message alive.

(See Sample Acknowledgment Bulletin Announcement on page E-3.)

SAMPLE LAY WITNESS ACKNOWLEDGMENT LETTER

[DATE]

[FAMILY NAME]
[ADDRESS]
[CITY, STATE ZIP]

Dear [NAME]:

On behalf of all the leaders of the commissions and organizations that are represented at [NAME OF PARISH] and myself, I sincerely thank you for sharing your personal Christian stewardship experience and its impact on your daily lives. Your testimony provided meaningful guidance and inspiration to our parish communion.

Our parish has been truly blessed with a faith communion that is prepared to take some extra steps in the practice of our discipleship with our Lord, Jesus Christ. I am pleased with the way our parish is responding to the invitation to Christian stewardship. Your own testimony has played an important role.

Your prayers and sharing of God's gifts of time and talent are greatly appreciated. God bless you for your generosity!

Sincerely yours in Christ,
[PASTOR'S NAME]
Pastor

NON-RESPONDENTS: FOLLOW-UP

It is important to make contact with parishioners who have not responded to the invitation to Christian stewardship. Those who have not responded can be divided into three groups:

- | | | |
|-----------------|--|--|
| Group #1 | Those who need reminders | This group will usually respond with an additional letter, reminding them of the Commitment Form. Because of distractions, forgetfulness, or procrastination, those in this group simply need an extra “nudge” to get them to send in their Commitment Forms. |
| Group #2 | Those who need personal contact and encouragement | This group is more difficult to reach. They will not respond to an additional letter, and need the personal contact of a telephone call. They may feel alienated or suspicious of the invitation or fearful of the consequences the invitation may bring. This group will usually respond with a phone call from a member of the parish. |
| Group #3 | Inactive Catholics | This group is made up of those who, for whatever reason, are on the fringe of the parish, never sharing themselves, and are non-supporters. They likely do not attend Mass regularly. This group cannot be persuaded to respond, and concentrated evangelization efforts will be needed to reach them. |

A review of the parish files, especially offertory giving patterns, may help you determine where non-responding parishioners belong in these respective groupings. However, it may also be true that you will only be able to determine this by trying to encourage all non-respondents to respond.

We suggest this procedure:

1. Identify all non-respondents by comparing the respondents with the total parish registration roster. Make a separate list of the non-respondents. Consider grouping them according to offertory giving patterns: regular givers = Group #1, irregular givers = Group #2, non-givers = Group #3.
2. Send a follow-up letter to all non-respondents and include a Commitment Form. This mailing should identify Group #1 by the returns you receive. A sample letter is provided on the next page.
3. Wait two weeks. Then begin telephoning all those who still have not responded.

SAMPLE FOLLOW-UP LETTER

[DATE]

[FAMILY NAME]
[ADDRESS]
[CITY, STATE ZIP]

Dear [NAME]:

Recently, we offered several informative presentations on Christian stewardship, which emphasized our need to enter into a more prayerful life, to spend more time with our families, to share our time and talent with our parish and community, and to give a portion of our financial blessings back to God. The response to our effort has been very encouraging. More than [NUMBER] individuals and families have responded and made commitments to these fundamentals of Christian stewardship.

The invitation to Christian stewardship that we have undertaken during the past weeks is very important to our parish family. I want to be sure that everyone has an opportunity to take part in our process of renewing and deepening our relationship with the Lord. We have not yet received your response and would like very much to invite you to participate in our parish stewardship journey.

Enclosed is a Commitment Form for your convenience. Please take time to proclaim your commitment to prayer and your family, and to make a commitment of your time, talent, and financial resources to God through the parish. Please mail the Commitment Form, take it to the parish office, or drop it in the offertory collection at Mass.

God has blessed us in abundant fashion. We show our gratitude by being good stewards of His abundant gifts.

Thank you for your commitment to our parish and the community.

Sincerely yours in Christ,
[PASTOR'S NAME]
Pastor

Enclosure

TELEPHONE CONTACT

The following is a suggested approach to your telephone calls to parishioners who have not responded. Use it as a guideline in developing your parish's approach.

- Identify yourself as a fellow parishioner of [NAME OF PARISH] calling on behalf of [NAME OF PASTOR] and the parish.
- Make your calls from the parish office. Many people have caller ID service and may not answer your call if made from a phone unknown to them.
- Talk to the person(s) whose name is on the list, not to another member of the family. Ask them if this is a convenient time to talk with them. If it is not, politely ask when it would be more convenient for them. If they are not home, leave a detailed message that you are a fellow parishioner who is calling on behalf of the pastor and the parish, and ask for a time when you can reach them.
- The purpose of the call is to follow up on the pastor's homilies, lay witness testimony and mailings and to get the person to respond to the request for their commitments to prayer, family, parish and financial support.
- Most of the calls will be very positive. Not all parishioners will respond the same way and, regrettably, a few will be negative. Be sure that you remain positive and calm.
- Your responsibility is to talk to them about the Christian stewardship journey begun in the parish. Listen to what they say, give them enough opportunity to state their feelings, and then ask them to respond to the forms they have received in the mail.
- Signing the forms is an outward sign of making a commitment. No one will call them to task if they fail to live up to their commitment. Conditions may change, causing them to be unable to fulfill their commitment.
- Please make sure that parishioners know we appreciate the contribution they make to the parish. They may respond that they are already doing as much as they can. We would like them to list those current involvements on their forms.
- The issue here is for everyone to think about their blessings from God and to take a fresh look at how they exercise Christian stewardship. They may decide there is no need to change their existing level of contributions and, of course, that is their decision to make.

Please Note:

Do not be surprised if the person you have called has questions for you that you may not be able to answer. Often these calls provide an opportunity for the parishioner to ask questions about the parish. Do not guess at the answer. Write their question down and assure them that you will forward their question to the appropriate parish personnel, who will in turn respond to the question. And then be sure to do it!

Occasionally a name on the list will inform you that they are no longer a member of the parish. Make a note of this information. If they give a reason why they have left, note this also, and forward it to the parish office to update the records.

A Suggested Approach to the Telephone Calls

Hello, Mr., Dr., Mrs., Ms. or Miss, [NAME OF PARISHONER]. This is [NAME OF CALLER] from [PARISH] calling. Father [PASTOR'S NAME] asked me to call you on behalf of the Christian stewardship invitation we are conducting at our parish. Have you received our mailings from the parish over the last several weeks about Christian stewardship? The most recent one was sent with a letter and a Commitment Form.

If "YES":

Have you had a chance to read them?

May I answer any questions for you?

If "NO": I hope you will respond to Father [PASTOR'S NAME]'s request for your commitment. The Commitment Form can be brought to Mass this weekend.

[If they are undecided, try to get them to respond and complete the form.]

I encourage you to read it and to consider making a commitment to the parish.

Thank you.

If "NO" or "NOT SURE":

Let me give you an idea of what it is all about with the hope that you will respond to it.

For the last several weeks, the parish has been offering parishioners an invitation to Christian stewardship as a way of life as disciples of Christ.

Mailings that went out the last several weeks ask us to do four things. We have been asked to devote some time to prayer, to give additional time to nurturing our family, to share our time and talent with our parish, and finally, to give back to God the first fruits of our labors through the weekly offertory collection.

We are inviting parishioners to fill out the Commitment Form.

I hope that you will respond by completing the form and bringing it with you to Mass this weekend. If you would like us to send another form, we will do so.

(If a person wants another copy, verify their name and address and give it to the parish office for mailing.)

GROUP #3 – NO RESPONSE AT ALL

Those Who Have Not Responded at All

There are some people in every parish who are just not involved. They remain on the fringe of the parish, sharing neither time and talent, nor money or prayers for the needs of the parish. The reasons why these parishioners may be alienated could be endless. Who can tell what has gone on in their lives? They may feel the Church itself wronged them through a lack of compassion at a time of great personal need. The pain or separation which they have endured may not be easily or quickly repaired. But, for whatever reason, they have remained a member of the parish.

It is important to keep the lines of communication open to these parishioners by quietly letting them know the parish communion leaves the door open for them to share in our faith. Their presence in the parish communion, no matter how slight, may be like glowing embers in a fire that need to be fanned back to life. Do not deprive these parishioners of the opportunity to return to an active faith life. The process may be slow. Keep in mind that the longer a parishioner stays away, the more difficult it will be for them to return. However, by keeping in touch with them and keeping the lines of communication open, they may feel that they are always welcome no matter when they feel the desire to return to parish life.

Keep the Lines of Communication Open

- Include them on the newsletter mailing list.
- Send a special mailing at the beginning of the liturgical seasons of Advent, Lent, and Easter to inform these parishioners of the times of special services and liturgies.
- Keep them apprised of available services in the parish. Do not assume that they are aware of what is offered.
- Provide them with family centered prayer guides at no cost.
- Eventually, visit them and invite them to come home to the parish.

The important thing is that we do not go to them to ask for money. That is not, after all, what we really need from them. We need, instead, for them to become part of parish life again. We need them to share in our faith because it gives us strength. We need them to be part of our communion. We need them. That is the most important message for us to extend to them.



PART THREE:

Keeping Stewardship Alive

PART THREE: KEEPING STEWARDSHIP ALIVE

NEW PARISHIONERS AND CHRISTIAN STEWARDSHIP

Hospitality is a Hallmark of Christian Stewardship

Our parishes should be warm and welcoming communions of faith. This can be accomplished if every parishioner accepts his or her responsibility to extend hospitality to newcomers.

Share Christian Stewardship with New Parishioners

Welcome new parishioners into the communion of faith and let them know that your parish practices Christian stewardship. Information sheets and brochures can either be attached to the registration form, forwarded with the first month of weekly offertory envelopes, or incorporated into a parish handbook that is presented to new parishioners at the time of registration or official parish welcome.

Be a Hospitable and Welcoming Parish

The following are other ways to become a more hospitable and welcoming parish:

- Ministers of hospitality should be assigned for every Mass. These ministers are often the first contact a newcomer may have with a parish. Offering a warm smile and welcome, providing assistance in locating registration forms and parish bulletins, or being well informed about parish office hours and procedures says much about the hospitality of your parish.
- Provide new parishioners with a packet of information or booklet that includes the parish mission statement, a brief history of the parish, and a biography of the pastor, as well as information on church services, office hours, and a listing of services, committees, and organizations.
- Newcomers to the parish should be personally welcomed by someone from the parish within the first month. A personal welcome from the pastor, if not by visit or phone call, should at least be accomplished by a letter of welcome upon receipt of a new registration form.
- Adequate staffing should be provided at all times in the parish office. All staff members, as much as possible, should be present and available to assist parishioners during regular office hours.
- Regular offering of refreshments after every Mass enhances hospitality by encouraging informal contact and socializing among parishioners.
- Provide nursery care during weekend liturgies. Consider offering nursery and child care during parish meetings, workshops, or other activities.



- Remember parishioners' special days by sending wedding anniversary and graduation congratulations, and by announcing Baptisms and weddings on a regular basis in the bulletin.
- Send "get well" wishes to the sick and hospitalized members of your parish. "Thinking of you" cards are appropriate and thoughtful for parishioners under treatment or terminally ill.
- Recognize those who make their First Eucharist, First Reconciliation or Confirmation, or who are participants in the RCIA process.
- Provide thoughtful funeral receptions and grief ministry.
- Wheelchairs should be available near the main entrance of the church for those who might appreciate this assistance.
- Close attention should be given to the entrance of your facility. Peeling front doors, wilting flowers, overgrown shrubs, dirty windows, icy sidewalks, and lack of adequate handicapped parking all send out quiet negative signals about the parish communion. Consider festive touches throughout the liturgical cycle. Banners in the church parking lot or outdoor flower pots brimming with fresh blooms at the front door announcing the Easter season, for example, invite parishioners even before they enter the church.
- In addition to the parish bulletin at Mass, consider sending a monthly or quarterly newsletter to all homes in the parish. This provides parish leadership a means to share news of what is going on in the parish to all parishioners. Include an article on Christian stewardship in each issue and be sure to publish a financial statement at least once a year. Sending out an attractive and informative newsletter to all households sends a message that "we care about you."

YEAR-ROUND STEWARDSHIP AWARENESS AND FORMATION

Stewardship Formation

Christian stewardship is a life-long journey that must be continuously reinforced through a reflection process on the concept of stewardship. The Prayers of the Faithful during Mass are an excellent opportunity to ask for the Lord's guidance on that journey. Some sample prayers are included on the following pages to assist you in reflecting on Christian stewardship.

Stewardship formation can also be reinforced in a variety of parish settings, including:

- pastoral staff meetings
- Parish Pastoral Council meetings
- commission meetings
- other parish gatherings

The Tenth Anniversary Edition of the United States Bishops' Pastoral Letter, *Stewardship: A Disciple's Response*, includes an appendix with suggested study guides and other resources for parishes to use in the ongoing stewardship awareness and formation process.

Copies of the USCCB's Pastoral Letter can be ordered by calling the United States Catholic Conference at (800) 235-8722 or online at www.usccbpublishing.org. The product code is 5-465.

The Pastor's Report

It has already been mentioned earlier that publishing a parish financial report at least once a year is essential to the parish leadership's commitment to Christian stewardship. But why stop there? Let parishioners know what is actually being accomplished in their worshipping communion. Along with the financial report, indicate in capsulized form the spiritual and social activities going on in the parish. Celebrate the fruits of parishioners' stewardship on an annual basis with a report. Sample reports are provided in the following pages.

Christian Stewardship Newsletters

The Department of Development and Stewardship periodically publishes newsletters on Christian stewardship for parishes and interested persons.

Parish Presentations on Christian Stewardship

The Department of Development and Stewardship staff is available for parish stewardship educational presentations. If you would like a staff member to come to your parish for a presentation, please contact the department at (800) 986-3925.



SAMPLE PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL (WEEKLY)

As our parish family starts its journey to making Christian stewardship a way of life, may our hearts be open to share our time, talent, and treasure with our parish communion and our neighbor

... we pray to the Lord ...

That our parish communion always strives to do God's will, to live our lives with gratitude, and to appreciate His gracious presence in all that we have and all that we are

... we pray to the Lord ...

That our hearts be converted and our minds open to be good stewards of God's many blessings

... we pray to the Lord ...

That we be trustworthy and faithful stewards of God's abundant blessings. Inspire us in ways as Christ's disciples that enable us to fully embrace His teachings

... we pray to the Lord ...

That the Holy Spirit breathe life into every ministry of our Church and parish communion

... we pray to the Lord ...

That we be trustworthy stewards of the Lord's abundant blessings by sharing our time and talent with our families, our parish, (our school), and our community

... we pray to the Lord ...

May we in gratitude be good Christian stewards by giving back to God the first fruits of our financial blessings

... we pray to the Lord ...

That we exercise good stewardship of God's gifts of our time, talent, and treasure by returning to Him in sacrifice a portion of these blessings

... we pray to the Lord ...

For the many gifts God has bestowed upon us — that these gifts may enable us to carry out more effectively the missions of our parish, the Archdiocese of Detroit, and the universal Church

... we pray to the Lord ...

That the Church and our parish communion always be good stewards of our Lord's abundant grace

... we pray to the Lord ...

That our parish communion continues daily its commitment to Christian stewardship as a way of life

... we pray to the Lord ...

That by the Lord's grace, we use His many blessings entrusted to us to build up His kingdom
... we pray to the Lord ...

For a deeper understanding of how our stewardship of prayer and nurturing of our families
brings us closer to our Lord, Jesus Christ
... we pray to the Lord ...

For a deeper understanding of how stewardship of our time, talent, and sacrificial offering
brings us closer to the Lord
... we pray to the Lord ...

For all those in our parish communion that contribute to our parish needs, may our gifts be
an expression of praise and gratitude for the gifts God has given us
... we pray to the Lord ...

For the many blessings God bestows upon us, that these gifts enable us to carry out more ef-
fectively our Church's mission
... we pray to the Lord ...

That our parish family's ongoing stewardship education and formation be fruitful in convert-
ing our minds and opening our hearts to live as disciples of Christ
... we pray to the Lord ...

In thanksgiving to our good and loving God, source of every grace and blessing, for this day
and the many gifts He gives us
... we pray to the Lord ...

That our Lord give us wisdom to guide us as good stewards on our faith journey of
discipleship
... we pray to the Lord ...

For an open heart and mind, so that we may use our many God-given gifts and in gratitude
return them to the Lord with increase to serve Him
... we pray to the Lord ...

That we may commit ourselves to be good stewards of the gifts God entrusts to us by sharing
our time, talent, and material gifts with our parish communion as witness that we strive to be
disciples of Jesus
... we pray to the Lord ...

That in thanksgiving for every gift God has given us, we use them to serve Him
... we pray to the Lord ...

That the Lord help us to realize that we need to share our many God-given gifts with our par-
ish communion and our neighbor
... we pray to the Lord ...

At Baptism, we are called to follow our Lord, Jesus. Help us keep this call to discipleship by opening our hearts and minds as we move along our faith journey in making stewardship a way of life

... we pray to the Lord ...

Help us develop and share our gifts as faithful stewards, so that we may use them in love and service to further the work of Your kingdom here on earth

... we pray to the Lord ...

Through the guidance of Holy Spirit, may we enjoy gladness of heart in becoming good stewards of the Lord's many gifts to us

... we pray to the Lord ...

May we respond as faithful stewards to Jesus' call to discipleship by receiving God's gifts gratefully, cherishing and tending them in a responsible manner, sharing them in justice and love with others, and returning them with increase to the Lord

... we pray to the Lord ...

May the Holy Spirit, the Gentle Guest of our souls, confirm our minds in truth and convert our hearts to find in us a generous response and prompt obedience to Christ's call to Christian stewardship

... we pray to the Lord ...

May our gracious Lord give us generous hearts so we may fully appreciate His many gifts to us

... we pray to the Lord ...

May the Lord our God give us generous hearts so that we may share our blessings without counting the cost

... we pray to the Lord ...

In Christ's spirit of sacrifice, may we share our time, talent, and treasure with others without expecting something in return

... we pray to the Lord ...

May God give us the wisdom to learn the difference between what we need and what we want

... we pray to the Lord ...

May our gracious and loving God help us to know the joy of helping others when we share our abundant gifts with those in need

... we pray to the Lord ...

Let us thank the Lord for His many blessings to us in each new day and may we strive to use these gifts to do His work in our parish and our community

... we pray to the Lord ...



Let us thank the Lord for blue sky, softening earth, refreshing wind, and flowing streams.
May we be good stewards of all of God's creation
... we pray to the Lord ...

Let us resolve to put God first in our lives and recognize Him as the source of every grace
and blessing
... we pray to the Lord ...

That we give back to God in love and gratitude the first portion of our blessings
... we pray to the Lord ...

In sacrifice, that we humbly accept the challenge to give to God and share with our neighbor
what is right and just rather than from our surplus
... we pray to the Lord ...

That we recognize being a faithful steward is our response to Christ as His disciples
... we pray to the Lord ...

By making stewardship a way of life, may we find true peace and joy
... we pray to the Lord ...

That we trust God to give us the wisdom and courage to be disciples of Christ by making
stewardship our way of life
... we pray to the Lord ...

That we, in these difficult economic times, generously share our time, talent, and treasure
collectively to help our parish communion, our neighbor, and those in need
... we pray to the Lord ...

That in the spirit of Christian stewardship as disciples of Jesus, we recognize God as the cre-
ator of life and giver of freedom. Give us the strength and courage to defend the unborn and
others most vulnerable in our parish, our nation, and throughout the world
... we pray to the Lord ...

That the Holy Spirit give our Stewardship Education and Formation Committee, and other
committees and commissions in our parish, guidance to provide leadership and education
that will enhance our understanding of Christian stewardship
... we pray to the Lord ...

That the Lord enlighten our minds so that we can humbly use the gifts He gives us to serve
Him each and every day
... we pray to the Lord ...

That we offer our God-given gifts of time, talent, and material blessings to our Lord, Jesus,
as a true act of faith, to reflect our love of God and our neighbor
... we pray to the Lord ...



That we offer this day all aspects of our lives — whether it be at home, work, or school — to be patient, merciful, generous, and to always strive to be holy
... we pray to the Lord ...

That our Lord, Jesus, give us generous hearts to share our blessings with those less fortunate in our neighborhood, country, and world
... we pray to the Lord ...

That we may be free from all worldly attachments to keep us focused on our stewardship mission as disciples of Christ
... we pray to the Lord ...

That our Lord, Jesus, guide us in serving Him on the pathway He calls us to follow for our work here on earth
... we pray to the Lord ...

That we may come to our Lord nourished by His grace and blessed by His abundant gifts
... we pray to the Lord ...

May the gift of the Eucharist transform our lives and give us thankful hearts
... we pray to the Lord ...

May Christ's Eucharistic gift make us faithful stewards of God's abundant blessings by inspiring us to serve Him according to His will here on earth
... we pray to the Lord ...

In thanksgiving for clean water and clean air, for renewable resources, and for careful stewardship of all of God's creation
... we pray to the Lord ...

In thanksgiving for health and shelter, for education and freedom, for abundant choices, and for selfless giving
... we pray to the Lord ...

SAMPLE PARISH STEWARDSHIP REPORT

[NAME OF THE PARISH]—[CITY]
July 1, [YEAR]—June 30, [YEAR]

2,142 households
7,027 individuals
 Under 5 years ..432 30 – 39 375
 5 – 12918 40 – 49 1,017
 13 – 19843 50 – 59 907
 20 – 29621 60 and older... 1,914
189 new households, July 20xx – June 20xx
2,521 Sunday Mass average attendance
1,217 Holy Days Mass average attendance
129 Weekday Mass average attendance

Sacraments celebrated

52 Anointings of the Sick
73 Baptisms (includes adults)
52 Confirmations (includes adults)
420 Masses (includes 47 funerals)
66 First Communions
57 First Reconciliations
38 Marriages
2 Vocations to the Priesthood/Religious Life

Prayer and Worship

18 Worship Commission members
31 Altar Servers
35 Cantors, Choir, and Liturgical Musicians
48 Eucharistic Ministers
40 Lectors and Commentators
12 Sacristans
38 Ushers
109 Youth Group participants

Christian Service

21 Christian Service Commission members
56 families adopted by Christmas “Adopt-A-Family” program
120 families served by St. Vincent de Paul Society
23 families served by Thanksgiving Food Baskets program
123 Knights of Columbus members
75 people visited by Ministers to the Sick

Christian Formation and Education

15 Education Commission members
70 Adult Faith Formation participants
60 Baptismal Preparation Class participants
37 Bible Study participants
61 Boy Scouts
30 Marriage Preparation couples
27 Cub Scouts
39 Girl Scouts
356 Elementary School students
43 participants in the Liturgy of the Word for Children
378 Religious Education students
12 participants in the Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults
43 Vacation Bible School participants

Stewardship

18 Parish Pastoral Council members, 10 meetings
15 Stewardship Commission members
6 Catholic Services Appeal Committee members
5 gardeners
12 office assistance volunteers
52 weekly bulletin publications
2 parish newsletters

SAMPLE PARISH ANNUAL FINANCIAL REPORT

**[NAME OF THE PARISH]—[CITY]
July 1, [Year]—June 30, [Year]**

Operating receipts	
Sunday and Holiday	\$ 824,197
Christmas	\$ 45,589
Mass stipends, weddings, funerals and baptisms	\$ 7,350
Fund-raising (CSA, refund, etc.) less expenses	\$ 49,446
Bequests and donations	\$ 14,658
Religious Education	\$ 10,592
Total operating receipts	\$ 951,832
Non-operating receipts	
Loan proceeds (interest)	\$ 131,265
Withdrawal from savings	\$ 82,944
Total non-operating receipts	\$ 214,209
TOTAL PARISH RECEIPTS	\$ 1,166,041
Operating Disbursements (expenses)	
Worship	
Worship salaries, benefits	\$ 16,990
General expenses	\$ 1,428
Worship programs	\$ 3,775
Total Worship expenses	\$ 22,193
Christian Service	
Christian Service salaries, benefits	\$ 28,173
General expenses	\$ 1,820
Christian Service programs	\$ 1,119
Total Christian Service expenses	\$ 31,112
Religious Education	
Salaries, benefits	\$ 41,904
General expenses	\$ 8,194
Instructional services, programs	\$ 8,756
Total Religious Education expenses	\$ 58,854
Administration	
Salaries, benefits	\$ 61,662
General expenses, including hospitality	\$ 14,388
Interest expense	\$ 131,265
Total administration expenses	\$ 207,315
Maintenance	
Salaries, contracted services	\$ 12,088
General expenses, plant and maintenance supplies	\$ 3,415
Utilities	\$ 31,422
Insurance	\$ 7,667
Other expenses	
Parish tithe	\$ 41,028
Diocesan assessment	\$ 22,680
Tuition assistance	\$ 10,893
Total maintenance and other expenses	\$ 129,193
Total operating disbursements	\$ 448,667
Non-operating Disbursements	
Debt repayment principal	\$ 568,006
Capital expenditures	
New additions	\$ 74,307
Furniture/equipment-machinery	\$ 6,424
Total non-operating disbursements	\$ 648,737
TOTAL PARISH DISBURSEMENTS	\$ 1,097,404
FUNDS TRANSFERRED TO SAVINGS	\$ 68,637

THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND

Belief

Pastors and lay leaders must exhibit absolute trust and confidence in the teaching of Christian stewardship. Your belief in its results and its rewards must be constant and unwavering.

Prayer

Christian stewardship is a spiritual experience, and prayer is the lifeblood of the Christian disciple. Begin every parish activity with prayer. The guidance of the Holy Spirit will make the decisions regarding your parish's stewardship efforts much easier.

Planning

Even as you are planning this year's Christian stewardship education programs, be aware of the need for an annual renewal of your stewardship efforts.

Communication

Continuing education about the fundamental principles of Christian stewardship is paramount to continuing enthusiasm about its rewards. Keep your parishioners informed. Every parishioner should know what is going on with the stewardship activity in your parish.

Inclusion

Include everyone in the invitation to participate. Recognize the unique contributions that every parishioner can make. We are all members of the Body of Christ, the people of God. Christian stewardship celebrates this fact.

Hospitality

Everyone should be made to feel at home in your parish. Be sure to welcome new parishioners, extend to them the warmth of your parish spirit, invite them to participate in parish activities, and present them with information about the parish.

Gratitude!!!

Never forget to say thank you. Every gift — no matter how small — is significant, and should call forth an expression of gratitude.

Sharing

Let the Department of Development and Stewardship hear from you. We would like to share your progress and your challenges — what has worked for you and what has not — so we can better assist you and other parishes. Contact the department at (800) 986-3925.

Vision

Retain and cherish your parish's vision of what it might yet be. Hold fast to your goals in the face of the momentary disappointments, the temporary setbacks. Be realistic. Parish involvement in the Christian stewardship journey will at the outset be something less than unanimous. It may, in fact, be minimal. Remember the Lord's teaching about the mustard seed. Plant the seed, and imagine what it, and you, might become. And do not forget to celebrate your successes.



PART FOUR:

Stewardship Reflections on the Liturgy of the Word

Reading Reflections – Cycle A

PART FOUR: STEWARDSHIP REFLECTIONS ON THE LITURGY OF THE WORD

CYCLE A (MATTHEW)

The following reflections on the Cycle A readings of the Liturgy of the Word are designed to stimulate your own thoughts and reflections on God's message to us as Christian stewards. Your reflections and thoughts, as well as the reflections presented here can then be the basis for homilies, lay witness testimony, and other guideposts along your stewardship journey.

First Sunday of Advent

First Reading – Isaiah 2:1-5

- A good steward uses God's gifts and guidance to seek peace.

Psalm 122:1-9

- Good stewards show gratitude for the Lord's gifts.
- Christian stewardship begins with developing a deeper prayer life.

Second Reading – Romans 13:11-14

- Do our actions show we are Christ's disciples?

Gospel Reading – Matthew 24:37-44

- The start of Advent reminds us not to put off our stewardship. Be prepared, the Lord is coming! (Used with permission from the Archdiocese of St. Louis, www.archstl/stewardship, Stewardship Bulletin Inserts, December 2007 – March 2008).

Stewardship Thought

Good stewards know that they are accountable to God for what they have and are, and they strive to live in readiness... (Used with permission from Our Sunday Visitor, *Stewardship by the Book: Bulletin Bits Based on the Sunday Readings*, by Sharon Hueckel, Second Edition 2004, page 7).

Immaculate Conception (December 8)

First Reading – Genesis 3:9-15, 20

- Do we try to follow God's will as stewards, or our own in disobedience of His commands?

Psalm 98:1-4

- Good stewards praise God for all of His blessings bestowed upon them.

Second Reading – Ephesians 1:3-6, 11-12

- Christian stewards understand that God chooses us to do His will for His praise and glory.



Gospel – Luke 1:26-38

- Mary is the model steward — completely trusting in God. We are truly thankful to God for the gift of His Son.

Stewardship Thought

Mary's Immaculate Conception prepared her for her unique role as the Mother of God. We, too, have been given all the gifts we need to do the work to which God calls us. Oh Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us that we may have the courage to say “yes!” when God calls (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 35).

Second Sunday of Advent

First Reading – Isaiah 11:1-10

- Scripture inspires stewards to reflect on God's peace and justice.

Psalm 72:1-2, 7-8, 12-13, 17

- Christian stewards share their time, talent, and treasure in love and justice with the poor and the needy.

Second Reading – Romans 15:4-9

- As a form of prayer, good stewards seek encouragement and hope from Scripture.
- Stewards welcome others in our parishes and communities.

Gospel – Matthew 3:1-12

- When we repent, we are grateful for God's great gift of reconciliation.

Stewardship Thought

As Christmas approaches, do we do whatever it takes to find that “perfect gift” for a loved one? Do we try to outdo last year's gifts? Do we keep in mind that our weekly sacrificial gift to the parish comes first — not what's left after bills are paid and gifts are purchased?

Do you bear good fruit for Christ? Or do you spend your time, talent, and treasure constantly acquiring more toys, clothes, and junk? (Archdiocese of St. Louis, *ibid.*).

Third Sunday of Advent

First Reading – Isaiah 35:1-6, 10

- God is generous in providing His abundance. We should praise Him at all times.
- Good stewards experience joy and gladness when the Lord comes first in our life.

Psalm 146:6-10

- The Lord is faithful, just, and powerful. He is our source of strength.
- Christian stewards give praise to God for all of our gifts.



Second Reading – James 5:7-10

- Stewardship involves praying for the gift of patience when dealing with life's hardships.

Gospel – Matthew 11:2-11

The good steward recognizes every blessing in life as a miracle from God and strives to use those gifts for God's honor and glory (Archdiocese of St. Louis, *ibid.*).

Stewardship Thought

Each of us has his or her own role to play in the coming of the Kingdom of God. John the Baptist was called to be herald of the Messiah, preparing the way of the Lord. To what is the Lord calling me? (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 7).

Fourth Sunday of Advent

First Reading – Isaiah 7:10-14

- Mary is the first disciple of Jesus. She accepted God's will without question. As Christian stewards, do we do the same?

Psalm 24:1-6

- A steward is richly blessed who places God above all things.

Second Reading – Romans 1:1-7

- A good steward, through reading Scripture, seeks the gifts of faith, grace, and peace from God through Jesus Christ.
- God calls all of us to be holy.

Gospel – Matthew 1:18-24

- Stewards joyfully acknowledge Emmanuel — “*God is with us*” — as God's ultimate gift for our salvation.
- Like Joseph, Christian stewards put their complete trust in God.

Stewardship Thought

When he discovered that Mary was with child, Joseph resolved to end their engagement with as little disgrace as possible. But obedient to the voice of God, he changed those plans ... God grant that I may be as open to the leading of the Holy Spirit! (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 7).

Christmas (Vigil)

First Reading – Isaiah 62:1-5

- Just as He did for the Israelites returning from captivity, God promised a new day of salvation for us. As good stewards, do we show gratitude and praise Him for this great gift?



Psalm 89:4-5, 16-17, 27, 29

- Our Lord God makes a covenant with us. We must rejoice in His favor and return to Him our love.

Second Reading – Acts of the Apostles 13:16-17, 22-25

- God brought forth Jesus, our Savior, from the house of David and heralded by John the Baptist. As Christian stewards, what gratitude do we show to our Lord God for this great gift?

Gospel – Matthew 1:1-25

- “Emmanuel” means “God is with us.” Let us as good stewards follow Mary and Joseph’s example by putting our complete trust in God.

Stewardship Thought

All creation rejoices in praise and glory to God that the prophecies are fulfilled in Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. As Christian stewards, our gratitude should be unending for this greatest of gifts.

Christmas (Midnight)

First Reading – Isaiah 9:1-6

- Christ is in our midst today. Do we recognize Him?
- The lights of Christmas remind us that Christ is the Light of the World.

Psalm 96:1-3, 11-13

- All praise, honor, and glory to Christ, our Savior.

Second Reading – Titus 2:11-14

- Christian stewards, as disciples of Christ, are eager to do what is good.

Gospel – Luke 2:1-14

- There was “*no room for them in the inn.*” Do we welcome Christ into our hearts?

Stewardship Thought

The birth of Jesus was part of God’s plan for the redemption of mankind. God also has a plan for each of us. Are we open to receive His plan?

Christmas (Dawn)

First Reading – Isaiah 62:11-12

- The joy of Christmas is that we are redeemed by the Lord.

Psalm 97:1, 6, 11-12

- Give thanks to the Lord, our light and our salvation.



Second Reading – Titus 3:4-7

- In Baptism, because of God’s mercy, we are renewed through the Holy Spirit. We must be grateful for this great gift.

Gospel – Luke 2:15-20

- The shepherds answered God’s call proclaimed by the angels to seek Christ and worship Him. Do we make that same effort to seek Him?

Stewardship Thought

Pray that God gives us wisdom to understand His will and the strength and courage to act as His disciples.

Christmas (Day)

First Reading – Isaiah 52:7-10

- Like the Israelites of old, today’s Christian stewards also proclaim, “*God is King!*”
- Jesus Christ brings us His Good News.

Psalm 98:1-6

- Christian stewards use their talents to praise and thank God in prayer, song, and instrument for His great gifts to us.

Second Reading – Hebrews 1:1-6

- Our heavenly Father proclaims Jesus, His Son, and tells the angels to worship Him. Can we do less?

Gospel Reading – John 1:1-18

- The Word becomes flesh; God became man. God gives us the greatest gift of all — His Son, Jesus, Who will open for us the path to eternal salvation.

Stewardship Thought

“For unto us is born this day a Savior!” In response to so great a love, only the gift of my whole self will do. You have given us Yourself, dear Lord; in love and thanksgiving, I commit myself afresh to You (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 7).

Feast of the Holy Family

First Reading – Sirach 3:2-6, 12-14

- Good parents are a blessing from God. Good Christian stewards honor and care for their parents whatever the circumstances may be.

Psalm 128:1-5

- As Christian stewards, we realize our spouse and children are true blessings from God and are to be nurtured.

Second Reading – Colossians 3:12-21

- As God's chosen ones, we are to put on compassion, reconciliation, and love for one another.
- A good steward does everything in the name of Jesus and follows His Word.
- The family is called the domestic Church. Love and respect one another.

Gospel – Matthew 2:13-15, 19-23

- Stewards realize their faith and God's grace will see their families through hard times.

Stewardship Thought

Parents who practice good stewardship use their time and talents to pass on their faith, and to educate, to nurture, and to protect their children.

New Year's Day – Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God

First Reading – Numbers 6:22-27

- Christian stewards recognize that God blesses us and acknowledge that true peace and happiness come from Him.

Psalm 67:2-3, 5-6, 8

- Stewards give God glory and praise for their bountiful blessings and His mercy.

Second Reading – Galatians 4:4-7

- As Christian stewards, we understand we are children of God through the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Gospel – Luke 2:16-21

- The shepherds went to Bethlehem at God's instruction through the angels. Do we as good stewards listen to God's Word and then act on it?
- Mary, Mother of God, teaches us how to be her Son's disciples.

Stewardship Thought

New Year's Day provides a perfect opportunity to ask ourselves the question: Does my life reflect gratitude for all that my loving Father has given me? (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 8).

Second Sunday after Christmas

First Reading – Sirach 24:1-2, 8-12

- As good stewards, we gratefully accept God's call to live in Him as our Creator, to do His will, and to follow His commandments.

Psalm 147:12-15, 19-20

- Christian stewards praise and glorify the Lord for His abundant and special blessings to us.



Second Reading – Ephesians 1:3-6, 15-18

- Our heavenly Father gives us His Son, Jesus, and every spiritual blessing. As Christian stewards, we show our gratitude by seeking holiness and being filled with love for God and one another through the Church.

Gospel – John 1:1-18

- Jesus is the Incarnated Word — God becoming flesh. He fills us with His redeeming love, which we share in gratitude with others.

Stewardship Thought

During this holy Christmas season, we are filled with joy at the coming of our Savior. As Christian stewards, do we answer His call to follow His Word?

The Epiphany of the Lord

First Reading – Isaiah 60:1-6

- As exhibited by the Magi prophecy, Christian stewards believe God’s gift of salvation is open to all who seek Him.
- Christ is the light that guides us to Him.

Psalm 72:1-2, 7-8, 10-13

- God exhorts His stewards to share their time, talent, and treasure with the poor and oppressed.

Second Reading – Ephesians 3:2-3, 5-6

- God, through Christ, gives His gift of grace to all those who seek to be members of the Body of Christ.
- Christian stewards welcome everyone as members of the Body of Christ regardless of their situation in life.

Gospel – Matthew 2:1-12

- By the story of the Magi’s gifts to Jesus, a Christian steward is reminded how much God blesses us with many gifts.
- The Magi journeyed far to pay homage to our King. Do we make time for Him in our lives? Do we trust God in all things?

Stewardship Thought

Today we remember the three wise men from the East who come to pay homage to the infant Jesus, bringing Him rich gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. The gifts we bring — our time, service, and some share of what we earn for the work we do — are especially precious in His sight (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 8).



The Baptism of the Lord

First Reading – Isaiah 42:1-4, 6-7

- A faithful steward accepts God-given talents gratefully and shares them in justice with those in need.

Psalm 29:1-4, 3, 9-10

- In gratitude, Christian stewards give glory and praise to God.

Second Reading – Acts of the Apostles 10:34-38

- Christian stewards acknowledge that God’s gift of faith is attainable by all who seek it.

Gospel – Matthew 3:13-17

- John’s Baptism of Jesus encourages us as Christian stewards to reflect on our own Baptism and continually seek to do God’s will.

Stewardship Thought

Our Baptism, like the Lord’s, is a consecration to service. The Bishops’ Pastoral Letter on stewardship reminds us that “... *there is a fundamental obligation arising from the sacrament of Baptism that people place their gifts, their resources — their selves — at God’s service in and through the Church*” (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 10).

Second Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading – Isaiah 49:3, 5-6

- God calls us as Christian stewards to serve Him and each other using the many gifts He gives us.
- Making Christian stewardship a way of life involves a true conversion of the heart.

Psalm 40:2, 4, 7-10

- Doing God’s will is the delight of a Christian steward.

Second Reading – 1 Corinthians 1:1-3

- Christian stewards are sanctified in Christ and called to be holy as members of His body.

Gospel – John 1:29-34

- John’s proclamation of Jesus as “*Lamb of God*” recalls for us Christ’s gift of the Eucharist.

Stewardship Thought

Today’s responsorial psalm is the theme song of the good steward: “*Here am I, Lord; I come to do your will.*” May I, too, stand ready to offer myself and my gifts in service to God. See Psalm 40 (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 7).

Third Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading – Isaiah 8:23-9:3

- Being a Christian steward can bring abundant joy to one's life, even in the face of hardship and gloom.

Psalm 27:1, 4, 13-14

- A good steward completely trusts in the Lord and wants Him completely in his or her life, even in the face of hardship and gloom.

Second Reading – 1 Corinthians 1:10-13, 17

- Christian stewards, through the sacrifice of our Lord, Jesus Christ, avoid divisions but instead seek unity of purpose in service to others.

Gospel – Matthew 4:12-23

- A true disciple of Jesus sacrifices all to answer His call to follow Him.

Stewardship Thought

Peter and Andrew, James and John all respond *immediately* to the call of Christ. May I be open to God's call and as ready to use my talents in His service as those first disciples were! (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 10).

Presentation of the Lord (February 2)

First Reading – Malachi 3:1-4

- As good stewards, do we allow the Lord to use our talents to do good works?

Psalm 24:7-10

- The Lord is King; we should welcome Him in our hearts.

Second Reading – Hebrews 2:14-18

- Jesus is faithful to the Father and was tested in His suffering. In our quest to be good Christian stewards, can we say the same? Do we ask for His strength when we are tested?

Gospel – Luke 2:22-40

- As the first step in making stewardship a way of life, have we “consecrated” ourselves to the Lord?

Stewardship Thought

When Mary and Joseph brought Jesus to the Temple, they offered a sacrificial gift “*in accordance with the dictate in the law of the Lord.*” An offering of a specific size or kind is not “dictated” when we bring our gifts to the altar at Mass. Is my gift reflective of the blessings I have received? See Luke 2:24 (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 33).



Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading – Zephaniah 2:3; 3:12-13

- Good stewards humbly acknowledge their gifts from God and their dependence on Him.

Psalm 146:6-10

- Christian stewards acknowledge God as their source of strength.

Second Reading – 1 Corinthians 1:26-31

- God raises us up through our lives as Christ’s disciples.

Gospel – Matthew 5:1-12

- Christian stewards who profess to be “poor in spirit”, recognize their complete dependence on God. They strive to do good for others.

Stewardship Thought

“Blessed are they who ... do what they do for the sake of the kingdom” (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 10).

Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading – Isaiah 58:7-10

- With a sincere heart, good stewards share their blessings from God to feed the hungry, to shelter the homeless, and to provide clothes for those in need.
- The Lord blesses those who bless others.

Psalm 112:4-9

- Good Christian stewards conduct their affairs in a just and honest manner.

Second Reading – 1 Corinthians 2:1-5

- As stewards, are we humble enough to realize that true wisdom comes from God?

Gospel – Matthew 5:13-16

- Through their good deeds, stewards exhibit true discipleship and thereby glorify God.

Stewardship Thought

The Gospel today reminds us that our lives and our deeds must serve as examples to others, pointing the way to the Father. Not for our own benefit do we labor, but so that others may see our good works and give glory to our Father in heaven (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 10).

Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading – Sirach 15:15-20

- We are given free choice. As Christian stewards, will we chose to follow God’s will or our own?

Psalm: 119:1-2, 4-5, 17-18, 33-34

- True discipleship entails seeking God with all our hearts and following His laws.

Second Reading – 1 Corinthians 2:6-10

- As Christian stewards, we should put our faith in God’s wisdom and strive to love Him.

Gospel – Matthew 5:17-37

- Jesus came to fulfill the law and the prophets. As His disciples, Christian stewards follow the law, reconcile with family members, are loyal in marriage, and are true in word and deed.

Stewardship Thought

Christian stewardship involves more than just the gift we bring to the altar. Today’s readings say clearly that it is fidelity to God’s law that makes our offering acceptable (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 11).

Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading – Leviticus 19:1-2, 17-18

- Good stewards strive to be holy as the Lord is holy and to help their neighbors.

Psalm 103:1-4, 8, 10, 12-13

- Christian stewards realize all blessings come from God and He is kind and merciful.

Second Reading – 1 Corinthians 3:16-23

- Are we good stewards of our physical body by realizing it is to be cared for as a “temple of God”?

Gospel – Matthew 5:38-48

- Jesus challenges us to “*love our enemies.*” In our journey as Christian stewards, how are we doing in following this directive?

Stewardship Thought

In today’s first reading, the Israelites are urged to love their neighbors as themselves. In the Gospel, Jesus spells out how we are to do that — to give generously to those who ask of us and not turn our backs on those who seek to borrow (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 11).

Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading – Isaiah 49:14-15

- Trust in God; He will not forget us.

Psalm 62:2-3, 6-7, 8-9

- Stewards trust in God in all things and at all times. He is our rock that is our hope.

Second Reading – 1 Corinthians 4:1-5

- Good stewards strive to become “*servants of Christ*,” knowing that the Lord will judge us.

Gospel – Matthew 6:24-34

- Christian stewards know God will provide for us. Which master do we serve — God or money?

Stewardship Thought

“*Stewards of the mysteries of God*” — that’s what St. Paul says we are, in today’s second reading. And the first requirement, he says, is that we be trustworthy. Entrusted with the gifts of faith, do I share it as gratefully and as generously as I do my time, talents, and my treasure? (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 11).

Ash Wednesday

First Reading – Joel 2:12-18

- Stewardship means putting God first in our life.
- God is merciful, rich in kindness.

Psalm 51:3-6, 12-14, 17

- As Christian stewards, we acknowledge our sinfulness and the need to draw closer to God in the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Second Reading – 2 Corinthians 5:20-6:2

- True stewards are disciples of Christ whatever the cost may be.
- Are we, as a parish, an “ambassador for Christ”?

Gospel – Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18

- Prayer is a fundamental principle of Christian stewardship.
- As good stewards we give back to God our “first fruits.”

Stewardship Thought

Today’s Gospel reminds us that all of our giving — whether of alms or of service — must always be done for love of God alone and not for the applause of our brothers and sisters (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 8).

First Sunday of Lent

First Reading – Genesis 2:7-9; 3:1-7

- Good stewardship involves cultivating wisely God’s gifts of the earth.
- God is our strength to overcome our human weakness.

Psalm 51:3-6, 12-14, 17

- Christian stewards understand we need God’s mercy when we fail to live out His way.

Second Reading – Romans 5:12-19

- A grateful steward acknowledges God’s gifts of grace through His Son, Jesus Christ, Who makes salvation possible to all who seek it.

Gospel – Matthew 4:1-11

- Jesus fasts in the desert and refuses to listen to the devil. In the face of the world’s temptations, do we call on Jesus to help us avoid sin?

Stewardship Thought

What temptations lure us from the path of discipleship? Possessions? Pride? Power? Oh, Lord, create for us a clean heart and renew a steadfast spirit within us! See Psalm 51 (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 8).

Second Sunday of Lent

First Reading – Genesis 12:1-4

- God calls all of us to leave behind our old ways and to follow Him, placing our complete trust in Him. Some of the old ways that we may have to leave behind might be materialism and selfishness and greed. Yet God promises to show us a new land, a better place ... (Archdiocese of St. Louis, *ibid.*).

Psalm 33:4-5, 18-20, 22

- Good stewards put their full faith, hope, and trust in God.

Second Reading – 2 Timothy 1:8-10

- Disciples of Christ are not afraid to suffer for the Gospel because their strength comes from God.

Gospel – Matthew 17:1-9

- Will God be pleased with us when it comes time to account for our stewardship?

Stewardship Thought

“Mature disciples make a conscious decision to follow Jesus, no matter what the cost”
(United States Conference of Catholic Bishops [USCCB], *Stewardship: A Disciple’s Response*, Tenth Anniversary Edition, 2002, page 42).

Third Sunday of Lent

(Use Cycle A readings during Cycle B and C years if your parish has RCIA catechumens and candidates.)

First Reading – Exodus 17:3-7

- Do we, as Christian stewards, show gratitude to the Lord for all of His blessings, or do we complain when life is difficult?

Psalm 95:1-2, 6-9

- Good stewards in praise and worship thank God for His gift of our life and salvation.

Second Reading – Romans 5:1-2, 5-8

- Faith, peace, and grace are all gifts from God through His Son, Jesus Christ.
- God's love comes to us through the Holy Spirit and that gives us hope in our Christian stewardship journey.

Gospel – John 4:5-42

- Jesus reminds us that material things, even something as basic as water, can never satisfy us for long. When we build our lives around material possessions we always want more. The satisfaction only comes when we follow Jesus (Archdiocese of St. Louis, *ibid.*).

Stewardship Thought

When Jesus asked the Samaritan woman for a drink of water, she opened the door for a life changing relationship with Him. Scripture says her testimony drew many others to Him as well. We, too, must be ready to respond whenever and wherever the Lord speaks to us and be prepared for His message to change our lives! (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 8).

Fourth Sunday of Lent

(Use Cycle A readings during Cycle B and C years if your parish has RCIA catechumens and candidates.)

First Reading – 1 Samuel 16:1, 6-7, 10-13

- How often do we invest our time, talent, and treasure in creating an appearance that does not matter at all to God? We strive to impress with our clothing, home, career, possessions, car, and other marks of distinction. But none of these illusions of greatness will impress God. Instead, He will look into our hearts to see how much we loved Him, how much we loved others, and how we show all that love by the way we used our time, talents, and treasure here on earth (Archdiocese of St. Louis, *ibid.*).

Psalm 23:1-6

- The Lord's goodness and kindness provides all our needs.

Second Reading – Ephesians 5:8-14

- The Lord is the light that guides us on our journey to Him.
- Christian stewardship requires a conversion of the heart — a new way of life.



Gospel – John 9:1-41

- As Christian stewards, do we see our lives through the eyes of true faith or are we blinded by our quest for material wealth?

Stewardship Thought

The blind man was willing to let Jesus minister to him and willingly did all that Jesus asked of him. The Pharisees were more resistant to His message, spending their time and energy to disprove the miracle. Which am I more like, the man born blind or the Pharisees? (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 8).

Fifth Sunday of Lent

(Use Cycle A readings during Cycle B and C years if your parish has RCIA catechumens and candidates.)

First Reading – Ezekiel 37:12-14

- Christian stewards are thankful for God’s precious gift of life.
- Lent is a time for the parish’s spiritual renewal.

Psalm 130:1-8

- Trust in the Lord is important for good stewardship. If we are going to give to God first then we must be willing to trust that God will always provide for us ... Good stewards have found wonderful peace and comfort in this level of trust. How much do you trust in the Lord? (Archdiocese of St. Louis, *ibid.*).

Second Reading – Romans 8:8-11

- Christian stewards shed their old “self” by accepting the gift of the Holy Spirit and put on a new “self.”

Gospel – John 11:1-45

- As good stewards, we believe all that we are and all that we have, including our lives, are true gifts from God.
- Jesus promises “*everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die.*”

Stewardship Thought

When Jesus learned about the illness of His friend, Lazarus, He responded, “*This illness is not to end in death; rather it is for God’s glory, that through it the Son of God may be glorified!*” Every aspect of our lives — our gifts as well as our sufferings — can, if surrendered to Christ, lead to blessings for others and ourselves. See John 11:4 (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 9).

Palm Sunday of the Lord’s Passion

Procession Gospel – Matthew 21:1-11

- The people praise Jesus on His entrance into Jerusalem possibly because they think He will deliver them from the Romans. Yet within a short time, many will be calling to crucify Him. As Christian stewards, is our faith in Jesus steadfast or only caught up in the moment?

First Reading – Isaiah 50:4-7

- What vocation has been God’s blessing to you? Do you develop and cultivate this vocation through His grace and help?

Psalm 22:8-9, 17-20, 23-24

- Through Christ’s suffering and humiliation, we are offered the gift of salvation to share in His glory.

Second Reading – Philippians 2:6-11

- Good stewards follow Jesus’ example of being the humble servant.

Gospel – Matthew 26:14-27:66

- Before His passion and death, Jesus gave us the gift of the Eucharist. The very word should cause us to thankfully reflect on all of God’s gifts to us.
- We look upon Judas Iscariot as a traitor. Yet how many times do we ask the world, “*What are you willing to give me if I hand Him over to you*”? Do we trade Jesus for money, for possessions, for power? Or do we make serving Him and working with Him our top priority? (Archdiocese of St. Louis, *ibid.*)

Stewardship Thought

“*Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!*” shouts the crowd in today’s Gospel. May *we* be always ready to share our blessings when *we* are sent in His name! See Luke 19:38 (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 10).

Holy Thursday: Mass of the Lord’s Supper

First Reading – Exodus 12:1-8, 11-14

- In today’s first reading, the Lord instructs Moses and the Israelites to prepare a year-old lamb without blemish for the Passover sacrifice as an offering back to God of the “first fruits” of their livestock. The Passover meal is a foreshadowing of the Eucharist, Christ’s sacrifice for us. As Christian stewards, what sacrificial gifts of our time, talent, and treasure do we bring to the Eucharistic table?

Psalm 116:12-13, 15-18

- The psalmist, in response to his question, “*How shall I make a return to the Lord for all the good He has done for me?*” proclaims, “*I am your servant, the son of your handmaid ...*” As Christian stewards, we realize that we need to use our God-given skills and talents to serve our fellow brothers and sisters in love and gratitude.

Second Reading – 1 Corinthians 11:23-26

- In today’s second reading, St. Paul reminds the Corinthian Church how Jesus totally gives of Himself in the Eucharist. As Christian stewards, it is the foundation of our faith that *we believe* in His *true presence* in this Most Holy Sacrament — and not just a symbolic gesture.

Gospel – John 13:1-15

- In today's Gospel, our humble Lord washes the feet of His disciples, showing them an example of how they are to serve one another. We, too, as Christian stewards strive to follow Jesus' model of service in sharing our God-given talents with our neighbor, especially those less fortunate.

Stewardship Thought

On this awesome and holy night, we must reflect as grateful stewards how much Jesus loves us. He loves us so much that He instituted the Holy Eucharist to continue His life with us in forgiving our sins, healing our brokenness, and strengthening our faith in Him. The very word, Eucharist, means "thanksgiving" and, for His sacrifice, we stand in awe and total gratitude.

Good Friday of the Lord's Passion

First Reading – Isaiah 52:13-53:12

- Given the prophet Isaiah's poetic description of a man's suffering and humiliation, and ultimate justification and triumph, Christians take this reading to refer to Jesus' suffering centuries later. As disciples of Jesus, we, too, know we need to take up our cross daily and follow Him.

Psalm 31:2, 6, 12-13, 15-17, 25

- We take refuge in the Lord, our strength in the face of the world's humiliation and ridicule as we strive to be disciples of Christ by following His way.

Second Reading – Hebrews 4:14-16; 5:7-9

- Jesus, our high priest, died once for the sins of all humanity. He sympathizes with us, for He, too, was tempted. Do we, as Christian stewards, gratefully acknowledge the magnitude of His sacrifice, which makes salvation open to all who seek it?

Passion – John 18:1-19:42

- In John's Passion account, when the soldiers and temple guard declare they are seeking "*Jesus the Nazorean,*" Jesus says, "*I AM.*" Even though they came to arrest Him, the power of His response caused them all to fall to the ground. As Christ's disciples, we acknowledge His union with God the Father and Holy Spirit and realize what awesome love He has for us.
- From the cross, Jesus presented His Mother to the world to be our model of Christian stewardship.

Stewardship Thought

We sometimes wonder why this day is called "Good Friday" because it recalls Jesus' trial and brutal scourging and death. Yet, as disciples of Christ, we know that without His suffering and death, we would not have His resurrection and promise of eternal life. By reflecting on this day, we, as Christian stewards, become truly grateful of Christ's ultimate sacrifice for us.

Easter Vigil

First Reading – Genesis 1:1-2:2

- The first and second chapters of the Book of Genesis tell how God created the universe, all creatures, and things. On the sixth day, He created man and woman in His likeness and image. As good stewards of the earth, it is our responsibility to take care of God's creation. As children of God, we are truly thankful for His gift of life and it is our responsibility to protect all human life from conception to natural death. How seriously do we take these responsibilities?

Psalm 104:1-2, 5-6, 10, 12-14, 24, 35

- Good stewards rejoice in God's creation and His power and wisdom in bringing it all forth.

– or –

Psalm 33:4-7, 12-13, 20-22

- The Lord is the Creator of all things. As good stewards, we put our trust in Him and gratefully pray for His kindness to us.

Second Reading – Genesis 22:1-18

- In the second reading, God tests Abraham's love for Him by asking him to sacrifice his only son, Isaac. Abraham does not question God's directive. Out of Abraham's fidelity to Him, God spared Isaac's life and blessed Abraham abundantly. As Christian stewards, do we pray to find and do God's will in our lives?

Psalm 16:5, 8-11

- We gratefully rejoice that God is always with us to guide us on His path to eternal life.

Third Reading – Exodus 14:15-15:1

- In the third reading, God delivers Moses and the ancient Israelite community from Pharaoh and his army by parting the Red Sea. By trusting in God to save them, Moses and his people escape through the parted sea while Pharaoh's army is destroyed when the rushing waters pour over them. What a powerful lesson to trust God in our times of trouble! As Christian stewards, how much do we trust in the Lord?

Psalm – Exodus 15:1-6, 17-18

- As Christian stewards, we gratefully praise the Lord for His power and steadfast protection of His people who strive to follow Him.

Fourth Reading – Isaiah 54:5-14

- The fourth reading takes place during the Babylonian captivity many centuries before Christ. Because of their grave sins against God, the ancient Israelites' homeland, including their sacred temple in Jerusalem, was destroyed, most of them taken captive, and sent to Babylon. Isaiah's imagery of an angry husband taking back his forsaken wife out of mercy and pity symbolizes God's mercy for His people, the captive Israelites, and for us when we turn away from God through sin. God, too, will forgive our sins through Jesus Christ if we, as His disciples, humble ourselves to seek reconciliation with Him.

Psalm 30:2, 4-6, 11-13

- As Christian stewards, we recognize God's great gift of forgiveness when we fail to be faithful to His commands.

Fifth Reading – Isaiah 55:1-11

- God promises His blessed comfort and nourishment to those who seek Him and do His will. God expects us as Christian stewards, to follow His Word and do His will throughout the world as He intends.

Psalm – Isaiah 12:2-6

- Good stewards give thanks and praise to the Lord for giving us strength and courage to follow Him as His disciples.

Sixth Reading – Baruch 3:9-15, 32-4:4

- In the sixth reading, Wisdom is depicted as a woman who assists God in His works. She is one we should seek as we try to walk in the way of God in prudence and peace. Wisdom also is included as one of the seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit. In our daily prayer life as Christian stewards, do we ask the Holy Spirit for wisdom and guidance?

Psalm 19:8-11

- The law of the Lord is perfect, right, and trustworthy. The hearts of good stewards rejoice in the rewards of following His way.

Seventh Reading – Ezekiel 36:16-28

- In the seventh reading, the prophet Ezekiel blasts the Israelites for profaning God's name and worshipping idols. Because of their sins, they are dispersed among the nations during the Babylonian exile. Yet God forgave them, just as He forgives us for His sake and His love for us. In return, He commands us to follow His law, even in the face of human laws that are contrary to His. As good Christian stewards, let us pray for strength in this modern world to be diligent in our obedience to God's laws as taught by the Church.

Psalm 42:3, 5; 43:3-4

- Good stewards thirst to be with God forever. We give thanks in song and instrument in His house where we worship Him.

– or –

Psalm 51:12-15, 18-19

- God forgives us when we stray from His path. As good stewards, we recognize our failings and ask God to create clean hearts in us.

Epistle – Romans 6:3-11

- St. Paul tells us that through the gift of Baptism, we die to sin and also share in Christ's death. But through Christ's death we also share in His resurrection. We have life anew — a rebirth. Christian stewardship too requires a conversion of heart and mind — a new way of life. Where are we as Christian stewards on our stewardship journey?

Psalm 118:1-2, 16-17, 22-23

- The psalmist says it all for us: “*Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good, His mercy endures forever.*” We do well to thank and praise Him for His many gifts of grace.

Gospel – Matthew 28:1-10

- In the Gospel reading, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary approach Jesus’ tomb to perform a humble service of anointing His body. They find an angel there who says, “*He has been raised exactly as He promised ... go tell His disciples.*” On their way from the tomb, Jesus appears to them and offers them peace. He promises His disciples will see Him. The women are both fearful and overjoyed with this Resurrection experience. Out of their act of kindness, they are the first to see the risen Jesus. As Christian stewards, let us, too, open our hearts and minds to the risen Lord.

Stewardship Thought

As our RCIA catechumens are Baptized, are Confirmed, and receive their First Holy Communion, may we, as good Christian stewards, welcome them with hospitable hearts into our faith communion. May we also be examples of true Christian stewardship to them by the way we share our time, talent, and treasure with our parish communion in the light of our risen Lord!

Easter Sunday

First Reading – Acts of the Apostles 10:34, 37-43

- Jesus’ gifts of forgiveness of sin, salvation, and membership in His Church are open to all who seek Him.

Psalm 118:1-2, 16-17, 22-23

- As good stewards, we are thankful for our many blessings through the Lord’s goodness and power.

Second Reading – Colossians 3:1-4

- We can seek what is above by sharing what we have here on earth. This is what Christian stewardship is all about. We realize that anything we have here on earth is not nearly as important as being with Christ. Once we realize that, sharing what we have is easy (Archdiocese of St. Louis, *ibid.*).

– or –

Second Reading – 1 Corinthians 5:6-8

- Through sincerity and truth in the Eucharist, the Christian community is renewed.

Gospel – John 20:1-9

- Very early in the morning after the Sabbath, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb to anoint Jesus’ body with precious oils. The reward for this good and conscientious steward was to be among the first to know that Jesus had been raised from the dead! Alleluia! (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 9).

Stewardship Thought

Christ is risen! Our heavenly Father gives us the greatest gift of all: an opportunity for salvation through Jesus, His Son.

Second Sunday of Easter (Divine Mercy)

First Reading – Acts of the Apostles 2:42-47

- Jesus' disciples in the early Church joined in prayer, the Eucharist, and sharing their possessions with the needy. Do we follow that example as Christian stewards?

Psalm 118:2-4, 13-15, 22-24

- As Christian stewards, we understand God is merciful and we should put our complete trust in Him. Rejoice in the Lord's day provided for us.

Second Reading – 1 Peter 1:3-9

- Christian stewards rejoice in Jesus' resurrection that gives faith and hope to share in His glory.

Gospel – John 20:19-31

- As good stewards we find peace through developing a closer relationship with Jesus, Who is our Lord and our God.

Stewardship Thought

- Jesus meets the need of each disciple. To the fearful in the upper room, He speaks words of peace. To doubting Thomas, He provides the tangible proof of His resurrection. What do I have to share that might meet someone else's need? (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 9).

Third Sunday of Easter

First Reading – Acts of the Apostles 2:14, 22-33

- As we practice Christian stewardship as a way of life, we find great joy in following our risen Lord.

Psalm 16:1-2, 5, 7-11

- As stewards striving to draw closer to God, we find great joy — joy that cannot be found in seeking the material possessions of this world.

Second Reading – 1 Peter 1:17-21

- God's gift of His Son is infinitely more precious than gold or silver, symbols of perishable worldly possessions.

Gospel – Luke 24:13-35

- Jesus' walk with the disciples to Emmaus shows us the way to our own discipleship through reading Scripture and celebrating His Eucharistic feast.



Stewardship Thought

The disciples on the road to Emmaus walked and talked with Jesus all day long, but it was not until they offered Him hospitality and He blessed and broke the bread that they recognized Him. Simple acts of loving kindness *still* reveal the presence of God in our midst (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 9).

Fourth Sunday of Easter

First Reading – Acts of the Apostles 2:14, 36-41

- Christian stewardship is a conversion of mind and heart, a new way of life in the Holy Spirit.

Psalm 23:1-6

- Do we gratefully accept as stewards, God's gifts of love and goodness in our lives?

Second Reading – 1 Peter 2:20-25

- Through prayer, we ask the Lord to give us special graces to follow in His footsteps as we carry life's crosses.

Gospel – John 10:1-10

- As the Good Shepherd, Jesus offers us an abundant life. As Christian stewards, are we open to His offering?

Stewardship Thought

Jesus says, "*I came that they may have life, and have it to the full.*" Good stewards are grateful for the gifts of life and joyfully share their abundance with others. See John 10:10 (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 9).

Fifth Sunday of Easter

First Reading – Acts of the Apostles 6:1-7

- Do we give back to God, the "first fruits" of our labors and share our material resources with those in need?
- Is our parish a welcoming communion to visitors and newcomers?

Psalm 33:1-2, 4-5, 18-19

- In various ways, good stewards offer praise to God. He loves those who are just and kind.

Second Reading – 1 Peter 2:4-9

- Our parish should be a spiritual "house," built on the cornerstone of our faith in Jesus, our risen Lord.
- We build our spirituality as good stewards through daily prayer.

Gospel – John 14:1-12

- Christian stewards know Jesus shows us the way to eternal life.

Stewardship Thought

“Those who have faith in me will do the works I do, and far greater than these,” Jesus tells His disciples. That’s quite an assignment for us as Christian stewards! See John 14:12 (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 9).

Sixth Sunday of Easter

First Reading – Acts of the Apostles 8:5-8, 14-17

- Through the Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and Holy Communion, we receive the gifts of the Holy Spirit and the full life of discipleship in Jesus. Through the Sacraments of Reconciliation and Anointing of the Sick, we are renewed in that discipleship.
- Good stewards set aside time daily to pray.

Psalm 66:1-7, 16, 20

- Stewards sing out joyful praise and thanksgiving for God’s tremendous deeds for us.

Second Reading – 1 Peter 3:15-18

- As Christian stewards, we know Christ is our reason for hope and our model for doing good.

Gospel – John 14:15-21

- The Holy Spirit is a true gift from God and fulfills Jesus’ promise to never leave us as we pursue our journey as Christian stewards.

Stewardship Thought

Those who obey the commandments, Jesus says in today’s Gospel, are the ones who really love Him. Does my stewardship reveal my love for Jesus? (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 9).

The Ascension of the Lord

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

First Reading – Acts of the Apostles 1:1-11

- In gratitude, Christian stewards gladly accept from God, as proclaimed by Jesus, the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Psalm 47:2-3, 6-9

- Good stewards live in a spirit of praise and thanksgiving to God for all of our blessings and for His glory.

Second Reading – Ephesians 1:17-23

- Stewards recognize wisdom as a gift from God to better see the riches of His glory.
- We should always strive to be good stewards of the Church, the Body of Christ on earth.

Gospel – Matthew 28:16-20

- In a spirit of stewardship, do we use our gifts to encourage our brothers and sisters in the Lord to be disciples of Jesus?

Stewardship Thought

Jesus ascended into heaven, blessing His disciples and promising that they would soon receive the power of the Holy Spirit. We who have received that promised gift of the Spirit are now empowered to be His witnesses to the ends of the earth — to use our time and talents to spread the Good News of salvation (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 34).

Seventh Sunday of Easter

(When the Ascension is not celebrated on Sunday)

First Reading – Acts of the Apostles 1:12-14

- Prayer is a fundamental principle of Christian stewardship, and prayer in a community is powerful.

Psalm 27:1, 4, 7-8

- An excellent way for a good steward to communicate with God is through daily prayer.

Second Reading – 1 Peter 4:13-16

- Christian stewardship is our response to being a disciple of Christ. A good steward is not afraid to suffer for being His follower.

Gospel – John 17:1-11

- Jesus indicates in His prayer to the Father that *“everything You gave Me is from You ...”* Gratitude for God’s gifts of all that we are and we have is the foundation of Christian stewardship.

Stewardship Thought

In today’s Gospel, Jesus prays, *“I have given You glory on earth by finishing the work You gave me to do.”* Good stewards follow His example by using their time and talents for the glory of God. See John 17:4 (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 10).

Pentecost Sunday

First Reading – Acts of the Apostles 2:1-11

- God filled the Apostles with the Holy Spirit to go forth to proclaim the Good News of Jesus. As good stewards, do we call upon the Holy Spirit to inspire our lives?

Psalm 104:1, 24, 29-31, 34

- Christian stewards acknowledge all life is a tremendous gift from God, especially life in the Spirit.

Second Reading – 1 Corinthians 12:3-7, 12-13

- The Body of Christ, the Church, consists of many parts, all gifts from a loving God. Do we share our God-given blessings with our family, parish, and community?

Sequence

- In gratitude, we thank God for His gift of the Holy Spirit, Who pours out His grace upon us and shows us the way to salvation.

Gospel – John 20:19-23

- Peace comes from the Father through the Holy Spirit and our Lord, Jesus Christ. Do we use our talents to create peace among our brothers and sisters in the Lord?

Stewardship Thought

In the second reading today, St. Paul reminds the Corinthians, “*there are different gifts, but the same Spirit; there are different ministries, but the same Lord.*” How am I using my gifts for the common good? (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 10).

Most Holy Trinity

First Reading – Exodus 34:4-6, 8-9

- Like Moses, Christian stewards strive to develop a stronger personal and community relationship with God, Who is kind and merciful.

Psalm – Daniel 3:52-55

- Even in time of heavy trials, faithful stewards bless and praise God for He is to be exalted above all.

Second Reading – 2 Corinthians 13:11-13

- Paul encouraged every Christian to encourage one another and to live in peace. Do we heed these inspired words of Scripture by practicing Christian stewardship — striving to live in peace, encouraging one another, and being quick to reconcile any differences, especially in our families and parish communion?

Gospel – John 3:16-18

- God demonstrated His tremendous love for us by sending His Son, Jesus, to show us the path to eternal life. As good stewards, are we grateful to God for this great gift?

Stewardship Thought

The Gospel today is sometimes called “the Gospel in miniature” because it so concisely sums up the Gospel message. In even more condensed form, “God loved ... God gave ...” is the paradigm for Christian stewardship — we give because we love (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 33).

Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ (*Corpus Christi*)

First Reading – Deuteronomy 8:2-3, 14-16

- Good stewards strive to live by the Word of God and develop a deeper prayer life through reading and listening to Scripture. Scripture enhances devotion to the Eucharist, which becomes the focal point and strength of our lives.



Psalm 147:12-15, 19-20

- Good stewards thank God for His blessings of children, food, and peace in our families.

Second Reading – 1 Corinthians 10:16-17

- Christian stewardship promotes unity and fellowship in our parishes by encouraging Mass attendance and the partaking of the Eucharist.

Gospel – John 6:51-58

- Jesus is truly “the bread of life.” As Christian stewards, we are deeply grateful to God for this tremendous gift.

Stewardship Thought

The Scriptures today remind us that, “*we, though many, are one body for we all partake of the one loaf.*” How are we using our gifts of time and talent to build up the Body of Christ? See 1 Corinthians 10:16-17 (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 33).

Ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading – Deuteronomy 11:18, 26-28, 32

- God blesses those who obey His commandments. What false idols do we face as Christian stewards in today’s culture?

Psalm 31:2-4, 17, 25

- As a Christian steward, is God really “*my rock and my fortress,*” or do I put my faith in wealth and worldly possessions?

Second Reading – Romans 3:21-25, 28

- Christian stewards realize that God’s gift of redemption through Jesus Christ is open to all. In this spirit, our parish communion should be a welcoming place for all seeking discipleship with Jesus.

Gospel – Matthew 7:21-27

- Christian stewardship is a way of life, meaning we must not only listen to the Word of God, we must act according to His guidance. We must build our “house” on the rock of prayer and Scripture, and not on the sand of materialism.

Stewardship Thought

Today’s readings call all of us to active discipleship. It is not enough to know the commandments; we must actively obey them. It is not enough to hear the words of Jesus; we must act on them. Good stewards demonstrate their gratitude for the gift of faith by putting it into action (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 11).

Tenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading – Hosea 6:3-6

- “*Christian stewards recognize God as the creator of the universe. Stewardship of the world is expressed by jubilant appreciation of nature, whose God-given beauty is to be nurtured, not abused*” (USCCB, *ibid.*, page 26).

Psalm 50:1, 8, 12-15

- Stewards praise God for His beautiful gifts of nature. God entrusts us to use these gifts wisely.

Second Reading – Romans 4:18-25

- Abraham is a model of good stewardship, building his faith by trusting in God and giving glory to Him.

Gospel – Matthew 9:9-13

- Jesus offers us the gifts of love and mercy that we as His disciples are to cultivate within ourselves.

Stewardship Thought

“*It is love that I desire, not sacrifice,*” says Hosea in today’s first reading. But for love of us, Jesus sacrificed everything — even His life. Are my small sacrifices gifts of love and gratitude? See Hosea 6:6 (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 11).

Eleventh Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading – Exodus 19:2-6

- Like Moses, as Christian stewards we put our complete trust in God, Who calls us to be His special people.

Psalm 100:1-3, 5

- God created us and His love for us is everlasting. As Christian stewards, do we recognize this precious gift?

Second Reading – Romans 5:6-11

- Faithful stewards recognize that God’s gifts of love and reconciliation through Jesus’ innocent suffering and death, and triumphant resurrection, are available to all who seek them.

Gospel – Matthew 9:36-10:8

- As Christian stewards, do we consider the “kingdom of heaven” as out in some cosmic universe or here within us? How do we use our gifts to promote the “kingdom”?
- God calls us to a vocation of laboring for His kingdom, including roles for priests, religious, and lay people.

Stewardship Thought

In today’s Gospel, Jesus sends out the disciples to meet the needs of others. His admonition to them is the same challenge He makes to us: “*the gift you have received, give as a gift.*” See Matthew 10:8 (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 11).



Twelfth Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading – Jeremiah 20:10-13

- The Lord is our strength in the face of modern culture that lures us away from Him.
- All we have and all that we are comes from the Lord. Good stewards in turn strive to share their time, talent, and material blessings, especially with the poor.

Psalm 69:8-10, 14, 17, 33-35

- The psalmist warns that following the Lord is not easy. Trust in God strengthens us.
- The psalmist also assures us that “*the Lord hears the poor.*” He answers their need through the generous gifts of good stewards (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 11).

Second Reading – Romans 5:12-15

- Through Jesus, the gift of grace is given to redeem us from our sins. As good stewards, do we gladly accept this gift and seek to live accordingly?

Gospel – Matthew 10:26-33

- Disciples follow Jesus — follow Him at any cost. They are not afraid. Are you willing to lose everything for Christ?
- We are precious in God’s sight. Do we live up to this great gift?

Stewardship Thought

“Nothing is concealed that will not be revealed,” Jesus tells us in the Gospel today, *“and nothing hidden that will not become known.”* May our stewardship of God’s gifts be such that we would not be ashamed if it were seen in the clear light of day. See Matthew 10:26 (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 11).

SS. Peter and Paul, Apostles (June 29)

First Reading – Acts of the Apostles 12:1-11

- Good stewards know that God hears our prayers and trust the answers will be according to His will and not our own.

Psalm 34:2-9

- Stewards take time to pray daily, to thank God, to praise Him, and to call out to Him when in need.

Second Reading – 2 Timothy 4:6-8, 17-18

- At the end of our lives, will we, as Christian stewards, be able to show that, through the strength the Lord gives us, we did use our time, talent, and treasure to further God’s kingdom here on earth?

Gospel – Matthew 16:13-19

- Peter recognized Jesus as his Lord and God, and was not afraid to say so. He accepted Christ’s call to be the “Rock” on which the Church is built to carry on Christ’s ministry to the world. As Christ’s disciples, do we accept His call to our vocation in life?

Stewardship Thought

Saints Peter and Paul worked tirelessly to spread the Gospel. Not all can be apostles, but we, too, must be good stewards of *our* vocations, using the gifts we have been given in the service of God's kingdom (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 34).

Thirteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading – 2 Kings 4:8-11, 14-16

- A parish that embraces Christian stewardship shows hospitality to visitors and newcomers as well as existing parishioners.
- The Christian steward knows that all things are possible with God.

Psalm 89:2-3, 16-19

- Stewardship is the response to discipleship in Christ. Do we sing out in joy for His goodness and strength?

Second Reading – Romans 6:3-4, 8-11

- Through our Baptism, we died to sin to live in Jesus.
- Do we “live” for God as Christian stewards or follow our own selfish inclinations?

Gospel – Matthew 10:37-42

- As Christian stewards, are we willing to “lose our life” to be disciples of Christ?
- Are we welcoming to others and willing to share our gifts?

Stewardship Thought

Both the first reading and the Gospel today speak of hospitality and welcome. Our ministers of hospitality are a most visible example of using one's time and talents to welcome the people of God. But the Gospel assures us that all who give even just “*a cup of water to one of His lowliest ones will be rewarded.*” See Matthew 10:42 (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, pages 11-12).

Fourteen Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading – Zechariah 9:9-10

- A good steward prays for the joy of God's justice and peace in one's life, family, and community.

Psalm 145:1-2, 8-11, 13-14

- As Christian stewards, we give praise to God for all our blessings, especially His grace and mercy.

Second Reading – Romans 8:9, 11-13

- As good stewards, we are called continually to live in the Spirit, to shed our old ways, and to give our minds and hearts to Jesus.

Gospel – Matthew 11:25-30

- To be good stewards, Jesus asks us to live humble lives and develop child-like faith, and promises us that He will share our burdens.

Stewardship Thought

“Let all your works give you thanks, O Lord, and let your faithful ones bless you,” says the psalmist. Stewardship is this “attitude of gratitude” for the many gifts God has given us. See Psalm 145 (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 12).

Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading – Isaiah 55:10-11

- Christian stewards know that God’s Word of salvation is a gift freely given that nourishes us to do His will.

Psalm 65:10-14

- Christian stewards show gratitude through prayer to God for the harvest gifts of the earth.

Second Reading – Romans 8:18-23

- As good stewards, we strive to be patient with our current sufferings in light of the greater glory to come, and to be grateful for the first fruits of the Holy Spirit to guide us.

Gospel – Matthew 13:1-23

- Do we, as stewards, accept the “seed of God’s Word” that falls on fertile ground to produce abundant fruit?

Stewardship Thought

May our stewardship of time, talent and treasure show us to be among those who have heard the message of Christ and taken it in, yielding a hundred — or sixty — or thirty-fold! (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 12).

Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading – Wisdom 12:13, 16-19

- *“Those who are just must be kind,”* says today’s first reading. If our words and deeds are kind and selfless, we will be like the good seed in the Gospel parable and gathered as wheat in the Lord’s harvest. See Wisdom 12:19 (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 12).

Psalm 86:5-6, 9-10, 15-16

- The Lord is kind and forgiving. Do we praise Him for His mercy?

Second Reading – Romans 8:26-27

- As good stewards we call upon the Holy Spirit to strengthen us in our prayer life.

Gospel – Matthew 13:24-43

- In a spirit of Christian stewardship, we strive — through prayer, Scripture, and the Eucharist — to increase our faith like the mustard seed planted in good soil that grows into a huge plant.
- Jesus is the sower of good seed that sustains us against the sower of worldly weeds — the devil.

Stewardship Thought

Good stewards in a parish are like the yeast in today’s Gospel. Their selfless gifts of time and talent help the parish grow and thrive, and their example inspires others to become good stewards, too (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 12).

Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading – 1 Kings 3:5, 7-12

- As good stewards, like Solomon, we seek God’s gifts of wisdom and understanding to help us make faith-filled decisions in our lives.

Psalm 119:57, 72, 76-77, 127-130

- Do we as stewards, follow God’s precepts or our own “rules”?

Second Reading – Romans 8:28-30

- Our life in Christian stewardship transforms us to a life of spirituality and away from earthly things.

Gospel – Matthew 13:44-52

- In practicing Christian stewardship, what do we sacrifice or give up for the “kingdom of heaven”?

Stewardship Thought

“The law of Your mouth is to me more precious than thousands of gold and silver pieces,” says the psalmist today. Does the amount of our offering suggest that we can honestly say the same? See Psalm 119 (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 12).

Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading – Isaiah 55:1-3

- Through prayer, reading Scripture, and, above all, regular Mass attendance and reception of the Eucharist, Christian stewards thirst for a closer relationship with God, Who provides us with all good things.

Psalm 145: 8-9, 15-18

- *“The hand of the Lord feeds us,”* sings the psalmist; *“He answers all our needs.”* Often, though, it is with the open hands of generous stewards willing to share His many gifts that God’s people are fed and their needs met. See Psalm 145 (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 12).

Second Reading – Romans 8:35, 37-39

- In today's culture, Christian stewards need to be very careful that the lure of acquiring material possessions does not separate us from the love of God in our Lord, Jesus Christ.

Gospel – Matthew 14:13-21

- The miracle of the loaves and fishes reminds us as good stewards to thank God daily for our blessings of food, but even more for our spiritual food Jesus offers us through the Eucharist.

Stewardship Thought

In today's Gospel, Jesus feeds the five thousand with five loaves and two fish. The message of stewardship is that God's gifts, *shared*, will always be more than enough (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 12).

Transfiguration of the Lord (August 6)

First Reading – Daniel 7:9-10, 13-14

- Do we use our talents as good stewards to serve the Lord who has dominion over all creation?

Psalm 97:1-2, 5-6, 9

- The Lord is King and the Most High. What "idols" in our culture distract us from doing God's work?

Second Reading – 2 Peter 1:16-19

- Our heavenly Father indicates during Jesus' Transfiguration that He is "well pleased" with His Son. Would He also be pleased with how we are using our time, talent, and treasure to embrace His kingdom?

Gospel – Matthew 17:1-9

- As we productively use our time, talent, and treasure to further God's work, we can only hope that through our faithful good deeds as Christ's disciples that we, too, can have a "mountain top" experience with our Lord.

Stewardship Thought

In the Gospel today, Peter yearns to *do* something to make concrete the Transfiguration he had witnessed. But to be a good steward of this spiritual gift, he was instructed to *be still*, to *listen* to Jesus, and to *wait* for His direction. Good advice for us, too! (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 34).

Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading – 1 Kings 19:9, 11-13

- Good stewards make daily quiet time to pray and listen to God, Who sometimes answers in the quietest of ways.

Psalm 85:9-14

- Happy are those stewards who trust in the Lord and who praise Him at all times.

Second Reading – Romans 9:1-5

- As stewards, do we accept the Good News of Jesus and the spiritual gifts available to us through the Holy Spirit?

Gospel – Matthew 14:22-33

- Jesus fed the people, then went off to pray. As Christian stewards, we build our faith through prayer and partaking of the Eucharist. Does the quest for material wealth distract us from attending Mass regularly and receiving Holy Communion?

Stewardship Thought

Elijah recognized the voice of God not in the strong and heavy wind, not in the earthquake, and not in the fire, but in a tiny whispering sound. May we find enough quiet in our clamorous world to hear His voice and discern what He is calling us to do and be (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 12).

Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary (August 15)

First Reading – Revelation 11:19; 12:1-6, 10

- The woman described in the passage from Revelation can be seen as a symbol of Mary, the model Christian steward, or the Church, the Bride of Christ. Either way, as we practice Christian stewardship and draw closer to our Lord, Jesus Christ, the symbolism promises that we are given the gift of grace to resist evil and do good.

Psalm 45:10-12, 16

- As stewards, do we follow Mary's example and honor Christ as Messiah and King or are we preoccupied with the "false" gods in our culture?

Second Reading – 1 Corinthians 15:20-27

- Christ's message to us is one of unity for He is above all nations. At the "*resurrection of the dead,*" will we be able to show Christ that we truly used our God-given talents to further His kingdom on earth?

Gospel – Luke 1:39-56

- Mary's canticle is a beautiful expression of her humbleness and praise to God in calling her to be the Mother of Jesus. As Christian stewards, do we follow her example of trusting God always?

Stewardship Thought

*“After Jesus, it is the Blessed Virgin Mary who, by her example, most perfectly teaches the meaning of discipleship and stewardship ... She was called and gifted by God; she responded generously, creatively and prudently; she understood her divinely assigned role as ‘handmaid’ in terms of service and fidelity” (USCCB, *ibid.*, page 41).*

Twentieth Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading – Isaiah 56:1, 6-7

- As Christian stewards, do we keep holy the Sabbath, beginning with Mass and the Eucharist?
- Do we always do what is right and just as we strive to join ourselves to the Lord?

Psalm 67:2-3, 5-6, 8

- In prayerful gratitude, good stewards acknowledge God’s blessings and praise Him.

Second Reading – Romans 11:13-15, 29-32

- Christian stewardship involves opening our hearts and minds to God’s call and His great mercy in spite of our sinfulness. Do we use His many gifts to spread the Gospel through good example in our lives?

Gospel – Matthew 15:21-28

- Faith is a true gift from God. One should persist through a lifetime in seeking, finding, and building that gift of faith.

Stewardship Thought

In today’s second reading, St. Paul tells the Romans, *“God’s gifts and His will are irrevocable.”* To what is God calling me today? What gifts are mine to share? See Romans 11:29 (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 13).

Twenty-First Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading – Isaiah 22:15, 19-23

- Political leaders who practice Christian stewardship realize their gifts of leadership are from God. It is their challenge to use these gifts in a just manner.

Psalm 138: 1-3, 6-8

- Good stewards exhibit “an attitude of gratitude” to God for His many blessings.

Second Reading – Romans 11:33-36

- A Christian steward understands how Paul’s teaching applies in our lives: *“For from God and through Him and for Him are all things.”*

Gospel – Matthew 16:13-20

- Peter’s faith in God revealed to him that Jesus was the “Christ,” Peter accepted his role as “head of the Church” even to death. Are we, as stewards, prepared to be disciples of Christ at any cost?

Stewardship Thought

In today’s second reading, St. Paul reminds the Romans — and us — that all things come from God: “*For from Him and through Him and for Him all things are.*” Good stewards understand that *all* is a gift and share generously the gifts of time, talent, and treasure with which they have been blessed. See Romans 11:36 (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 13).

Twenty-Second Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading – Jeremiah 20:7-9

- Jeremiah had the gift of prophesy. He would not stop proclaiming God’s Word to his people. As stewards, what is God calling us to do, and are we open to follow His call?

Psalm 63:2-6, 8-9

- Christian stewardship means building a closer relationship with God through prayer and frequent reception of the Holy Eucharist at Mass.

Second Reading – Romans 12:1-2

- Do we, as good stewards, care for our physical bodies in a respectful manner pleasing to God?
- The “body” that St. Paul speaks of is also realized in the unity of the Church, Christ’s Body on earth, which guides us to do God’s will.

Gospel – Matthew 16:21-27

- Jesus asks that we “lose ourselves” for the sake of the kingdom. As stewards, are we willing to accept this challenge to deny ourselves, to take up our cross daily, and to follow Him?

Stewardship Thought

In today’s second reading, St. Paul exhorts the Romans to *total* stewardship. “*Brothers and sisters,*” he urges, “... *offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God.*” See Romans 12:1 (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 13).

Twenty-Third Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading – Ezekiel 33:7-9

- A prophet is God’s voice proclaiming His word at a given time in history. In today’s world, we still have prophets among us. As Christian stewards, do we acknowledge their gifts and listen to their words to turn away from evil and follow Christ as His disciples?

Psalm 95:1-2, 6-9

- Good stewards joyfully and gratefully praise and worship God for all that we are and for all that we have.

Second Reading – Romans 13:8-10

- Who is our neighbor? Out of love, as Christian stewards, we share our time and financial resources with a neighbor in need.

Gospel – Matthew 18:15-20

- Christian stewardship involves prayer, not only in private, but in groups and in a communion of believers. Jesus states, “*For where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them.*”

Stewardship Thought

Am I my brother’s keeper? All three readings today suggest that for the Christian steward the answer is “Yes!” (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 13).

Twenty-Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading – Sirach 27:30-28:7

- As good stewards, we should be quick to forgive our neighbor. In turn, God will show forgiveness and mercy to us.

Psalm 103:1-4, 9-12

- A Christian steward does not forget that all gifts are from our kind and merciful Lord.

Second Reading – Romans 14:7-9

- All that we do, we do in the name of the Lord for we are His Who died for us.

Gospel – Matthew 18:21-35

- Jesus challenges His followers, in the spirit of Christian stewardship, to forgive one another without end, just as God always is merciful to us.

Stewardship Thought

Stewardship is not optional! “*None of us lives as his own master and none of us dies as his own master;*” says St. Paul. “*While we live, we are responsible to the Lord, and when we die, we die as His servants.*” See Romans 14:7-9 (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 13).

The Exaltation of the Holy Cross (September 14)

First Reading – Numbers 21:4-9

- The bronze serpent that Moses made to cure his people of snake bites later became a despised idol to Israel. What are some of the modern day idols that good stewards need to avoid to be faithful to God?

Psalm 78:1-2, 34-38

- In the Old Testament, God forgave His people when they sinned against Him. As Christian stewards, what spirit of forgiveness do we show when we are wronged?

Second Reading – Philippians 2:6-11

- Christ gives us the model for placing the needs of others above our individual interests.
- St. Paul was willing to lay down his life for the Gospel. As disciples of Christ, are we willing to do the same?

Gospel – John 3:13-17

- God's love gave His only Son as a gift to all Christians and, through Christ's death and resurrection, a chance of eternal life. As Christian stewards, are we grateful for this great gift?

Stewardship Thought

Even though the Lord led them out of Egypt and provided for their every need, the people in today's first reading were complaining and ungrateful. Does my stewardship of God's gifts show that I know from whom they came and am grateful? (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 34).

Twenty-Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading – Isaiah 55:6-9

- A Christian steward knows that God tells us His thoughts are not our thoughts, but still we need to strive to do His will.

Psalm 145:2-3, 8-9, 17-18

- Stewardship involves reverent praise to God for all of His blessings of grace and mercy.

Second Reading – Philippians 1:20-24, 27

- As followers of Christ, would we, like Paul, be willing to sacrifice our lives for the Gospel?
- While as Christ's disciples we long to be with Him in His glory, we know we must do His work here on earth.

Gospel – Matthew 20:1-16

- As Christian stewards, are we generous in returning our "first fruits" to the Lord in response to His many blessings and are we just in our dealings with others?

Stewardship Thought

In today's Gospel, the vineyard owner says, "*I am free to do as I please with my money, am I not?*" We are likewise free. Is a generous return to the Lord in thanksgiving for His many blessings among the choices we have made? See Matthew 20:15 (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 13).

Twenty-Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading – Ezekiel 18:25-28

- God is fair and His gift of forgiveness is available to all of us who seek repentance for our sins.

Psalm 125:4-9

- Christian stewards seek the Lord's teachings as the pathway from sin.

Second Reading – Philippians 2:1-11

- In imitation of Christ, Christian stewards, united in the Church, humbly serve God and one another.

Gospel – Matthew 21:28-32

- As Christ's disciples, we should always strive to find and do God's will. Conversion of our hearts and believing in Christ are fundamentals of Christian stewardship.

Stewardship Thought

The first son in today's Gospel said he would do his father's bidding, but did not. The second son balked at first, but then repented and did as he was asked. What service is God calling me to do? Which son am I more like? (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 13).

Twenty-Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading – Isaiah 5:1-7

- In the "vineyard of life," do we follow our Lord's way to use our time, talent, and treasure to produce good fruit? Or do our "own thing" that provides "wild grapes"?

Psalm 80:9, 12-16, 19-20

- In the "battle of life," do we try to go at it alone or follow a Christian steward's path and trust in the Lord?
- Are we good stewards of God's creation?

Second Reading – Philippians 4:6-9

- Christian stewardship emphasizes prayer to God, not only for our needs, but especially in thanksgiving to the Lord for all our blessings.

Gospel – Matthew 21:33-43

- As tenants of this world, do we accept Jesus and the prophets' words in a spirit of stewardship, or does our materialistic culture distract us from the truth?

Stewardship Thought

In the Gospel today, the owner of the vineyard sent messengers to collect his share of the harvest from the tenant farmers, but there was not a single good steward on the property! God is the owner, we are the tenants. What sort of stewards are we? (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 13).

Twenty-Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading – Isaiah 25:6-10

- What joy awaits stewards who follow Christ’s way! Will we as good stewards use our God-given gifts of time, talent, and treasure according to His will here on earth to be able to taste “rich food” and “choice wines” in the kingdom of heaven?

Psalm 23:1-6

- As we strive to embrace Christian stewardship “as a way of life,” is the Lord truly “my Shepherd”?

Second Reading – Philippians 4:12-14, 19-20

- St. Paul teaches us that a fundamental principle of Christian stewardship is to accept God’s gifts gratefully.
- As good stewards, are we humble before God for the abundant blessings He shares with us?

Gospel – Matthew 22:1-14

- Do we answer, as faithful stewards, Jesus’ call to follow Him to His eternal feast? Along the way, do we put on the garment of His teaching to clothe us?

Stewardship Thought

In today’s second reading, St. Paul thanks the Philippians for being willing to share in his hardships and promises that God, in turn, will fully supply all their needs. Our God truly cannot be outdone in generosity! (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 14).

Twenty-Ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading – Isaiah 45:1, 4-6

- Christian stewards acknowledge the Lord as the one, true God. Through prayer and discernment, we should strive to discover what the Lord is calling us to do.

Psalm 96:1, 3-5, 7-10

- As good stewards, what gifts do we have to offer back to God?

Second Reading – 1 Thessalonians 1:1-5

- Christian stewards pray in thanksgiving to God and also for the intentions of others.
- We are chosen by God to grow in faith and to love one another through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Gospel – Matthew 22:15-21

- Everything comes from God, including civil authority. Jesus guides us on the way to be good stewards of God’s gifts and good citizens.

Stewardship Thought

Each year at tax time, we conscientiously give “*to Caesar what belongs to Caesar.*” Does my stewardship indicate that I am as faithful about giving “*to God what belongs to God*”? See Matthew 22:21 (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 14).

Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading – Exodus 22:20-26

- Faithful stewards show compassion to the poor and oppressed. They joyfully share their abundance with those in need.

Psalm 18:2-4, 47, 51

- As Christian stewards, can we proclaim God as our rock, our strength, and our salvation; do we trust in Him?

Second Reading – 1 Thessalonians 1:5-10

- In today's second reading, the Thessalonians did a complete conversion away from idols to believe in the true God. In today's society, what "idols" are distracting us from discipleship and making Christian stewardship a way of life?

Gospel – Matthew 22:34-40

- As disciples of Christ, we are called to love God with our entire being and our neighbor as ourselves. Who do we consider our neighbor?

Stewardship Thought

We fulfill the commandment to love our neighbor when we exercise good stewardship — joyfully sharing our gifts of life, abilities, and resources to meet our neighbor's need (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 14).

Thirty-First Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading – Malachi 1:14-2:2, 8-10

- God punishes those who turn away from His commandments. Good stewards do not break faith in God, nor in one another in our parish communion.

Psalm 131:1-3

- The good steward puts humble trust in God's faithfulness.

Second Reading – 1 Thessalonians 2:7-9, 13

- Christian stewards give thanks for God's Word, and are faithful in their ministry to others.

Gospel – Matthew 23:1-12

- It is not enough to "talk the talk" of Christian stewardship; we must also "walk the walk" by following Christ's example in our effort to serve others.

Stewardship Thought

"The greatest among you will be one who serves the rest," Jesus says in today's Gospel. What wonderful good news for those who give of their time in service to others! See Matthew 23:11 (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 14).

Thirty-Second Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading – Wisdom 6:12-16

- Thoughtful and prudent wisdom is a blessed gift from God for which Christian stewards are grateful.

Psalm 63:2-8

- Christian stewards thirst for a close personal relationship with God, the source of our joy and worthy of all praise and blessing.

Second Reading – 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

- Christian stewards try to follow God's will in order to be prepared at the end of life on earth with the hope of attaining eternal life with our Lord.

Gospel – Matthew 25:1-13

- If the Lord comes tonight, could we provide an accounting of our stewardship of His gifts to us?

Stewardship Thought

Like the sensible bridesmaids in today's parable, good stewards make sure that they, and whatever gifts are theirs to share, are ready to serve when the Master calls (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 14).

All Saints (November 1)

First Reading – Revelation 7:2-4, 9-14

- Good stewards understand the white garment of salvation comes from Christ as symbolized in the Sacrament of Baptism, which washes away the stain of sin.
- Christian stewards strive to build a strong relationship with God through prayer, meditation, and adoration.

Psalm 24:1-4, 5-6

- Can we as faithful stewards say we are "pure of heart" like the saints?

Second Reading – 1 John 3:1-3

- Do we use our time and talents to lead virtuous lives so by our example the world will know we are Christ's disciples?

Gospel – Matthew 5:1-12

- Good Christian stewards strive to live the Beatitudes. As faithful stewards, we profess to follow Christ's teaching to live our lives completely dependent on the Lord our God.

Stewardship Thought

Today's psalm makes clear that we and everything we think we own actually belongs to God instead: "*The Lord's are the earth and its fullness, the world and those who live in it.*" We are *stewards*, not owners, of our own lives and all we possess! See Psalm 24 (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, pages 34-35).



The Commemoration of all the Faithful Departed (All Souls – November 2)

First Reading – Wisdom 3:1-9

- Good stewards strive to be faithful to God, Who gives us grace and peace, and is merciful to us always.

– or –

First Reading – Daniel 12:1-3

- We, as faithful stewards, strive to live just and holy lives pleasing to God, Who will judge us on our last day according to our actions.

Psalm 23:1-6

- Christian stewardship embraces a spirit of hospitality at home and in our parish.

Second Reading – Romans 5:5-11

- As Christian stewards, we put our hope in God, Who does not disappoint, but instead pours out His love for us, especially through His Son, Jesus Christ, Who has redeemed us.

– or –

Second Reading – Romans 6:3-9

- Christian stewards believe that through our Baptism we live with Christ because He died for our sins.

Gospel – John 6:37-40

- Are we striving to follow God’s will as Christian stewards to believe in His Son, Jesus, or do we follow our own will?

– or –

Gospel – John 11:17-27

- Jesus states, *“I am the resurrection and the life; whoever believes in Me, even if he dies, will live ...”* All of us, even those who believe in our Lord, will experience physical death, but our souls will live forever. These are comforting words for us, who, as disciples of Christ, strive to follow His commandments, and do His will.

Stewardship Thought

On the Feast of All Souls, we pray for those who have gone before us and stand in judgment before God. May we share with one another the treasure of love’s memory, and console one another with the assurance of resurrection in Christ Jesus (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 35).

The Dedication of the Lateran Basilica in Rome (November 9)

First Reading – Ezekiel 47:1-2, 8-9, 12

- Good stewards are grateful for water, the source of life and a gift from God, symbolizing His grace flowing throughout the world.

Psalm 46:2-3, 5-6, 8-9

- In troubled times, Christian stewards trust in God’s strength and guidance.

– or –

Psalm 84:3-6, 8-11

- As Christian stewards, we yearn to live in the house of God.



Second Reading – 1 Corinthians 3:9-11, 16-17

- As Christian stewards, do we strive to build the Church with Jesus as the foundation of our life?

Gospel – John 2:13-22

- As good stewards, do we deal honestly with others in our financial matters, understanding that every material possession is God's gift to us?
- Jesus described His body as a temple. Are we good stewards of our bodily health?

Stewardship Thought

As we pray today for increase of spiritual gifts, we are reminded by the Bishops' Pastoral Letter on stewardship that good stewardship of the Church "*means cherishing and fostering the gifts of all, while using one's own gifts to serve the community of faith*" (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 34).

Thirty-Third Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading – Proverbs 31:10-13, 19-20, 30-31

- Husbands and wives are called by God to their vocation of marriage. Marriages based in faith and love are a beautiful gift from God.

Psalm 128:1-5

- Stewards who put their faith in God will be blessed with a happy home.

Second Reading – 1 Thessalonians 5:1-6

- Good stewards, guided by the light of Christ, are always alert and prepared for the coming of the Lord.

Gospel – Matthew 25:14-30

- Matthew's account of the talents clearly illustrates Christian stewardship — using God's gifts wisely and prudently.
- As stewards, do we use our time, talent, and treasure to further God's mission here on earth?

Stewardship Thought

Good stewards are like the industrious and reliable servants in today's Gospel, prudently using and multiplying the gifts entrusted to them by God (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 14).



Christ the King

First Reading – Ezekiel 34:11-12, 15-17

- God promises to shepherd His sheep, caring for them always. As Christian stewards, are we striving to follow that example by caring for God's many gifts to us, and placing our faith and trust in our "Good Shepherd"?

Psalm 23:1-3, 5-6

- Christian stewardship promotes a spirit of Christ's hospitality in our home and in our parish.

Second Reading – 1 Corinthians 15:20-26, 28

- St. Paul teaches us about death and resurrection through Christ. We are blessed to have the opportunity to gain salvation through Christ's resurrection.

Gospel – Matthew 25:31-46

- On our journey to be good and faithful stewards, do we see Christ in the faces of the hungry, the sick, the ill-clothed, strangers, and prisoners among us, and act to relieve their suffering?

Stewardship Thought

When the Son of Man comes in glory, may we be among those who have fed the hungry, welcomed the stranger, and clothed the naked. For Jesus tells us clearly that it is those who have demonstrated good stewardship by sharing their gifts with the less fortunate who will receive God's blessing and inherit the kingdom (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 14).



*Stewardship Reflections
on the Liturgy of the Word*

Reading Reflections – Cycle B

STEWARDSHIP REFLECTIONS ON THE LITURGY OF THE WORD

CYCLE B (Mark)

The following reflections on the Cycle B readings of the Liturgy of the Word are designed to stimulate your own thoughts and reflections on God's message to us as Christian stewards. Your reflections and thoughts, as well as the reflections presented here, can then be the basis for homilies, lay witness testimony, and other guideposts along your stewardship journey.

First Sunday of Advent

First Reading – Isaiah 63:16-17, 19; 64:2-7

- As good Christian stewards, we learn to surrender and let God mold our lives.

Psalm 80:2-3, 15-16, 18-19

- As practicing stewards, we put our full faith in God, knowing He will be with us and protect us.

Second Reading – 1 Corinthians 1:3-9

- In anticipation of Christ's revelation, as Christian stewards we never lack in spiritual blessings, and we give thanks and praise for these gifts.
- God calls us to fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ.

Gospel Reading – Mark 13:33-37

- Being watchful, we as wise and faithful stewards know that God will hold us accountable on how we used His gifts in this life to further His kingdom.

Stewardship Thought

We are the servants of God, each with his or her own task. We will be judged good stewards if, at His coming, He finds us ready and conscientiously pursuing the tasks to which we have been called (Used with permission from Our Sunday Visitor, *Stewardship by the Book: Bulletin Bits Based on the Sunday Readings*, by Sharon Hueckel, 2004 edition, page 15).

Second Sunday of Advent

First Reading – Isaiah 40:1-5, 9-11

- God is all-powerful, yet comforting to His people.
- As Christian stewards, we know that Jesus "feeds His flock" spiritually through our partaking of the Eucharist.

Psalm 85:9-14

- Christian stewards acknowledge God's abundant blessings bestowed upon them and, in turn, we use these blessings to promote kindness and truth, justice and peace.



Second Reading – 2 Peter 3:8-14

- Mindful of a finite life here on earth, and knowing we must give an accounting of God’s blessings, good Christian stewards strive to live virtuous lives strengthened by regular partaking of the Lord’s Eucharistic gift.

Gospel – Mark 1:1-8

- Through our Baptism, we are called to be disciples of Christ. Like John the Baptist, Jesus also stresses the importance of repentance. Advent is a good time to participate in the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Stewardship Thought

John the Baptist’s call to repentance is echoed in the U.S. Bishops’ Pastoral Letter on stewardship: “*Christians must beg God for the grace of conversion: the grace to know who they are, to whom they belong, how they are to live — the grace to repent and change and grow, the grace to become good disciples and stewards*” (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 15).

Immaculate Conception (December 8)

First Reading – Genesis 3:9-15, 20

- Do we try to follow God’s will as stewards in the model of Mary Immaculate, or our own in disobedience of His commands?

Psalm 98:1-4

- Good stewards praise God in joyful song for His blessing of our salvation.

Second Reading – Ephesians 1:3-6, 11-12

- Christian stewards understand that God has chosen us to do His will for His praise and glory.

Gospel – Luke 1:26-38

- Mary is the model steward — completely trusting in God and answering His call to do His will. We are truly thankful to God for the gift of His Son.

Stewardship Thought

Mary’s Immaculate Conception prepared her for her unique role as the Mother of God. We, too, have been given all the gifts we need to do the work to which God calls us. Oh Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us that we may have the courage to say “yes!” when God calls (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 35).

Third Sunday of Advent

First Reading – Isaiah 61:1-2, 10-11

- Christian stewards rejoice in God’s gifts to us, likened to beautiful jewels or gardens, and understand we must follow the Lord’s example by sharing them with others in love and justice.



Psalm – Luke 1:46-50, 53-54

- Mary, in her Magnificat, responds to Elizabeth with joy that she accepts her call to be the Mother of God. Do we, as Christian stewards, also respond joyfully to God's call?

Second Reading – 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24

- The Christian steward seeks to develop a deeper prayer life to draw closer to the Lord by giving Him constant thanks and becoming holy.

Gospel – John 1:6-8, 19-28

- John the Baptist came to “*testify to the light*,” Who is Jesus. Does our life reflect that we believe Jesus is our light and salvation?

Stewardship Thought

All of the people in today's readings — the prophet Isaiah, the Virgin Mary, St. Paul, St. John the Baptist — seemed to understand clearly and rejoice in what God was calling them to be and to do. Do I? (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 15).

Fourth Sunday of Advent

First Reading – 2 Samuel 7:1-5, 8-11, 16

- In this first reading, God speaks to David through His prophet Nathan and promises a time of peace in David's reign to build a “*house of God*.” As Christian stewards, how do we use our time, talents, and treasure to build God's kingdom?

Psalm 89:2-5, 27, 29

- God is ever faithful. As stewards, how loyal are we in following His commandments?

Second Reading – Romans 16:25-27

- God, through Jesus Christ, reveals Himself that we may believe for His glory and our salvation.

Gospel – Luke 1:26-28

- Mary without hesitation accepted her earthly vocation as “Mother of God.” Are we, as Christian stewards, through prayer and discernment, prepared to say “yes” to God's call?

Stewardship Thought

In the first reading, God promises King David that His house and His kingdom will endure forever. It is through Mary's “Yes” — “*I am the handmaid of the Lord. Let it be done to me as you say*.” — that promise finds fulfillment. See Luke 1:38 (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 15).

Christmas (Vigil)

First Reading – Isaiah 62:1-5

- God promises a new day of salvation for us. For this, we must always be thankful to Him.

Psalm 89:4-5, 16-17, 27, 29

- Our Lord God is our Rock and our Savior. We gratefully rejoice in His kindness and faithfulness.

Second Reading – Acts of the Apostles 13:16-17, 22-25

- God brought forth Jesus, our Savior, from the house of David. Christian stewards repent for the times we fail to be grateful for this great gift.

Gospel – Matthew 1:1-25

- “Emmanuel” means “God is with us.” Let us as stewards follow the model of Mary and Joseph and put our complete trust in God.

Stewardship Thought

All the earth rejoices in praise and glory to God that the ancient prophecies are fulfilled in Jesus Christ our Savior. As Christian stewards, our gratitude should be boundless.

Christmas (Midnight)

First Reading – Isaiah 9:1-16

- Christ is in our midst today. Do we recognize Him?
- The lights of Christmas remind us that Christ is the light of the world.

Psalm 96:1-3, 11-13

- Let us rejoice with all praise, honor, and glory to Christ our Savior.

Second Reading – Titus 2:11-14

- As Christian stewards, disciples of Christ, we reflect on His redeeming grace in our lives.

Gospel – Luke 2:1-14

- There was “*no room for them in the inn.*” Do we welcome Christ into our hearts?
- The glory of God was proclaimed to lowly shepherds. Are we “poor in spirit”?

Stewardship Thought

The birth of Jesus was part of God’s plan for the redemption of mankind. God also has a plan for each of us. Are we open to receive His call to share in His plan?



Christmas (Dawn)

First Reading – Isaiah 62:11-12

- Our redemption by the Lord is the true joy of Christmas.

Psalm 97:1, 6, 11-12

- Give thanks to the Lord, our light and our salvation.

Second Reading – Titus 3:4-7

- In Baptism, because of God’s mercy, we are renewed by the Holy Spirit through Jesus Christ. We must be grateful for this great gift.

Gospel – Luke 2:15-20

- The shepherds answered God’s call proclaimed by the angels to seek Christ and worship Him. Do we make that same effort to seek Him?

Stewardship Thought

Pray that God gives us wisdom to understand His will and the strength and courage to act as His disciples.

Christmas (Day)

First Reading – Isaiah 52:7-10

- Like the Israelites of old, today’s Christian stewards also proclaim, “*God is King*”!
- Jesus Christ brings us His Good News of salvation.

Psalm 98:1-6

- As Christian stewards, we are encouraged to use our talents to praise and thank God in prayer, song, and instrument for His great gifts to us.

Second Reading – Hebrews 1:1-6

- Our heavenly Father proclaims Jesus His Son and tells the angels to worship Him as a reflection of God’s glory. Can we do less?

Gospel Reading – John 1:1-18

- The Word became flesh; God became man. God gives us the greatest gift of all — His Son, Jesus, Who will light for us the path to eternal salvation.

Stewardship Thought

The shepherds who heard the joyous news from the angels on that first Christmas night and then hurried to find the infant Savior must surely have been changed by that experience. How has His coming changed my life? (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 15).

Feast of the Holy Family

First Reading – Sirach 3:2-6, 12-14

- Good parents are a blessing from God. God commands us as good Christian stewards to honor and care for our parents whatever the circumstances may be.

Psalm 128:1-5

- As Christian stewards, we realize our spouse and children are true blessings from God and are to be nurtured.

Second Reading – Colossians 3:12-21

- As God's chosen ones, we are to put on compassion, reconciliation, and love for one another as members of the Body of Christ.
- A good steward does everything in the name of Jesus, follows His Word, and prays and sings gratefully to God.
- The family is called the domestic Church. Love and respect one another.

Gospel – Luke 2:22-40

- With great joy, Mary and Joseph manifested their gift of faith in Jesus by presenting Him in the Temple, to be thanked and praised by those longing for salvation.

Stewardship Thought

Parents who practice good stewardship use their time and talents to pass on their faith, to educate, to nurture, and to protect their children.

New Year's Day – Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God

First Reading - Numbers 6:22-27

- Christian stewards gratefully recognize that God blesses us and acknowledge that true peace and happiness come from Him through His grace.

Psalm 67:2-3, 5-6, 8

- As stewards, we give God glory and praise for His gift of our salvation through His mercy.

Second Reading – Galatians 4:4-7

- As Christian stewards, we understand we are children and heirs of God through the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Gospel – Luke 2:16-21

- The shepherds went to Bethlehem at God's instruction through the angels. Do we as good stewards listen to God's call and then act on it in our lives?
- Mary, Mother of God, teach us how to be your Son's disciples.

Stewardship Thought

The first reading today recalls God's special blessing upon the Israelites. The Lord has been gracious to us as well, pouring into our hearts that spirit which knows Him as Father and makes us His children. May we, like Mary, treasure these things in our hearts and live gratefully (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 16).

Second Sunday after Christmas

First Reading – Sirach 24:1-4, 8-12

- Good stewards accept God’s call to live in Him and His commands.

Psalm 147:12-15, 19-20

- Christian stewards glorify the Lord in all we do and say in thanksgiving for His many blessings.

Second Reading – Ephesians 1:3-6, 15-18

- Our heavenly Father gives us His Son and every spiritual blessing. As stewards, we demonstrate our gratitude by striving to be holy and filled with love for God and one another.

Gospel – John 1:1-18

- In Jesus, the Word became flesh, filled with redeeming love for us, which we share in gratitude with others.

Stewardship Thought

During this Christmas season, we rejoice that our Savior has come. As stewards, do we answer His call to follow His Word?

The Epiphany of the Lord

First Reading – Isaiah 60:1-6

- The prophet Isaiah paints a picture of the fullness of God’s gifts to us which should inspire us as Christian stewards to give back to the Lord for His praise and glory.
- Christ is the light that guides us to Him.

Psalm 72:1-2, 7-8, 10-13

- God with His mercy and justice exhorts us as His stewards to praise Him by sharing our time, talent, and treasure with the poor and oppressed.

Second Reading – Ephesians 3:2-3, 5-6

- God, through Christ, gives His gift of grace to all people and welcomes the baptized as members of the Body of Christ and heirs of God’s Kingdom.

Gospel – Matthew 2:1-12

- By the story of the Magi’s gifts to Jesus, Christian stewards are reminded how much God blesses us with many gifts. We must use and return them gratefully.
- The Magi journeyed far, with great effort, to pay homage to our King. Do we make time for Him in our lives? Do we trust God in all things?

Stewardship Thought

The three wise men who came from the East to pay homage to the infant Jesus brought Him rich gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh as part of their worship. What gifts have I brought to this celebration to offer to the newborn Savior? (Our Sunday, Visitor, *ibid.*, page 16).



The Baptism of the Lord

First Reading – Isaiah 42:1-4, 6-7

- A faithful steward accepts God-given talents gratefully and shares them in love and justice with those in need.

Psalm 29:1-4, 3, 9-10

- In gratitude, Christian stewards give glory and praise to God.

Second Reading – Acts of the Apostles 10:34-38

- Christian stewards acknowledge that God’s gifts of faith and peace are attainable by all who act according to His commandments through Christ, Who is Lord of all.

Gospel – Mark 1:7-11

- John’s Baptism of Jesus encourages us as Christian stewards to reflect on our own Baptism and continually seek to do God’s will to please Him.

Stewardship Thought

Today we celebrate the Baptism of the Lord. The U.S. Bishops’ Pastoral on stewardship reminds us that Baptism gives all of His disciples a share in His priestly work and calls them “*to offer up the world and all that is in it — especially themselves — to the Lord of all*” (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 18).

Second Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading – 1 Samuel 3:3-10, 19

- As Christian stewards, do we follow Samuel’s example in answering the Lord’s call for us to serve Him?

Psalm 40:2, 4, 7-10

- Christian stewards enthusiastically praise and give thanks to God for His gifts to us.

Second Reading – 1 Corinthians 6:13-15, 17-20

- St. Paul reminds us we are temples of the Holy Spirit. Are we good stewards of the spiritual, psychological, emotional, and physical health of our own bodies?

Gospel – John 1:35-42

- Andrew, in today’s Gospel, tells Peter that they had found the Messiah. What an immediate conversion of mind and heart these two disciples must have experienced. Have we, as Christian stewards, found Christ in our lives through our own conversion?

Stewardship Thought

In today’s first reading, we hear Samuel respond eagerly, “*Here I am!*” each time the Lord calls him. May we, too, be listening for the call of God in our lives and be ready to say like the psalmist, “*Hear am I, Lord; I come to do your will.*” See 1 Samuel 3:4; Psalm 40 (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 18).

Third Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading – Jonah 3:1-5, 10

- After some persuasion, Jonah became God’s messenger to Nineveh. As Christian stewards, how difficult is it for us to accept God’s call to spread His message throughout the world?
- Have we experienced conversion like the people of Nineveh?

Psalm 25:4-9

- On our stewardship journey, we should trust God to guide us to justice and truth on our way to eternal life.

Second Reading – 1 Corinthians 7:29-31

- As Christian stewards, do we conduct ourselves in this world with full knowledge that we are preparing here for God’s heavenly kingdom?

Gospel – Mark 1:14-20

- In today’s Gospel, Jesus calls His first disciples and, without hesitation, they stop what they are doing and follow Him. Jesus calls us to follow Him, to be, as His disciples, faithful Christian stewards.

Stewardship Thought

There is a certain urgency in today’s Gospel as Jesus calls His first disciples — Andrew and Simon, James and John. Each one follows Jesus *immediately*, unhesitatingly abandoning nets and boats and father and fellow workers. To what is Jesus calling me — at *this* moment, in *these* circumstances? What will I need to abandon in order to follow Him? (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 18).

Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading – Deuteronomy 18:15-20

- God used Moses, even though imperfect, as His prophet to the Israelites to speak in His name. We have our own imperfections, but as Christian stewards, do we allow God to use our gifts to further His kingdom here on earth?

Psalm 95:1-2, 6-9

- During Mass, do we participate in worshipping God by praising Him through prayer and song?

Second Reading – 1 Corinthians 7:32-35

- God calls each of us to a special vocation for the good of all. Are our hearts and minds open to that call?

Gospel – Mark 1:21-28

- Healing is important in Jesus’ ministry to reinforce His teaching. As Christian stewards, do we follow His teaching and are we humble enough to seek His healing in times of need?



Stewardship Thought

Moses told the people, “*The Lord will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own kinsmen.*” God still provides among His people the gifts and talents necessary to continue the work of His Church. What gifts are yours to share? See Deuteronomy 18:15 (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 19).

Presentation of the Lord (February 2)

First Reading – Malachi 3:1-4

- As good stewards, do we cultivate God’s gifts so we can use our talents to the fullest to do good works in His name?

Psalm 24:7-10

- The Lord is the King of glory; let us welcome Him in our hearts.

Second Reading – Hebrews 2:14-18

- Jesus is faithful to the Father and was tested in His suffering. In our quest to be good Christian stewards, do we ask for His strength when we are tested?

Gospel – Luke 2:22-40

- Do we strive to make stewardship a way of life by longing for the Messiah like Simeon and Anna? Have we “consecrated” ourselves to the Lord?

Stewardship Thought

When Mary and Joseph brought Jesus to the Temple, they offered a sacrificial gift “*in accord with the dictate in the law of the Lord.*” An offering of a specific size or kind is not “dictated” when we bring our gifts to the altar at Mass. Is my gift reflective of the blessings I have received? See Luke 2:24 (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 33).

Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading – Job 7:1-4, 6-7

- In times of despair and hopelessness, we, as Christian stewards, know we can put our trust and faith in the Lord’s loving care.

Psalm 147:1-6

- The Lord is good and worthy of our praise. He heals and sustains us through His power and goodness.

Second Reading – 1 Corinthians 9:16-19, 22-23

- In the second reading, St. Paul is inspired to use his gift of speech to preach the Gospel, but does so humbly and as God’s servant to others. As Christian stewards, do we use our God-given gifts to spread God’s Word through our humble action?

Gospel – Mark 1:29-39

- The Gospels give us many accounts of the restorative power of Jesus’ ministry on earth. As good Christian stewards, we follow Jesus’ example and make daily prayer the vehicle of our stewardship journey.

Stewardship Thought

Like St. Paul in the second reading, the good steward can say, “*I do all that I do for the sake of the Gospel in the hope of sharing in its blessings.*” See 1 Corinthians 9:23 (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 19).

Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading – Leviticus 13:1-2, 44-46

- Who are the “lepers” of our day; do we treat them as outcasts, or are we loving and compassionate?

Psalm 32:1-2, 5, 11

- Christian stewards are comforted in the fact that they are loved and forgiven by a kind and merciful God.

Second Reading – 1 Corinthians 10:31-11:1

- True stewards, like St. Paul, imitate Christ by doing good for others for the glory of God.

Gospel – Mark 1:40-45

- Whether it is spiritual, psychological, emotional, or physical in nature, we, as Christian stewards, are never afraid to ask Jesus for the restorative healing in our lives offered by the Church through Her ordained ministers.

Stewardship Thought

In today’s second reading, St. Paul urges the Corinthians to “*do all for the glory of God.*” If we follow that advice in everything we do, we cannot help but be good stewards! See 1 Corinthians 10:31 (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 19).

Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading – Isaiah 43:18-19, 21-22, 24-25

- As Christian stewards, we believe that God forgives our offenses but can we, in a spirit of reconciliation, forgive those “*who trespass against us*”?

Psalm 41:2-5, 13-14

- God loves the poor. Do we, as Christian stewards, share our time, talent, and treasure with those who are less fortunate, and in need of our compassion?

Second Reading – 2 Corinthians 1:18-22

- God is always faithful and reliable in His gift of love for us. As Christian stewards, how steady and reliable are we in returning this gift to Him?

Gospel – Mark 2:1-12

- Due to the paralytic’s faith, Jesus heals and forgives him in today’s Gospel. Jesus also offers us the gift of forgiveness through our priests as representatives of Christ in the sacrament of Reconciliation. As Christian stewards, how often do we participant in this healing sacrament of forgiveness?



Stewardship Thought

Forgiveness, too, is a gift from God. Freed from the paralysis of sin, the man in today's Gospel was able to stand and give witness to the power of God. How do I let sin cripple me? Am I a good steward of the gift of God's forgiveness? (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 19).

Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading – Hosea 2:16-17, 21-22

- In this first reading, God makes a covenant of love and fidelity with His people, and asks us to respond as faithful stewards of His gifts.
- In marriage, God asks us as good Christian stewards to make that same covenant with our spouse.

Psalm 103:1-4, 8, 10, 12-13

- God offers us His abundant gifts of kindness and mercy. Do we, as Christian stewards, gratefully acknowledge these gifts from the Lord?

Second Reading – 2 Corinthians 3:1-6

- St. Paul does not take credit for his gift of preaching but acknowledges God through the Holy Spirit as the source of this gift. Do we, as disciples of Christ, acknowledge God as the source of our many gifts or do we consider ourselves “self-made” women and men?

Gospel – Mark 2:18-22

- Fasting was a common practice for the Jews of Jesus' day. Today, the Church asks us, if we are able, to fast during Lent in an effort to enhance our spiritual lives. As we continue our spiritual journey to make stewardship a way of life, why limit our fasting only to Lent?
- The way to follow Jesus does not depend on adherence to old rules but in our love.

Stewardship Thought

St. Paul tells the Corinthians that they are living letters, “*known and read by all.*” What does the letter of *my* life reveal to those who read it? Can they tell by the way I live that I belong to Christ and that all I am and have is His? See 2 Corinthians 3:2 (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 19).

Ash Wednesday

First Reading – Joel 2:12-18

- God is merciful, rich in kindness. Good stewards recognize our failings in appreciating God's gifts and beg His forgiveness and mercy.

Psalm 51:3-6, 12-14, 17

- As Christian stewards, we acknowledge our sinfulness and ask for reconciliation and restoration through God's grace in the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Second Reading – 2 Corinthians 5:20-6:2

- Understanding stewardship calls us to be reconciled to God and receive His grace gratefully.
- Are we, as a parish, “ambassadors for Christ”?



Gospel – Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18

- Prayer, religious acts, and almsgiving are fundamental principles of Christian stewardship. We do these in gratitude to God, not to impress others.
- As good stewards, we give back to God our “first fruits.”

Stewardship Thought

In today’s Gospel, Jesus warns that our giving must be done quietly, without hoping for recognition or applause. But He also promises that God, Who sees even our most secret deeds, will reward those who fast, pray, and give alms (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 16).

First Sunday of Lent

First Reading – Genesis 9:8-15

- In this first reading, God makes a new covenant with Noah and his family after they leave the ark, a chance for renewal in their lives. Daily, God gives us a new covenant, a chance for renewal in our lives. Do we, as Christian stewards, gratefully accept His offer and His gifts?

Psalm 25:4-9

- In mercy and compassion, God teaches and guides us on His way. Are we grateful for His gifts?

Second Reading – 1 Peter 3:18-22

- Jesus died for our sins, and by His resurrection, offers the gift of salvation to all who seek it. The waters of Noah’s day are a symbol of the salvation of our Baptism. As Christian stewards, we must take this gift seriously by forming a right conscience.

Gospel – Mark 1:12-15

- In today’s Gospel, Jesus in the desert is tempted by the devil. He exhorts us to reform our lives and believe His Good News. As stewards of our lives, are we humble enough in times of temptation caused by addictions and weaknesses to call on Jesus to help us avoid sin?

Stewardship Thought

The waters of Baptism make us part of the covenant in Christ. But the Bishops’ Pastoral Letter on stewardship reminds us that “*there is a fundamental obligation arising from the Sacrament of Baptism...that people place their gifts, their resources — their selves — at God’s service in and through the Church*” (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 16).

Second Sunday of Lent

First Reading – Genesis 22:1-2, 9-13, 15-18

- In today’s first reading, Abraham is so devoted to God that he is willing to sacrifice his own son to the Lord. As Christian stewards, do we put that same trust in God in our lives?

Psalm 116:10, 15-19

- During times of hardship, rather than despair, we as good Christian stewards keep our faith and hope in the Lord and give thanks for His blessings.

Second Reading – Romans 8:31-34

- “*If God is for us, who can be against us*” says it all. As Christian stewards, what gratitude do we return to the Lord for this love?

Gospel – Mark 9:2-10

- In today’s Gospel, Peter, James, and John have a “mountain top” experience at Jesus’ Transfiguration. God asks them to “*Listen to Him.*” As Christian stewards, are we listening to Jesus and His teachings, or are we following our own will?

Stewardship Thought

Abraham was prepared to sacrifice his only son, Isaac. St. Paul reminds us that God Himself “*did not spare His own Son.*” Are my gifts to the Lord — of my resources, of my time, of myself — also sacrificial? See Romans 8:32 (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 16).

Third Sunday of Lent

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

First Reading – Exodus 20:1-17

- The Ten Commandments are the foundation of living our life, and direction for loving God and our neighbor. As Christian stewards, reflecting on this reading is a good time to ask ourselves how seriously are we trying to follow God’s command.

Psalm 19:8-11

- Good stewards praise and thank God for His gift of wisdom and guidance handed down to us through His commandments.

Second Reading – 1 Corinthians 1:22-25

- Jesus’ crucifixion appears to the world as weakness, but faithful stewards recognize the saving power of God in Christ’s sacrifice.

Gospel – John 2:13-25

- In today’s Gospel, Jesus is justified in correcting the abuse occurring in the Temple. Are we courageous enough to work to correct the wrongs in our present day world?

Stewardship Thought

“*You shall not covet ...*” is perhaps a difficult commandment to keep in our consumer-oriented society. But as Christian stewards, we know that we are the recipients and caretakers of God’s many gifts. May this understanding that all is gift help us be less resentful of the gifts of others (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 16).

Fourth Sunday of Lent

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

First Reading – 2 Chronicles 36:14-17, 19-23

- In today's first reading, the Jewish people and leaders of that day defiled the Lord's Temple and abandoned God's ways. God sent them prophets to encourage them to change their ways but they did not listen. What "false idols" in today's society do we as good Christian stewards need to avoid so that we are not lured away from our faith in God and His directives?

Psalm 137:1-6

- In a time of sorrow and loss, Christian stewards find peace, hope, and comfort in the Lord.

Second Reading – Ephesians 2:4-10

- Christian stewards offer praise and gratitude to God for faith and salvation through His Son, Jesus Christ — completely God's gifts, not of our doing.

Gospel – John 3:14-21

- God's love for us is immense. He so loved us that He gave His only Son for our eternal salvation. In praise and thanksgiving, what do we, as Christian stewards, return to the Lord for His tremendous gift?

Stewardship Thought

All that we have and all that we are comes from the Lord. "*We are truly his handiwork,*" says St. Paul in the second reading, "*created in Christ Jesus to lead a life of good deeds which God prepared for us in advance.*" See Ephesians 2:10 (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 17).

Fifth Sunday of Lent

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

First Reading – Jeremiah 31:31-34

- In today's first reading, Jeremiah tells the ancient Israelites that God will "write" His law upon their hearts. As Christian stewards, how often do we ask for reconciliation for our failure to follow Christ in our lives?

Psalm 51:3-4, 12-15

- As Christian stewards, we not only seek God's gift of forgiveness of our sins but also that closeness with Him when we repent of those sins.

Second Reading – Hebrews 5:7-9

- As we seek to be Jesus' disciples, we must continue to pray, even when suffering.

Gospel – John 12:20-33

- True Christian stewardship requires that we lose ourselves to serve Jesus and others to gain eternal life with Him.



Stewardship Thought

“If anyone would serve me,” says Jesus in today’s Gospel, “let him follow me; where I am, there will my servant be.” In what way is Jesus inviting me to follow Him? What service is He asking of me? See John 12:26 (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 17).

Palm Sunday of the Lord’s Passion

Procession Gospel – Mark 11:1-10

- The people praised Jesus and blessed the reign of God. Yet, we know shortly thereafter many shouted for His death. As Christian stewards, is our faith in Jesus steadfast or only caught up in moments of fervor?

First Reading – Isaiah 50:4-7

- God gave Isaiah a well-trained tongue. What vocation has God called us to? Do we develop and cultivate our vocation through His grace and assistance?

Psalm 22:8-9, 17-20, 23-24

- Christ suffered and was humiliated for us. In times of our own suffering, He is with us to give peace and comfort.

Second Reading – Philippians 2:6-11

- Good stewards follow Jesus’ example of being the humble servant, for which God exalted Him.

Gospel – Mark 14:1-15:47

- In today’s Gospel, Jesus receives kindness, but then suffers betrayal and denial by His friends, false accusations, and humiliating death on a cross — all for our salvation. As Christian stewards, are we willing to gratefully take up our cross daily to become stronger disciples of Jesus?

Stewardship Thought

Good stewards strive to conform their lives to that of Christ — emptying themselves of all pride and putting themselves at the service of others (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 17).

Holy Thursday: Mass of the Lord’s Supper

First Reading – Exodus 12:1-8, 11-14

- In today’s first reading, the Lord instructs Moses and the Israelites to prepare a year-old lamb without blemish for the Passover sacrifice as an offering back to God of the “first fruits” of their livestock. The Passover meal is a foretelling of the Eucharist, Christ’s sacrifice for us. As Christian stewards, what sacrificial gifts of our time, talent, and treasure do we bring to the Eucharistic table?

Psalm 116:12-13, 15-18

- The psalmist, in response to his question, “*How shall I make a return to the Lord for all the good He has done for me?*” proclaims, “*I am your servant, the son of your handmaid ...*” As Christian stewards, we realize that we need to use our God-given skills and talents to serve others in love and gratitude.

Second Reading – 1 Corinthians 11:23-26

- In today’s second reading, St. Paul reminds the Corinthian Church how Jesus totally gives of Himself in the Eucharist. As practicing Christian stewards, it is the foundation of our faith that *we believe* in His *true presence* in this Most Holy Sacrifice — and not just as some symbolic gesture.

Gospel – John 13:1-15

- In today’s Gospel, our humble Lord washes the feet of His disciples, showing them an example of how they are to serve one another. We, too, as Christian stewards, strive to follow Jesus’ model of service in sharing our God-given talents with our neighbor, especially those less fortunate.

Stewardship Thought

On this awesome and holy night, we must reflect as grateful stewards how much Jesus loves us. He loves us so much that He instituted the Holy Eucharist to continue His life with us in forgiving our sins, healing our brokenness and strengthening our faith in Him. The very word, Eucharist, means “thanksgiving” and, for His sacrifice, we stand in awe and total gratitude.

Good Friday of the Lord’s Passion

First Reading – Isaiah 52:13-53:12

- Given the prophet Isaiah’s poetic description of a man’s suffering and humiliation, and ultimate justification and triumph, Christians take this reading to refer to Jesus’ suffering centuries later. As disciples of Jesus, we, too, know we need to take up our cross daily and follow Him.

Psalm 31:2, 6, 12-13, 15-17, 25

- We take refuge in the Lord, our strength in the face of the world’s humiliation and ridicule as we strive to be disciples of Christ by following His way.

Second Reading – Hebrews 4:14-16; 5:7-9

- Jesus, our high priest, died once for the sins of all humanity. He sympathizes with us for He, too, was tempted. Do we, as Christian stewards, gratefully acknowledge the magnitude of His sacrifice, which makes salvation open to all who seek to follow Him?



Passion – John 18:1-19:42

- In John’s Passion account, when the soldiers and temple guard declare they are seeking “*Jesus the Nazorean*,” Jesus says, “*I AM*.” Even though they came to arrest Him, the power of His response caused them all to fall to the ground. As Christ’s disciples, we acknowledge His union with God the Father and Holy Spirit, and realize what awesome love He has for us.
- From the cross, Jesus presented His Mother to the world to be our model of Christian stewardship.

Stewardship Thought

We sometimes wonder why this day is called “Good Friday” because it recalls Jesus’ trial and brutal scourging and death. Yet, as disciples of Christ, we know that without His suffering and death, we would not have His resurrection and promise of eternal life. By reflecting on this day, we, as Christian stewards, become truly grateful of Christ’s ultimate sacrifice for us.

Easter Vigil

First Reading – Genesis 1:1-2:2

- The first and second chapters of the Book of Genesis tell how God created the universe, all creatures, and things. On the sixth day, He created man and woman in His likeness and image. As good stewards of the earth, it is our responsibility to take care of God’s creation. As children of God, we are truly thankful for His gift of life and it is our responsibility to protect all human life from conception to natural death. How seriously do we take these responsibilities?

Psalm 104:1-2, 5-6, 10, 12-14, 24, 35

- Good stewards rejoice in God’s creation and His power and wisdom in bringing it all forth.
– or –

Psalm 33:4-7, 12-13, 20-22

- The Lord is the Creator of all things. As good stewards, we put our trust in Him and gratefully pray for His kindness to us.

Second Reading – Genesis 22:1-18

- In the second reading, God tests Abraham’s love for Him by asking him to sacrifice his only son, Isaac. Abraham does not question God’s directive. Out of Abraham’s fidelity to Him, God spared Isaac’s life and blessed Abraham abundantly. As Christian stewards, do we pray to find and do God’s will in our lives?

Psalm 16:5, 8-11

- We gratefully rejoice that God is always with us to guide us on His path to eternal life.

Third Reading – Exodus 14:15-15:1

- In the third reading, God delivers Moses and the ancient Israelite community from Pharaoh and his army by parting the Red Sea. By trusting in God to save them, Moses and his people escape through the parted sea while Pharaoh's army is destroyed when the rushing waters pour over them. What a powerful lesson to trust God in our times of trouble! As Christian stewards, how much do we trust in the Lord?

Psalm – Exodus 15:1-6, 17-18

- As Christian stewards, we gratefully praise the Lord for His power and steadfast protection of His people who strive to follow Him.

Fourth Reading – Isaiah 54:5-14

- The fourth reading takes place during the Babylonian captivity many centuries before Christ. Because of their grave sins against God, the ancient Israelites' homeland, including their sacred temple in Jerusalem, was destroyed, most of them taken captive, and sent to Babylon. Isaiah's imagery of an angry husband taking back his forsaken wife out of mercy and pity symbolizes God's mercy for His people, the captive Israelites, and for us when we turn away from God through sin. God, too, will forgive our sins through Jesus Christ if we, as His disciples, humble ourselves to seek reconciliation with Him.

Psalm 30:2, 4-6, 11-13

- As Christian stewards, we recognize God's great gift of forgiveness when we fail to be faithful to His commands.

Fifth Reading – Isaiah 55:1-11

- God promises His blessed comfort and nourishment to those who seek Him and do His will. God expects us as Christian stewards, to follow His Word and do His will throughout the world as He instructs.

Psalm – Isaiah 12:2-6

- Good stewards give thanks and praise to the Lord for giving us strength and courage to follow Him as His disciples.

Sixth Reading – Baruch 3:9-15, 32-4:4

- In the sixth reading, Wisdom is depicted as a woman who assists God in His works. She is one we should seek as we try to walk in the way of God in prudence and peace. Wisdom also is included as one of the seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit. In our daily prayer life as Christian stewards, do we ask the Holy Spirit for wisdom and guidance?

Psalm 19:8-11

- The law of the Lord is perfect, right, and trustworthy. The hearts of good stewards rejoice in the rewards of following His way.

Seventh Reading – Ezekiel 36:16-28

- In the seventh reading, the prophet Ezekiel condemns the Israelites for profaning God’s name and worshipping idols. Because of their sins, they are dispersed among the nations during the Babylonian exile. Yet God forgave them, just as He forgives us for His sake and His love for us. In return, He commands us to follow His law, even in the face of human laws that are contrary to His. As good Christian stewards, let us pray for strength in this modern world to be diligent in our obedience to God’s laws as taught by the Church.

Psalm 42:3, 5; 43:3-4

- Good stewards thirst to be with God forever. We give thanks in song and instrument in His house where we worship Him.

– or –

Psalm 51:12-15, 18-19

- God forgives us when we stray from His path. As good stewards, we recognize our failings and ask God to create clean hearts in us.

Epistle – Romans 6:3-11

- St. Paul tells us that through the gift of Baptism, we die to sin and also share in Christ’s death. But through Christ’s death we also share in His resurrection. We have life anew — a rebirth. Christian stewardship also requires a conversion of heart and mind — a new way of life. Where are we as Christian stewards on our stewardship journey?

Psalm 118:1-2, 16-17, 22-23

- The psalmist says it all for us: *“Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good, His mercy endures forever.”* We do well to thank and praise Him for His many gifts of grace.

Gospel – Mark 16:1-7

- The angel told Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome to tell Peter and Jesus’ disciples that Jesus had been raised up as He had told. As Christian stewards, do our lives witness our belief in the Good News of Christ’s resurrection?

Stewardship Thought

As our RCIA catechumens are Baptized, are Confirmed, and receive their First Holy Communion, may we, as good Christian stewards, welcome them with hospitable hearts into our faith communion. May we also be examples of true Christian stewardship to them by the way we share our time, talent, and treasure with our parish communion in the light of our risen Lord!

Easter Sunday

First Reading – Acts of the Apostles 10:34, 37-43

- Jesus' ministry of good works and healing culminated in His triumphant resurrection from death on a cross. His gifts of forgiveness of sin, salvation, and membership in His Church are open to all who believe in Him.

Psalm 118:1-2, 16-17, 22-23

- As good stewards, we are thankful for our many blessings through the Lord's goodness, mercy, and power that endure forever.

Second Reading – Colossians 3:1-4

- We can seek what is above by sharing what we have here on earth. This is what Christian stewardship is all about. We realize that anything we have here on earth is not nearly as important as being with Christ. Once we realize that, sharing what we have is easy (Used with permission from the Archdiocese of St. Louis, www.archstl.org/Stewardship, Stewardship Bulletin Inserts, December 2007 – March 2008).

– or –

Second Reading – 1 Corinthians 5:6-8

- Through the Eucharist, we, as the Christian community, are renewed in sincerity and truth.

Gospel – John 20:1-9

- Christ is risen! The disciples saw the wrappings in the tomb and believed in Christ. God gives us the greatest gift of all — salvation through His Son, Jesus, as we journey to be His disciples.

Stewardship Thought

Alleluia! Christ is risen and is victorious over sin and death! We are good stewards of our faith if, like St. Paul, we share this good news whenever and wherever we can (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 17).

Second Sunday of Easter (Divine Mercy)

First Reading – Acts of the Apostles 4:32-35

- The early believers in Christ, in total stewardship, did not claim earthly possessions as their own. As Christian stewards, we likewise are called to share our blessings with the needy.

Psalm 118:2-4, 13-15, 22-24

- Good stewards, gratefully rejoice in the day the Lord has made and the strength and courage He gives us. His mercy and love is everlasting.

Second Reading – 1 John 5:1-6

- As good Christian stewards, we are born of God and love Him when we keep His commandments, which He promises are not burdensome. Thus strengthened in Him, we can conquer the world.



Gospel – John 20:19-31

- How many times in our stewardship journey do we find ourselves to be a “doubting Thomas” before we proclaim “*my Lord and my God*”?

Stewardship Thought

The Christian community described in Acts understood and practiced *total* stewardship. St. Paul reports that the believers did not claim anything as their own, but held everything in common, and distributed to each whatever was needed (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 17).

Third Sunday of Easter

First Reading – Act of the Apostles 3:13-15, 17-19

- As Christian stewards, we are grateful that God our Father, through Jesus Christ, offers us the gift of eternal salvation if we repent of our sins, change our ways, and follow His commandments.

Psalm 4:2, 4, 7-9

- The Lord gives peace to those stewards who are faithful.

Second Reading – 1 John 2:1-5

- True Christian stewards understand that Jesus offered Himself for our sins and the sure way to follow Him is to keep His commandments.

Gospel – Luke 24:35-48

- Jesus encourages us to draw close to Him through the Scriptures. To be His disciples, let us ask Jesus to open our hearts and minds to His Word.

Stewardship Thought

The disciples in today’s Gospel came to know Jesus in the breaking of the bread. When we share what we have with those who are in need, we, too, will discover Jesus in our midst (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 17).

Fourth Sunday of Easter

First Reading – Acts of the Apostles 4:8-12

- In today’s world, people seek “salvation” through various sources including worldliness, material wealth, influence, and power. As good Christian stewards, we know that our salvation comes *only* through Jesus.

Psalm 118: 1, 8-9, 21-23, 26, 29

- As Christian stewards, we know better than to trust in the world. Rather, we take our refuge in the Lord and put our trust in Him whose goodness and kindness endures forever.

Second Reading – 1 John 3:1-2

- God so loves us that He calls us to be His children. As Christian stewards, do we thank God for this great gift or do we take it for granted?

Gospel – John 10: 11-18

- As Christian stewards, we know we can put our faith and trust in Jesus, “*The Good Shepherd.*” What a great gift it is that He lays down His life for us.

Stewardship Thought

To be good stewards we must be good shepherds, willing to lay down our lives for those committed to our care, not mere hired hands who run off, “*leaving the sheep to be snatched and scattered by the wolf.*” See John 10:12 (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 18).

Fifth Sunday of Easter

First Reading – Acts of the Apostles 9:26-31

- Do we, as Christian stewards, have the conversion of heart like St. Paul and his courage to live the Gospel even in the face of modern temptations?

Psalm 22:26-28, 30-32

- Good Christian stewards turn to the Lord to serve Him.

Second Reading – 1 John 3:18-24

- As Christian stewards, we must be mindful that our actions follow our words in accordance with God’s commands to believe in His Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another.

Gospel – John 15:1-8

- To be good stewards, we are called by Christ to bear good fruit by living in Him. Do we live according to His call?

Stewardship Thought

In today’s Gospel, Jesus says that God is glorified when a disciple, grafted in Christ, produces abundantly and bears much fruit. The disciple must then be a good steward of that abundance (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 18).

Sixth Sunday of Easter

First Reading – Acts of the Apostles 10:25-26, 34-35, 44-48

- In this first reading Peter says, “... *in every nation whoever fears Him and acts uprightly is acceptable to Him.*” In our parish, as good stewards, how welcoming are we to visitors and new members of our faith communion?

Psalm 98:1-4

- Christian stewards give thanks and praise to the Lord in song for revealing His kindness, faithfulness, and gift of salvation.

Second Reading – 1 John 4:7-10

- Good Christian stewards are thankful for God’s great gift of love, a love so strong that He sent His only Son as an offering for our sins.

Gospel – John 15:9-17

- In today’s Gospel, Jesus commands us to love one another as He loves us. As Christian stewards, do we go forth and devote our lives as His disciples?

Stewardship Thought

Jesus’ commandment is that His disciples love one another, even to the point of laying down their lives, if necessary. What gifts of myself — my skills and talents, my time and resources — will demonstrate my love for God’s people? (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 18).

The Ascension of the Lord

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

First Reading – Acts of the Apostles 1:1-11

- Christian stewards gratefully accept God’s gift of the Holy Spirit as proclaimed by the risen Jesus.

Psalm 47:2-3, 6-9

- Good stewards sing praise to God in thanksgiving for His glory and rule in our lives.

Second Reading – Ephesians 1:17-23

- Stewards thank God for the gift of wisdom to see better the riches of His glory.
- We should always strive to be good stewards of the Church, the Body of Christ on earth.

Gospel – Mark 16:15-20

- As stewards of His great gifts, Jesus encourages us to go forth to proclaim His Good News. Do we use these gifts to encourage others to be His disciples?

Stewardship Thought

Jesus ascended into heaven, blessing His disciples and promising that they would soon receive the power of the Holy Spirit. We who have received that promised gift of the Spirit are now empowered to be His witnesses to the ends of the earth — to use our time and talents to spread the Good News of salvation (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 34).

Seventh Sunday of Easter

(When the Ascension is not celebrated on Sunday)

First Reading – Acts of the Apostles 1:15-17, 20-26

- In today’s first reading, Peter and the other Apostles prayerfully choose a successor to Judas. Do we, like Matthias, answer God’s call to use our time, talent, and treasure to promote His kingdom on earth?

Psalm 103:1-2, 11-12, 19-20

- As good Christian stewards, we gratefully praise God for His many blessings bestowed upon us and His generous ruling in our lives.

Second Reading – 1 John 4:11-16

- God gives us His tremendous love in His Spirit. Do we, as Christian stewards, return our love to Him by loving one another as He commands?

Gospel – John 17:11-19

- In today's Gospel reading, Jesus prays for unity within the Church. He also sends us into the world but instructs us not to be of the world and its temptations.

Stewardship Thought

Jesus is the perfect steward — watching carefully over all who have been entrusted to Him by the Father and then sending them all out into the world in service. May I similarly protect and wisely use the gifts entrusted to me! (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 18).

Pentecost Sunday

First Reading – Acts of the Apostles 2:1-11

- God filled the Apostles with the Holy Spirit to go forth to proclaim the Good News of Jesus. As good stewards, do we call upon the Holy Spirit to inspire our lives?

Psalm 104:1, 24, 29-31, 34

- Christian stewards strive to please God and marvel at His works, especially His tremendous gift of life in the Spirit.

Second Reading – 1 Corinthians 12:3-7, 12-13

- The Body of Christ, the Church, consists of many parts, all gifts from our loving God. Do we share our unique God-given gifts with our family, parish, and community?

Sequence

- We thank God for His gift of the Holy Spirit, Who gives us grace and the way to salvation.

Gospel – John 20:19-23

- Peace comes from the Father through the Holy Spirit and our Lord, Jesus Christ. Do we use our God-given talents to create peace among our brothers and sisters in the Lord?

Stewardship Thought

St. Paul reminds us today that all of our gifts have their source in the Holy Spirit and that those gifts are given “*for the common good.*” What gifts are mine to share? (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 18).



Most Holy Trinity

First Reading – Deuteronomy 4:32-34, 39-40

- As Christian stewards, we know our God is strong and powerful, and yet generous to us when we strive, out of love and obedience, to keep His commandments.

Psalm 33:4-6, 9, 18-20, 22

- The Lord, creator of all, is kind to faithful stewards who put their trust in Him.

Second Reading – Romans 8:14-17

- As Christian stewards, do we have a close enough relationship with God to be considered His heirs?

Gospel – Matthew 28:16-20

- As Christian stewards, we believe that Christ is always with us, giving us strength to carry out His mission here on earth.

Stewardship Thought

Today's second reading reminds us that we are adopted sons and daughters — the heirs — of God. We are good stewards of our inheritance when we share our faith and fulfill Our Lord's command to "*go ... and make disciples of all the nations.*" See Matthew 28:19 (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 33).

Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ (*Corpus Christi*)

First Reading – Exodus 24:3-8

- In today's first reading, Moses and the Israelites make a covenant with God to follow His precepts and laws. In thanksgiving and reverence for God, do we, as Christian stewards, strive to do the same?

Psalm 116: 12-13, 15-18

- How can we return to the Lord for all He does for us? In gratitude, we, as Christian stewards, should offer our time, talent, and treasure back to Him.

Second Reading – Hebrews 9:11-15

- Christ sacrificed Himself for our redemption and gave us His Eucharistic gift. In thanksgiving, do we, as Christians stewards, show our reverence and respect for Christ's awesome gift, the Eucharist?

Gospel – Mark 14:12-16, 22-26

- At the Last Supper, Jesus instituted the Eucharist out of His great love for His disciples and for us today. Do we, as practicing Christian stewards, truly *believe* in the *real saving presence* of Jesus in the consecrated Eucharist, Whose presence we should gratefully adore?

Stewardship Thought

The focus of today's feast is the total self-giving of Jesus. The Bishops' stewardship Pastoral reminds us that "*the glory and the boast of Christian stewards lie in mirroring, however poorly, the stewardship of Jesus Christ, who gave and still gives all He has and is, in order to be faithful to God's will and carry through to completion His redemptive stewardship of human beings and their world*" (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 33).

Ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading – Deuteronomy 5:12-15

- Good Christian stewards keep the Sabbath holy by attending weekend Mass regularly, partaking of the Eucharist, and, thus nourished, living out the Good News throughout the week.

Psalm 81:3-8, 10-11

- The Lord is good and worthy of praise and song for His strengthening us. Do we, as Christian stewards, recognize Him as our God or do we let other "false gods" lure us away from our faith?

Second Reading – 2 Corinthians 4:6-11

- Christian stewards realize that following Christ will be difficult at times, but like St. Paul, we are confident that Jesus will provide the needed strength to see us through those trials.

Gospel – Mark 2:23-3:6

- Do we merely follow the letter of seemingly rigid rules in our lives, or do we, as good Christian stewards, act out of mercy or kindness in the example of Jesus?

Stewardship Thought

Today's first reading is a powerful reminder that time is also a gift of God for which we must be accountable. Six days to work, says Scripture, and a seventh for the Lord (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 19).

Tenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading – Genesis 3:9-15

- As good Christian stewards, do we readily call on the Lord's strength in times of temptation by the devil? Do we take responsibility for our actions?

Psalm 130:1-8

- As we practice stewardship, do we show gratitude to the Lord for His gift of mercy and forgiveness?

Second Reading – 2 Corinthians 4:13-5:1

- Our gift of faith from the Lord strengthens us, that even though we will experience physical death, we are renewed in the hope of eternal life.



Gospel – Mark 3:20-35

- Are we striving as Christian stewards to do the will of God in communion with our fellow brothers and sisters in the Lord?

Stewardship Thought

Adam and Eve were banished from the Garden because of their disobedience. But Jesus says in today's Gospel that when we are obedient to God's will — when we use our gifts to serve one another — we are part of His family. "*Whoever does the will of God is brother and sister and mother to me*" (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 19).

Eleventh Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading – Ezekiel 17:22-24

- Do we, as practicing Christian stewards, use our God-given gifts to reach out to others and bear good fruit for the kingdom of God?

Psalm 92:2-3, 13-16

- Good stewards, by gratefully recognizing the goodness of the Lord and praising Him, will flourish in Him.

Second Reading – 2 Corinthians 5:6-10

- St. Paul states in today's second reading, "... *we walk by faith* ..." Are we, as Christian stewards, building our faith by using our God-given gifts to do good or are we using those gifts for our own selfish gain?

Gospel – Mark 4:26-34

- Are we, as Christian disciples, allowing God's gift of faith — the mustard seed in today's Gospel parable — to grow larger in our lives? Are we practicing good stewardship by gratefully opening our hearts and minds to reach the full potential God has given us?

Stewardship Thought

Like the sower in today's Gospel, I scatter as seed my gifts of time, talent, and resources; and I trust that, by God's grace and in God's time, these small gifts of myself may grow and flourish and help to bring about the kingdom of God (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 20).

Twelfth Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading – Job 38:1, 8-11

- In today's first reading, God speaks to Job amidst a storm. We know in our own lives that God can speak to us in very subtle ways. As Christian stewards, do we strive to make available quiet time to listen to Him?

Psalm 107:23-26, 28-31

- As Christian stewards, we can be gratefully confident that God will rescue us in times of great distress.

Second Reading – 2 Corinthians 5:14-17

- With Christ, a new covenant is created with us; now we live, not for ourselves, but in the example of Christ, Who gave us Himself. Do we, as Christian disciples, return our praise and thanksgiving to God for His great gift?

Gospel – Mark 4:35-41

- When the wind and storms hit us in daily life, do we, as Christian stewards, turn to the Lord in faith, or try to go at it alone?

Stewardship Thought

St. Paul reminds us in the second reading that Christ died “*so that those who live might live no longer for themselves.*” What we give to and do for others, we give to and do for Jesus! See 2 Corinthians 5:15 (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 20).

Thirteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading – Wisdom 1:13-15; 2:23-24

- God did not make death, only good things. Through sin, death entered the human condition. When we are called home to the Lord, will we be able to stand before Him and be accountable for our stewardship in this life?

Psalm 30:2, 4-6, 11-13

- Christian stewards give thanks and praise to the Lord for drawing us near Him. Like the psalmist, we rejoice with the dawn — the promise of eternal life with God.

Second Reading – 2 Corinthians 8:7, 9, 13-15

- In this second reading, St. Paul reminds us that, as followers of Christ, we are to support one another in our faith and in our needs.

Gospel – Mark 5:21-43

- Through their great faith, Jesus in today’s Gospel heals the woman with a hemorrhage and the synagogue official’s daughter. As Christian stewards, do we have the same faith in Jesus to heal us of our mental, spiritual, psychological, and physical afflictions?

Stewardship Thought

Today’s reading from St. Paul explains the “divine economy” of stewardship — “*The relief of others ought not to impoverish you; there should be a certain equality. Your plenty at the present time should supply their need so that their surplus may in turn one day supply your need.*” See 2 Corinthians 8:13-14 (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 20).



SS. Peter and Paul, Apostles (June 29)

First Reading – Acts of the Apostles 12:1-11

- Good stewards know that God hears our prayers and gratefully trust that His answers will be according to His will and not our own.

Psalm 34:2-9

- Stewards take time to pray daily to thank God, to praise Him, and to call out to Him when in need.

Second Reading – 2 Timothy 4:6-8, 17-18

- At the end of our lives, will we, as Christian stewards, be able to show that through the strength the Lord gives us we did use our time, talent, and treasure to further God's kingdom here on earth?

Gospel – Matthew 16:13-19

- Peter recognized Jesus as his Lord and God, and was not afraid to say so. He accepted Christ's call to be the "Rock" on which the Church is built, to carry on Christ's ministry to the world. As Christ's disciples, do we accept His call to our vocation in life?

Stewardship Thought

Saints Peter and Paul worked tirelessly to spread the Gospel. Not all can be apostles, but we, too, must be good stewards of *our* vocations, using the gifts we have been given in the service of God's kingdom (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 34).

Fourteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading – Ezekiel 2:2-5

- As Christian stewards, do we witness by our lives in this modern day, that we are following Christ's message to us?

Psalm 123:1-4

- As the Lord's disciples, we need to stay strong in Him when we are insulted and challenged for our faith and beliefs.

Second Reading – 2 Corinthians 12:7-10

- St. Paul reminds us that in our weaknesses, Christ makes us strong through His gift of grace.

Gospel – Mark 6:1-6

- In today's Gospel, Jesus does not perform any large miracles in His hometown because of their lack of faith. As Christian stewards, is our faith strong enough to bring about even small miracles in our lives?

Stewardship Thought

During this time, we celebrate the independence of our country. We would do well to echo the psalmist, saying, “*Our eyes are fixed on the Lord, pleading for His mercy.*” May we always recognize and use the gifts of freedom and abundance He has showered upon us. See Psalm 123 (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 20).

Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading – Amos 7:12-15

- As followers of Christ, are we fulfilling our vocation? Do we nurture and use our God-given gifts of talent and skills to do so?

Psalm 85:9-14

- Christian stewards understand that in following the Lord, in His kindness and truth, He promises the benefits of justice and salvation.

Second Reading – Ephesians 1:3-14

- As Christian stewards, we understand God’s great gift in choosing us to be holy and filled with love for Him and others. How are we doing in answering God’s call?

Gospel – Mark 6:7-13

- The apostles answered Jesus’ call and in His name went out to use His gifts to heal the sick and drive out demons. Are we using God’s gifts to us faithfully to build up His kingdom?

Stewardship Thought

Today’s readings are about being chosen and sent. The prophet Amos was chosen by the Lord and sent to use his talents for the people of God. The Gospel recounts the story of the sending of the Twelve. In the second reading, St. Paul reminds us that we, too, are chosen. For what have I been chosen? To whom have I been sent? (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 20).

Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading – Jeremiah 23:1-6

- In today’s first reading, Jeremiah warns about evil rulers who mislead the people. Today the same is true. Christian stewards need to educate themselves on significant political issues to be good citizens who faithfully follow Catholic teaching.

Psalm 23:1-6

- Good stewardship parishes warmly welcome all who come, regardless of circumstances or position.
- As Christian stewards, do we offer a warm welcome to guests in our homes and are we generous in sharing our blessings with them?

Second Reading – Ephesians 2:13-18

- Are we practicing good Christian stewardship by praying for Christ's gift of peace to reconcile and heal any divisions in our lives, in our families, in the workplace, in our community and parish?

Gospel – Mark 6:30-34

- In our hectic world, do we, as Christian stewards, allow for quiet time in our lives to refresh our spirits and draw closer to Christ by listening to His teachings?

Stewardship Thought

In today's Gospel, Jesus had planned to slip away from the crowds for a few moments of peace and a little rest. When He saw the people gathered, however, He put His needs aside to meet the needs of others. As good stewards, we are called to do the same (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 20).

Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading – 2 Kings 4:42-44

- Good stewardship entails giving our "first fruits" back to God in thanksgiving for His many blessings to us.

Psalm 145:10-11, 15-18

- The Lord is faithful to us. As Christian stewards, do all our works give Him thanks and praise?

Second Reading – Ephesians 4:1-6

- In this second reading, St. Paul reminds us to be worthy of the Lord's calling us to virtue and to preserve community unity as one Body in Christ and in one Spirit. As Christian stewards, are we using our time, talent, and treasure to promote unity in our parish communion?

Gospel – John 6:1-15

- In today's Gospel, Jesus feeds the physical needs of the multitude by multiplying five barley loaves and two fish. His actions are similar with His disciples at the Last Supper by instituting the Eucharist which continues to nourish the Church. As true Christian stewards, do we recognize His real presence in the Eucharist and do we exhibit reverence and respect in gratitude for this tremendous gift He made available to us?

Stewardship Thought

"The hand of the Lord feeds us," says the psalmist; *"he answers all our needs."* Both Elisha's servant in the first reading and the disciples in the Gospel story who witnessed the feeding of the five thousand saw this happen and knew it to be true. See Psalm 145 (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 20).

Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading – Exodus 16:2-4, 12-15

- Because of the grumbling of the ancient Israelites, God rained down manna for bread and quail for meat to feed them in the wilderness. Food is a gift from God. In our country of plenty, how grateful are we, as Christian stewards, for the abundant blessings God gives us?

Psalm 78:3-4, 23-25, 54

- The goodness of the Lord is proclaimed throughout the ages. As stewards, do we show “an attitude of gratitude” for the Lord’s many blessings bestowed upon us?

Second Reading – Ephesians 4:17, 20-24

- In today’s second reading, St. Paul encourages us to get rid of the old, sinful self, and put on a new self by learning more about Christ through His teaching. In our stewardship journey are we drawing closer to Christ through prayer and study of Scripture?

Gospel – John 6:24-35

- Jesus says, “*I am the bread of life ...*” Good stewards thank God daily for our blessings of food but are most thankful for the spiritual food offered by Jesus through the Eucharist — the foundation and summit of our faith.

Stewardship Thought

The crowd in today’s Gospel demanded a sign from Jesus. May our faithful stewardship be a sign to others that we, like the Ephesians in the second reading, have laid aside our former way of life and acquired a “fresh, spiritual way of thinking” in Christ (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 20).

Transfiguration of the Lord (August 6)

First Reading – Daniel 7:9-10, 13-14

- Good stewards recognize God as Lord and King of our lives. Do we use our God-given talents to serve Him?

Psalm 97:1-2, 5-6, 9

- The Lord is King and the Most High. Do we gratefully praise Him?

Second Reading – 2 Peter 1:16-19

- Peter witnessed God telling the world during Jesus’ Transfiguration that He is “well pleased” with His Son. Would He also be pleased with how we are using our time, talent and treasure to embrace His kingdom?

Gospel – Mark 9:2-10

- As we productively use God’s gifts to further His work, we are confident that in our faithful service as His disciples, we, too, can have a “mountain top” experience with our Lord.



Stewardship Thought

In the Gospel today, Peter yearns to *do* something to make concrete the Transfiguration he had witnessed. But to be a good steward of this spiritual gift, he was instructed to *be still*, to *listen* to Jesus, and to *wait* for His direction. Good advice for us, too! (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 34).

Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading – 1 Kings 19:4-8

- As we practice stewardship in the way we live, we can be confident that when we put our faith in God, He will not only provide for our physical needs but also provide spiritual nourishment for our journey.

Psalm 34:2-9

- The Lord answers stewards who put their total trust in Him. We should praise and glorify Him at all times for His goodness to us.

Second Reading – Ephesians 4:30-5:2

- In today's second reading, St. Paul tells us that we should forgive one another as God forgives us, we should love one another as Christ loves us. As Christian stewards, are we following these instructions?

Gospel – John 6:41-51

- In today's Gospel, Jesus says, "*I am the living bread that came down from heaven; whoever eats this bread will live forever ...*" As Christ's disciples, we build our faith by joining with our parish communion in partaking of the Eucharist. Does the quest for material wealth distract us from attending weekend Mass and receiving Holy Communion?

Stewardship Thought

The gifts of God that the angel brought to Elijah — food, water, rest, and encouragement — were given, not for his own good alone, but to strengthen him for service. How am I using my gifts to serve others? (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 21).

Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary (August 15)

First Reading – Revelation 11:19; 12:1-6, 10

- The woman described in the passages from Revelation, can be seen as a symbol of Mary, the model Christian steward, or of the Church, the Bride of Christ. Either way, as we practice Christian stewardship and draw closer to our Lord, Jesus Christ, the symbolism promises that we are given the gift of grace to do good and resist evil.

Psalm 45:10-12, 16

- As stewards, do we follow Mary's example and honor Christ as Messiah and King or are we preoccupied with the "false" gods in our culture?

Second Reading – 1 Corinthians 15:20-27

- Christ’s message to us is one of unity; His kingdom is above all nations. At the “*resurrection of the dead*,” will we be able to show Christ that we truly used our God-given talents and shared our “first fruits” to further His kingdom on earth?

Gospel – Luke 1:39-56

- Mary’s canticle is a beautiful expression of her humbleness and praise to God in calling her to be the Mother of Jesus. As Christian stewards, do we follow her example of trusting God completely and always?

Stewardship Thought

“After Jesus, it is the Blessed Virgin Mary who, by her example, most perfectly teaches the meaning of discipleship and stewardship ... She was called and gifted by God; she responded generously, creatively and prudently; she understood her divinely assigned role as ‘handmaid’ in terms of service and fidelity” (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops [USCCB], *Stewardship: A Disciple’s Response*, Tenth Anniversary Edition, 2002, page 41).

Twentieth Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading – Proverbs 9:1-6

- As we draw closer to God through our stewardship journey, we are called to welcome others to join in that journey through generous use of our God-given gifts of time, talent, and treasure.

Psalm 34:2-7

- Good Christian stewards bless and praise the Lord, knowing that those who seek Him do not lack for any good thing.

Second Reading – Ephesians 5:15-20

- In gratitude, Christian stewards, filled with the Spirit, sing hymns of praise to God for every blessing in the name of our Lord, Jesus Christ, and strive to avoid evil.

Gospel – John 6:51-58

- Jesus proclaims in today’s Gospel, “... *whoever eats this bread will live forever.*” As Christian stewards, what an invitation we have for intimacy with Christ through His Body and Blood, and our way to eternal life with Him by partaking in His gift of the Eucharist!

Stewardship Thought

Even though we are told that if we seek the Lord, we shall not want, in the second reading St. Paul reminds us that, thus blessed by the Lord, the good steward should “*give thanks to God the Father always and for everything in the name of our Lord, Jesus Christ.*” See Ephesians 5:20 (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 21).

Twenty-First Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading – Joshua 24:1-2, 15-18

- In today's first reading Joshua says, "*As for me and my household, we will serve the Lord.*" In our stewardship journey, do we proclaim that same allegiance to God's way for our family?

Psalm 34:2-3, 16-21

- The Lord hears the cry of the poor. As disciples of Christ, we give witness of our stewardship by sharing our God-given gifts with them.

Second Reading – Ephesians 5:21-32

- Good Christian stewards acknowledge that the institution of marriage between a man and a woman is a true gift from God. Husbands and wives must be devoted to each other as Christ is devoted to the Church.

Gospel – John 6:60-69

- Jesus' teaching on the Eucharist troubled some of His followers, and they lost their faith. Do we, as Christian disciples, understand that Christ's Body and Blood is the foundation of our faith in the Lord?

Stewardship Thought

In today's first reading, Joshua challenges the people to decide whom they will serve. Recalling God's faithfulness to them and to their ancestors, the people declare, "*We also will serve the Lord, for He is our God.*" May we, too, be mindful of God's gifts to us and renew our commitment to serve Him with grateful hearts (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 21).

Twenty-Second Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading – Deuteronomy 4:1-2, 6-8

- Christian stewards strive to follow close to God by observing His commandments, which are right and just.

Psalm 15:2-5

- God promises that Christian stewards who make every effort to obey His laws out of love and respect will find His peace.

Second Reading – James 1:17-18, 21-22, 27

- In our second reading, St. James proclaims, "*... every perfect gift is from above ...*" Understanding this is the foundation of Christian stewardship — God calls us to share His gifts with others, especially the poor.

Gospel – Mark 7:1-8, 14-15, 21-23

- Jesus states in today's Gospel, "*This people honors me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me ...*" Stewardship is a conversion of both heart and mind — a new way of life. Where are we on this journey to be close to Christ?

Stewardship Thought

“*Every worthwhile gift, every genuine benefit, comes from above,*” says St. James in the second reading. But, he reminds us, true worship of God involves *using* those good gifts to benefit the less fortunate. Good stewardship is not optional; it is the hallmark of our faith! See James 1:17 (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 21).

Twenty-Third Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading – Isaiah 35:4-7

- In today’s first reading, the prophet Isaiah proclaims, “*Say to those whose hearts are frightened: Be strong, fear not!*” These are comforting words to us as Christian stewards in an uncertain world.

Psalm 146:7-10

- As Christian stewards, we find our strength and protection in the Lord and are thankful for God’s unending mercy.
- The Lord is champion of the poor and oppressed.

Second Reading – James 2:1-5

- Discrimination and prejudice are evils in our society. To be Christian disciples and good stewards, we must understand the kingdom of God is open to ALL who love Him.

Gospel – Mark 7:31-37

- When health issues occur, do we, as Christian stewards, seek God’s gift of healing through grateful prayer?

Stewardship Thought

The good steward must not show favoritism. The rich may have many material gifts to share, but St. James reminds us in the second reading that God has chosen the world’s poor to be rich in faith and inheritors of God’s kingdom (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 21).

Twenty-Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading – Isaiah 50:4-9

- In life, suffering is expected when we become God’s followers. As Christian disciples, we can stand confident through the world’s ridicule for we know the Lord is with us.

Psalm 116:1-6, 8-9

- As Christian stewards, we take comfort in the mercy and love of our God in His dealings with us.

Second Reading – James 2:14-18

- Christian stewards know that faith in Christ prompts good works — they go hand in hand.



Gospel – Mark 8:27-35

- Jesus proclaims in today’s Gospel, “*If a man wishes to come after me, he must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me.*” To be Christian stewards, we must lose our own lives for the sake of discipleship in Christ.

Stewardship Thought

In the second reading today, St. James has harsh words for those who do not put their faith into action. May we be such good stewards of God’s gifts to us that we can never be accused of having “*faith that does nothing in practice.*” See James 2:17 (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 21).

The Exaltation of the Holy Cross (September 14)

First Reading – Numbers 21:4-9

- God is merciful and forgives us when we repent of our sins. We are healed through reconciliation with Him. What modern day idols tempt us to turn away from God?

Psalm 78:1-2, 34-38

- God forgives the contrite when we sin against Him. As Christian stewards, what spirit of forgiveness do we show when we are wronged by others?

Second Reading – Philippians 2:6-11

- Christ gives us the model for placing the needs of others above our individual interests.

Gospel – John 3:13-17

- God’s love gave us His only Son as a gift to all people and, through Christ’s death and resurrection, eternal life for all who believe in Him. As Christian stewards are we grateful for this great gift?

Stewardship Thought

Even though the Lord led them out of Egypt and provided for their every need, the people in today’s first reading were complaining and ungrateful. Does my stewardship of God’s gifts show that I know from whom they came and am grateful? (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 34).

Twenty-Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading – Wisdom 2:12, 17-20

- As stewards, Christ strengthens us as we strive to follow God’s law, even when the evil one tempts us to break His commandments.

Psalm 54:3-8

- As Christian stewards, we pray in confidence that God will give us strength in times of confrontation with evil.

Second Reading – James 3:16-4:3

- As disciples of Christ, we seek true wisdom, justice, and peace to help us avoid conflict with others and to do God’s will and not our own.

Gospel – Mark 9:30-37

- In today's Gospel, Jesus tells the apostles, "*If anyone wishes to be first, he shall be the last of all and the servant of all.*" In this statement, Jesus sums up how, as Christian stewards, we are to serve others.

Stewardship Thought

Today's second reading warns that a heart consumed with avarice and envy leads to jealousy, strife, conflicts, and disputes. A giving heart, in contrast, can sing instead with the psalmist, "*Freely will I offer you sacrifice; I will praise your name, O Lord, for its goodness.*" See Psalm 54 (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 21).

Twenty-Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading – Numbers 11:25-29

- Like prophets of old, our Church leaders today are inspired by the Holy Spirit and are considered modern day prophets. As practicing Christian stewards, do we heed their words?

Psalm 19:8, 10, 12-14

- As disciples of Christ, we are refreshed and find freedom in our lives when we follow God's laws which are just and trustworthy.

Second Reading – James 5:1-6

- In today's second reading, St. James admonishes those who seek wealth and build their wealth by cheating others. As Christian stewards, what do we seek?

Gospel – Mark 9:38-43, 45, 47-48

- In today's Gospel, Jesus warns us to make whatever corrections we need in our lives to assure our chances of getting into heaven. As we continue our stewardship journey, this is a good time to examine our lives to determine how we can deepen our relationship with God.

Stewardship Thought

St. James warns in today's second reading that those who hoard their wealth and live only for themselves will be condemned. But in the Gospel, Jesus assures us that all who give of themselves for His sake will be rewarded (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 22).

Twenty-Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading – Genesis 2:18-24

- In today's first reading, God states, "*That is why a man leaves his father and mother and clings to his wife, and the two of them become one flesh.*" God makes clear that the Sacrament of Matrimony, a beautiful gift from God, is between one man and one woman.

Psalm 128:1-6

- Happy is the family — father, mother, and children — that follows the way of the Lord.

Second Reading – Hebrews 2:9-11

- St. Paul, in this second reading, reminds us that Jesus is, "... *leader to their salvation ...*" And through His suffering, He consecrates us as His brothers and sisters in the Lord.

Gospel – Mark 10:2-16

- Jesus proclaims marriage as a sacred life-long commitment between a man and a woman as husband and wife. As Christ's disciples, do we have "child-like faith" in the Lord?

Stewardship Thought

The phrase in today's psalm, "*May you see your children's children,*" is really a prayer for a long life. The good steward knows that *every* day is a gift from God, to be lived with joy and thanksgiving. "*May the Lord bless us all the days of our lives!*" See Psalm 128 (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 22).

Twenty-Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading – Wisdom 7:7-11

- As Christian stewards, we should pray for wisdom because through this gift comes a life of grace which enlightens us to follow the path to the Holy Spirit, and not worldly desires.

Psalm 90:12-17

- The psalmist says, "*Prosper the work of our hands!*" As Christian stewards and servants of the Lord, we pray in joy and gladness to do His will and use His gifts to further His kingdom here on earth.

Second Reading – Hebrews 4:12-13

- In this second reading, we learn the power of the Word of God. We also are reminded that as Christian stewards, we will be called to account of our stewardship.

Gospel – Mark 10:17-30

- Jesus teaches us that to be His disciples we must give up things of this world and follow Him. He promises His disciples peaceful abundance and warns of persecution.

Stewardship Thought

In today's Gospel, Jesus asks the rich young man to give away all that he has in order to have treasure in heaven. But he is unable to free himself from his possessions, and so he goes sadly away. Does what *I* own keep *me* from following Jesus? (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 22).

Twenty-Ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading – Isaiah 53:10-11

- We know as Christian stewards that to be disciples of Christ, we must turn over our very lives to Him, and endure suffering for His sake.

Psalm 33:4-5, 18-20, 22

- The Lord is just and right and kind. Our faith in Him is our shield during difficult times.

Second Reading – Hebrews 4:14-16

- Let us, as good stewards, pray to the Lord for strength in times of temptation, for we know that Jesus, too, was tempted throughout His life here on earth, but never sinned.

Gospel – Mark 10:35-45

- In today's Gospel, Jesus says to His apostles, "*Whoever wants to rank first, must serve the needs of all.*" Let us keep this verse in mind as we serve others with the time, talent, and treasure God has given us to further His kingdom.

Stewardship Thought

Good stewards must not argue about who is the most important. Today's Gospel says clearly that those who aspire to greatness must humbly serve the needs of all. Even Jesus came not to be served, but to serve (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 22).

Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading – Jeremiah 31:7-9

- Let us be mindful of our responsibility as good Christian stewards to console, comfort, and pray for those in our parish communion who are experiencing difficult times.

Psalm 126:1-6

- As grateful stewards of the land, we are glad and rejoice in the Lord's abundant harvest of great things for us.

Second Reading – Hebrews 5:1-6

- As Christian stewards, we are reminded that God calls each of us to a personal vocation using our unique God-given gifts. Let us continue to pray for holy men and women to answer their special call to the priesthood or religious life.

Gospel – Mark 10:46-52

- In today's Gospel, Jesus heals the blind man Bartimaeus because of his faith. Do we, as Christian stewards, have enough faith so that Jesus can heal us?



Stewardship Thought

Today's psalm says, "*The Lord has done great things for us; we are filled with joy.*" Good stewards demonstrate by their living and giving that they understand God as the Source of all they are and have. See Psalm 126 (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 22).

All Saints (November 1)

First Reading – Revelation 7:2-4, 9-14

- Good stewards understand salvation comes from Christ as symbolized by the white garment in the Sacrament of Baptism, which washes away the stain of sin.
- Christian stewards strive to build a strong relationship with God through prayer, meditation and adoration.

Psalm – 24:1-6

- Do we strive to be Christ's faithful stewards with sinless hands and clean hearts like the saints?

Second Reading – 1 John 3:1-3

- God's great love calls us to be His children. Do we use our time and talents to lead virtuous lives, so by our example, the world will know we are Christ's disciples?

Gospel – Matthew 5:1-12

- To be good Christian stewards, we must strive to live the Beatitudes. As faithful stewards, we profess to follow Christ's teaching to lose our lives completely in His service of others.

Stewardship Thought

Today's psalm makes clear that we and everything we think we own actually belongs to God instead: "*The Lord's are the earth and its fullness, the world and those who live in it.*" We are *stewards*, not owners, of our own lives and all we possess! See Psalm 24 (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, pages 34-35).

The Commemoration of all the Faithful Departed (All Souls – November 2)

First Reading – Wisdom 3:1-9

- God gives peace in death to good stewards who strive to live lives faithful to God.
- He gives us grace and peace and is merciful to us always.

– or –

First Reading – Daniel 12:1-3

- We, as faithful stewards strive to live just and holy lives pleasing to God, Who will judge us on our last day according to our actions.

Psalm 23:1-6

- Just as the Lord, our Shepherd, refreshes our souls, as Christian stewards we should embrace a spirit of hospitality to others in our home and our parish.

Second Reading – Romans 5:5-11

- As Christian stewards, we put our hope in God Who does not disappoint, but instead pours out His love for us, especially through His Son, Jesus Christ, Who has redeemed us even though we are sinners.

– or –

Romans 6:3-9

- Christian stewards believe that through our Baptism we receive grace to live with Christ. He died for our sins, and, if we die to sin, we trust that we will unite with Him in our resurrection.

Gospel – John 6:37-40

- Are we striving as Christian stewards to follow God’s will and, by truly believing in His Son, be raised with Him on the last day?

– or –

Gospel – John 11:17-27

- Jesus states, *“I am the resurrection and the life; whoever believes in Me, even if he dies, will live ...”* All of us, even those who believe in our Lord, will experience physical death, but our souls will live forever. These are comforting words for us, who, as disciples of Christ, strive to follow His commandments, and do his will.

Stewardship Thought

On the Feast of All Souls, we pray for those who have gone before us and stand in judgment before God. May we share with one another the treasure of love’s memory, and console one another with the assurance of resurrection in Christ Jesus (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 35).

Thirty-First Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading – Deuteronomy 6:2-6

- In today’s first reading, Moses encourages the ancient Israelites to follow God’s commandments and give the Lord their total love. Our Church leaders today profess the same message. As Christian stewards, are we listening?

Psalm 18:2-4, 47, 51

- In a spirit of gratitude, we as good Christian stewards praise God for being our rock and salvation.

Second Reading – Hebrews 7:23-28

- Jesus, our High Priest, accepted His call to do His Father’s will, even dying on a cross for our salvation. As good Christian stewards, may we continue to pray that more men and women, with Jesus as their example, answer God’s call to the priesthood and religious life, and that we may answer God’s call to our own vocation.

Gospel – Mark 12:28-34

- In today’s Gospel, Jesus teaches us that to be His disciples we must love God with our whole being, and *“love your neighbor as yourself.”* We know how difficult this directive can be. Let us pray to the Lord for patience with our neighbor in our communities, our parishes, and the world.

Stewardship Thought

What percentage does God ask of me as a good steward? *All* of my heart, *all* of my soul, *all* of my mind, and *all* of my strength! (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 22).

Thirty-Second Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading – 1 Kings 17:10-16

- In today's first reading, the widow's small act of kindness to Elijah does not go unnoticed by the Lord. Trusting in God, and looking for nothing in return, the widow is abundantly blessed. Are we, as Christian stewards, humble enough to gratefully acknowledge that all of our gifts and blessings come from the Lord?

Psalm 146:7-10

- The Lord commands us as good stewards to provide food for the hungry and justice for the oppressed. How well are we using our time, talent, and treasure to follow His command?

Second Reading – Hebrews 9:24-28

- Christ died for our sins and paved the way for salvation for those who seek it. As Christian stewards, we understand that we will be accountable for our stewardship of God's gifts. What praise and gratitude do we return to the Lord for this great gift of hope for eternal life with Christ?

Gospel – Mark 12:38-44

- In today's Gospel, Jesus praises the poor widow's giving to the temple treasury because her sacrifice was great. However, He admonished the wealthy who gave of their surplus, which was no sacrifice. In our own sacrificial giving, where are we in this story? Are we giving to the weekly offertory what is left of our funds, or are we giving back to God the "first fruits" of our labors?

Stewardship Thought

Both widows in today's readings gave all they had to the work of the Lord, one using all her remaining food to feed Elijah and the other offering her two copper coins to the temple treasury. Faithful stewards give all that is asked and trust the Lord to be faithful to His promises (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 22).

The Dedication of the Lateran Basilica in Rome (November 9)

First Reading – Ezekiel 47:1-2, 8-9, 12

- Good stewards are grateful for water as the source of life on earth and a gift from God, symbolizing His grace flowing throughout the world. In gratitude for the precious gift of God's creation, we must be good stewards of the environment.

Psalm 46:2-3, 5-6, 8-9

- In troubled times, Christian stewards trust in God's strength and guidance; He is always with us.

– or –

Psalm 84:3-6, 8-11

- As Christian stewards, we yearn to live in the house of God.



Second Reading – 1 Corinthians 3:9-11, 16-17

- As Christian stewards, do we strive to build the Church with Jesus as both the master-builder and the foundation of our life?

Gospel – John 2:13-22

- As good stewards, do we deal honestly with others in our financial matters, understanding that every material possession is God's gift to us?
- Just as Jesus described His body as a temple, are we good stewards of our own bodily health?

Stewardship Thought

As we pray today for increase of spiritual gifts, we are reminded by the Bishops' Pastoral Letter on stewardship that good stewardship of the Church "*means cherishing and fostering the gifts of all, while using one's own gifts to serve the community of faith*" (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 34).

Thirty-Third Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading – Daniel 12:1-3

- In today's first reading, Daniel's prophecies about the end times can apply to the end of our own lives here on earth. If our lives ended today, would the Lord find we have been wise and just in how we used our time, our God-given gifts and our treasure to do His work here on earth?

Psalm 16:5, 8-11

- If we trust in the Lord as faithful stewards, we know He will provide for all of our needs.

Second Reading – Hebrews 10:11-14, 18

- Jesus made the perfect offering for our sins. As Christian stewards, do we show gratitude to God for His Son's sacrifice for our salvation?

Gospel – Mark 13:24-32

- Jesus warns us to be prepared, for we know not the day or hour of the end times, nor our own death. If the second coming of Christ happened today, would He find us grounded in our faith and practicing the fundamentals of stewardship in a way that He could call us one of "His chosen?"

Stewardship Thought

The readings today speak of the end of the world and the coming of the kingdom. The Bishops' Pastoral on stewardship says clearly that "*that 'life to come' is in continuity with this present life through the human goods, the worthy human purposes, which people foster now.*" May our good stewardship help us to be numbered among the chosen on the last day! (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 23).

Christ the King

First Reading – Daniel 7:13-14

- In today's first reading, the prophet Daniel says, "... *all peoples, nations, and languages serve Him.*" As Christian stewards, are we making every effort to do God's will and serve Him by using our time, God-given gifts and financial resources to do His work here on earth?

Psalm 93:1-2, 5

- The psalmist says, "*The Lord is king ...*" Do we as practicing stewards give Him grateful praise and glory for His abundant grace bestowed upon us?

Second Reading – Revelation 1:5-8

- In today's second reading, the Lord God says, "*I am the Alpha and the Omega ...*" The Lord is the beginning and the end — the almighty. As Christian stewards, we believe that through Christ's sacrifice for our sins, God has called us to serve Him.

Gospel – John 18:33-37

- As we struggle to become closer disciples of Jesus through our stewardship efforts, how many times, like Pilate, do we turn our back on the Lord and seek worldly gain? Yet, in His infinite mercy, He forgives us and calls us back to a closer relationship with Him in His kingdom.

Stewardship Thought

- Today's second reading reminds us that the sacrifice of Christ frees us from sin and makes us a royal nation of priests *in the service* of God. How am I using my gifts to serve God and others? (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 23).



*Stewardship Reflections
on the Liturgy of the Word*

Reading Reflections – Cycle C

STEWARDSHIP REFLECTIONS ON THE LITURGY OF THE WORD

CYCLE C (Luke)

The following reflections on the Cycle C readings of the Liturgy of the Word are designed to stimulate your own thoughts and reflections on God's message to us as Christian stewards. Your reflections and thoughts, as well as the reflections presented here, can then be the basis for homilies, lay witness testimony, and other guideposts along your stewardship journey.

First Sunday of Advent

First Reading – Jeremiah 33:14-16

- God remained faithful to Israel, promising that a “*just shoot*” would be raised from the line of David. As Christian stewards, how faithful are we to the Lord and His commands?

Psalm 25:4-5, 8-10, 14

- As practicing stewards, we draw closer to the Lord by asking Him to show us the humble path to truth and justice.

Second Reading – 1 Thessalonians 3:12-4:2

- In today's second reading, St. Paul calls the Thessalonians and us, too, to a life of holiness in the Lord. Are we, as Christian stewards, conducting ourselves in a way that pleases God?

Gospel – Luke 21:25-28, 34-36

- If the Lord Jesus returned today, could we, as Christian stewards, render an account of how we used His gifts in this life to further His kingdom?

Stewardship Thought

“Be on guard,” Jesus warns in today's Gospel, *“lest your spirits become bloated with indulgence.”* Let us heed His warning and follow the advice of St. Paul, conducting ourselves in a way pleasing to God, overflowing with love for one another. See Luke 21:34 (Used with permission from Our Sunday Visitor, *Stewardship by the Book: Bulletin Bits Based on the Sunday Readings*, by Sharon Hueckel, 2004 edition, page 24).

Second Sunday of Advent

First Reading – Baruch 5:1-9

- In today's first reading, Baruch proclaims similar words as does John the Baptist. The prophet rejoices in God's promise of His justice and glory, and *“... that every lofty mountain be made low, and that the age-old depths and gorges be filled to level ground ...”* As Christian stewards, are we preparing our hearts and minds for Christ's coming?

Psalm 126:1-6

- The ancient Israelites exclaim their joy to the Lord for His great deeds on their return from exile to the holy city, Jerusalem. As Christian stewards, we, too, rejoice that God fills our needs, and we praise Him in gratitude for His many blessings.



Second Reading – Philippians 1:4-6, 8-11

- St. Paul, in today's second reading, prays in gratitude for the way the people promote the Gospel and understand the things that really matter. Are we, as Christian stewards, as eager to accept Jesus' teachings in order to become His disciples?

Gospel – Luke 3:1-6

- Through our Baptism, we are called to be Christ's disciples. John the Baptist, heralding the coming of Jesus, proclaimed the importance of repentance, leading to forgiveness of sin. Advent is a good time to participate in the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Stewardship Thought

Good stewards believe that God, who has begun this good work in them, will carry it through to completion. In words and deeds, they can sing with the psalmist, "*The Lord has done great things for us; we are filled with joy!*" See Psalm 126 (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 24).

Immaculate Conception (December 8)

First Reading – Genesis 3:9-15, 20

- With Mary Immaculate as our stewardship model, we strive to follow God's will as faithful stewards, and not yield to temptation in disobedience of His commands.

Psalm 98:1-4

- Good stewards give praise and thanksgiving to God in joyful song for His gift of our salvation.

Second Reading – Ephesians 1:3-6, 11-12

- Faithful stewards realize that God chooses us, through Christ, to do His will for His praise and glory.

Gospel – Luke 1:26-38

- Mary, the model steward, put her complete faith and trust in God in answering the call to do His will. We are in complete gratitude to our heavenly Father for the great gift of His Son, Jesus.

Stewardship Thought

Mary's Immaculate Conception prepared her for her unique role as the Mother of God. We, too, have been given all the gifts we need to do the work to which God calls us. Oh Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us that we may have the courage to say "yes!" when God calls (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 35).

Third Sunday of Advent

First Reading – Zephaniah 3:14-18

- The prophet proclaims the joy of the Lord's deliverance. As Christian stewards, do we rejoice in our Lord's love for us?



Psalm – Isaiah 12:2-6

- “*God indeed is my Savior; I am confident and unafraid.*” We thank and praise our Lord for His goodness to us.

Second Reading – Philippians 4:4-7

- As good Christian stewards, we strive to make grateful prayer a priority and daily habit. We know that from persistent prayer and thanksgiving offered to God, we can attain much peace in our daily lives.

Gospel – Luke 3:10-18

- In today’s Gospel, John the Baptist preaches that we, as Christian stewards, are to share our abundant blessings with the less fortunate, and be content with what we have.

Stewardship Thought

- Today’s Gospel provides a blueprint for good stewardship: “*Let the man who has two coats give to him who has none. The man who has food should do the same.*” See Luke 3:11 (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 24).

Fourth Sunday of Advent

First Reading – Micah 5:1-4

- From the humble town of Bethlehem will be born a ruler, great, yet peaceful. What a simple but powerful message. At this time of year, can we, as Christian stewards, quiet our lives enough to truly appreciate this prophecy?

Psalm 80:2-3, 15-16, 18-19

- Do we, as Christian stewards, call upon the Lord to be our strength?

Second Reading – Hebrews 10:5-10

- We acknowledge, as faithful stewards, that Jesus sacrificed Himself for our sins and our salvation. Do we in turn sacrifice our time, talent, and treasure to build up His kingdom here on earth?

Gospel – Luke 1:39-45

- In today’s Gospel, the Holy Spirit inspires Elizabeth to proclaim to Mary, “... *Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb.*” As Christian stewards, do we allow the Holy Spirit to work in our lives to further the work of the kingdom?

Stewardship Thought

The Gospel today tells of the Virgin Mary, pregnant herself, hurrying off to help her cousin Elizabeth. The model of good stewardship, she who had given herself to bear the Savior, gave her time and love to others as well (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 24).



Christmas (Vigil)

First Reading – Isaiah 62:1-5

- God promised a new day of salvation for us. For this great gift, we must always praise Him and rejoice in His goodness.

Psalm 89:4-5, 16-17, 27, 29

- Our Lord God is our Rock and our Savior. We gratefully rejoice in His kindness and faithfulness to us.

Second Reading – Acts of the Apostles 13:16-17, 22-25

- Our heavenly Father brought forth, from the line of David, Jesus to be our Savior, as He had promised. As Christian stewards, we repent for the times we take this great gift for granted.

Gospel – Matthew 1:1-25

- “Emmanuel” means “God is with us.” As faithful stewards, let us follow Mary and Joseph’s example by putting our total trust in the Lord.

Stewardship Thought

Heaven and earth rejoice with praise and glory to God that the prophecies of old are fulfilled in Jesus Christ, our Savior. As faithful Christian stewards, our gratitude should be endless for this greatest of gifts.

Christmas (Midnight)

First Reading – Isaiah 9:1-6

- Our Lord, Jesus Christ, is among us this and every day. Do we recognize Him?
- The lights of Christmas symbolize Christ as the Light of the World.

Psalm 96:1-3, 11-13

- Along with all creation, let us rejoice by giving praise, honor, and glory to Christ, our Savior.

Second Reading – Titus 2:11-14

- As Christian stewards, disciples of Christ, do we accept God’s redeeming grace that helps us live virtuous lives?

Gospel – Luke 2:1-14

- There was “*no room for them in the inn.*” Is there room in our hearts for Christ this day?
- The glory of God was proclaimed to lowly and humble shepherds living in fields, tending their flock. Like the shepherds, are we humble and open to hear God’s message of peace and redemption?

Stewardship Thought

The birth of Jesus was part of God’s plan for our salvation. How do we, as Christian stewards, gratefully accept this special gift?



Christmas (Dawn)

First Reading – Isaiah 62:11-12

- The gift of redemption by our Lord, Jesus Christ, as foretold by Isaiah, brings us true joy at Christmas.

Psalm 97:1, 6, 11-12

- Faithful stewards, who are just and honest of heart, give thanks to the Lord, our light and our salvation.

Second Reading – Titus 3:4-7

- In Baptism, through God’s mercy, we are fully renewed by the power of the Holy Spirit through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Are we, as Christian stewards, grateful for the great gift of hope of eternal life?

Gospel – Luke 2:15-20

- The shepherds accepted God’s call, proclaimed by the multitude of angels, to seek Christ and pay Him homage. Do we, as faithful stewards, make the same effort to seek and praise Him?

Stewardship Thought

We pray that God gives us wisdom to do His will, and the courage and strength to act as His disciples.

Christmas (Day)

First Reading – Isaiah 52:7-10

- Like the ancient Israelites, today’s Christian stewards also proclaim, “*God is King!*”
- Jesus Christ offers us His Good News of salvation.

Psalm 98:1-6

- As Christian stewards, we are encouraged to use our talents to praise and thank the Lord, our God, in prayer, song, and instrument for His abundant blessings bestowed upon us.

Second Reading – Hebrews 1:1-6

- God proclaims Jesus His Son, and tells the angels to praise and worship Him as a reflection of the Father’s glory. Can we, as faithful stewards, do less?

Gospel Reading – John 1:1-18

- The Word becomes flesh; God became man. Our heavenly Father’s love for us comes through the greatest gift of all — His Son, Jesus, Who is the Light of the World and path to eternal life.

Stewardship Thought

Rejoice! The Word became flesh and dwells among us! Oh, come, let us adore him! (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 24).



Feast of the Holy Family

First Reading – Sirach 3:2-6, 12-14

- God blesses us through our parents. He commands us, as Christian stewards, to respect, honor, and care for our parents, whatever the circumstances may be.

Psalm 128:1-5

- As faithful stewards, we realize our spouse and children are blessings from God, and are to be nurtured.

Second Reading – Colossians 3:12-21

- As God's chosen ones, we are to put on compassion, reconciliation, and love for one another as members of the Body of Christ.
- A good steward does everything in the name of Jesus, follows His Word, prays, and sings gratefully to God.
- The family is called the domestic Church — love and respect one another.

Gospel – Luke 2:41-52

- After frantically looking for Jesus for three days, Mary and Joseph find Him in the Temple in Jerusalem, in the midst of the teachers. God's great gift of faith reveals Christ's divinity to us. Are we, as Christian stewards, open to this gift?

Stewardship Thought

Parents who practice good stewardship draw upon their time and talents to pass on their gift of faith, to educate, to nurture, and to protect their children.

New Year's Day – Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God

First Reading – Numbers 6:22-27

- Christian stewards gratefully recognize that God blesses us abundantly, and acknowledge that true joy, peace, and happiness comes from God through His grace.

Psalm 67:2-3, 5-6, 8

- We gratefully give God glory and praise for His mercy and blessing.

Second Reading – Galatians 4:4-7

- As Christian stewards, we understand that our heavenly Father has made us His heirs through His Son, Jesus.

Gospel – Luke 2:16-21

- The humble shepherds went to Bethlehem at God's instruction through His angels. They praised and glorified God for all they saw and heard of the Christ Child. Do we, as good stewards, make time to listen to God's call, and then act promptly on it in our lives?
- Mary, Mother of God, shows us the way to become your Son's disciples.

Stewardship Thought

The Gospel today says that, having found the infant Jesus, the shepherds returned to their work, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen. We, too, have seen and celebrated the mystery of the Word made flesh. Will we follow their example when we return to work tomorrow? (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 24).

Second Sunday after Christmas

First Reading – Sirach 24:1-2, 8-12

- Faithful stewards accept God’s call to live in Him and follow His commands.

Psalm 147:12-15, 19-20

- Christian stewards praise and glorify the Lord in all we do and say in gratitude for His peace and many blessings.

Second Reading – Ephesians 1:3-6, 15-18

- God gives us His Son, Jesus Christ, as every spiritual blessing. As faithful stewards, we demonstrate our gratitude by striving to be holy, and filled with love for God and one another.

Gospel – John 1:1-18

- In Jesus, God’s Word is incarnated — became flesh. He is filled with redeeming love for us, which we share in praise and thanksgiving with others.

Stewardship Thought

During this season of Christmas, we rejoice that our Savior has come to dwell among us. As Christian stewards, do we answer His call to follow His Word?

The Epiphany of the Lord

First Reading – Isaiah 60:1-6

- The prophet Isaiah paints a radiant picture of God’s abundant gifts to us, which should inspire us, as Christian stewards, to gratefully proclaim His praise and glory.

Psalm 72:1-2, 7-8, 10-13

- God, in His mercy and justice, exhorts us, as His stewards, to praise and glorify Him by sharing our time, talent, and treasure with the poor and oppressed.

Second Reading – Ephesians 3:2-3, 5-6

- Our heavenly Father, in His goodness through Jesus Christ, offers His gift of grace to all people and welcomes everyone as members of the Body of Christ and His heirs, regardless of who they are.

Gospel – Matthew 2:1-12

- The story of the Magi’s gifts to Jesus reminds us how much God blesses us, and how, as Christian stewards, we must use and return these gifts gratefully to the Lord in His service.



- The Magi journeyed far, with great effort, to pay homage to our King. Do we respect, honor, and make time for Him in our lives? Do we trust God in all things?

Stewardship Thought

The three kings in today's Gospel traveled a great distance at considerable cost to offer their richest gifts to the Infant Jesus. How far will *I* go, and what will *I* offer to do homage to this newborn King and Savior? (Our Sunday, Visitor, *ibid.*, page 25).

The Baptism of the Lord

First Reading – Isaiah 42:1-4, 6-7

- In service to others, a faithful steward gratefully accepts God's gifts, and willingly shares them in love and justice with those in need.

Psalm 29:1-4, 3, 9-10

- With praise and thanksgiving, Christian stewards give glory to God as Lord of all.

Second Reading – Acts of the Apostles 10:34-38

- Through His Son, Jesus Christ, God's gifts of faith and peace are within reach of all who follow His commandments.

Gospel – Luke 3:15-16, 21-22

- John's Baptism of Jesus encourages us, as Christian stewards, to fulfill our Baptismal promises to believe in the Gospel, to reject evil, and use our God-given gifts in His service throughout the world.

Stewardship Thought

Jesus, whom God called "*my beloved Son,*" is also "*servant*" of whom Isaiah speaks in the first reading. We, who are baptized in Christ, must follow His example and use our time and resources in the service of God and neighbor. See Luke 3:22 (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 27).

Second Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading – Isaiah 62:1-5

- In today's first reading, Isaiah tells the people, "*You shall be called by a new name.*" They will shed their old desolate image, and become like a jewel in a crown. As Christian stewards, we, too, are called, as disciples of Christ, to shed our sinful ways and renew our lives in His image.

Psalm 96:1-3, 7-10

- We, as Christian stewards, enthusiastically sing a new song of worship, praise, and thanksgiving to God for His abundant blessings bestowed upon us.

Second Reading – 1 Corinthians 12:4-11

- St. Paul explains in this reading that God gives each of us unique gifts to be used for the common good. How are we, as Christian stewards, using these gifts to further His kingdom?



Gospel – John 2:1-11

- Jesus, at the urging of His Mother, performs a miracle at the wedding feast at Cana by turning water into fine wine. This miracle reveals His glory to encourage His disciples to believe in Him. As Christian stewards, what signs or miracles do we seek to believe in Him?

Stewardship Thought

In today's second reading, St. Paul tells the Corinthians (and us) that all of our gifts are from God and that they are given, not for ourselves alone, but for the common good. But the generosity of God knows no limits — the miracle at Cana reminds us that whenever we faithfully do as God asks, He can change our gifts of water into wine! (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 28).

Third Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading – Nehemiah 8:2-6, 8-10

- In today's first reading, the ancient Israelites are asked to rejoice in the Lord for his abundant food, and to give a portion to those who had nothing. As Christian stewards, we are called to do the same.

Psalm 19:8-10, 15

- The psalmist proclaims that God's laws are perfect, trustworthy, right, clear, pure and just. As Christian stewards, we see the wisdom of His commands and strive to follow His precepts faithfully.

Second Reading – 1 Corinthians 12:12-30

- In this reading, St. Paul teaches that all disciples with their various gifts are part of the same body — the Body of Christ, the Church. We can apply this metaphor to our parish communion. What steps are we taking as Christian stewards to build up our parish to fulfill its mission of doing Christ's work?

Gospel – Luke 1:1-4; 4:14-21

- By reciting a passage from the prophet Isaiah, Jesus proclaims His own ministry of service. As Luke continues in his Gospel, we find Jesus is not accepted in His hometown. As disciples of Jesus, we should not be afraid to proclaim the Gospel, even in the face of opposition.

Stewardship Thought

The U. S. Bishops' Pastoral on stewardship reinforces today's reading from 1 Corinthians: *"Because its individual members do collectively make up the Body of Christ, that body's health and well-being are the responsibility of the members — the personal responsibility of each one of us. We all are stewards of the Church"* (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 28).



Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading – Jeremiah 1:4-5, 17-19

- God states that He knew Jeremiah even before He formed him in the womb, and dedicated him as a prophet before his birth. What a beautiful message for us, as faithful stewards, to use in defense of the Church's position on the sanctity of life.
- God strengthens the prophet to profess His Word to the leaders and people of his time. As Christian stewards, do we pray for God to give us the same courage to profess His Word today?

Psalm 71:1-6, 15, 17

- What comforting words from the psalmist that God's strength is our rock and our refuge at all times.

Second Reading – 1 Corinthians 12:31-13:13

- Love is the binding force that unifies us as mature Christian stewards. Out of this love, our Lord calls us to serve those in need.

Gospel – Luke 4:21-30

- Jesus reminds the people how the message proclaimed by the prophets is often rejected by those who should heed it. As faithful disciples of Christ, we believe that Jesus came so all may believe in Him.

Stewardship Thought

Jeremiah declares that the Lord knew him before he was born, and dedicated and appointed him to his role as prophet even before he drew breath. We, too, are known and sent by the Lord. What deeds of love and service are mine to perform? (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 28).

Presentation of the Lord (February 2)

First Reading – Malachi 3:1-4

- As Christian stewards, do we cultivate our God-given gifts to the fullest to do good works in His name?

Psalm 24:7-10

- Our Lord God is the King of glory; let us welcome Him with open hearts.

Second Reading – Hebrews 2:14-18

- Jesus is always faithful to His heavenly Father, even enduring great trials and severe suffering. Do we, as Christian stewards, truly understand that His trials and suffering were for our salvation?

Gospel – Luke 2:22-40

- Like Simeon and Anna, do we strive to make Christian stewardship a way of life by our longing for the Messiah? Have we consecrated our lives to the Lord?

Stewardship Thought

When Mary and Joseph brought Jesus to the Temple, they offered a sacrificial gift “*in accord with the dictate in the law of the Lord.*” An offering of a specific size or kind is not “dictated” when we bring our gifts to the altar at Mass. Is my gift reflective of the blessings I have received? See Luke 2:24 (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 33).

Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading – Isaiah 6:1-8

- As faithful stewards, we may feel unworthy, like Isaiah in today’s reading, to answer God’s call to do His work. May we humbly approach our Lord through the Sacrament of Reconciliation that frees us from our sins and opens the path to do His will.

Psalm 138:1-5, 7-8

- Good and faithful stewards praise and thank the Lord daily for His kindness and truth that strengthens us.

Second Reading – 1 Corinthians 15:1-11

- St. Paul, through the Holy Spirit, knew his mission, his call — to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles. Have we, as Christian stewards, discerned God’s call in our lives?

Gospel – Luke 5:1-11

- In today’s Gospel, Peter feels unworthy to follow the Lord, and yet does so when Jesus encourages him. On our journey to make stewardship a way of life, drawing closer to Jesus as His disciples, we, too, encounter fear and feelings of unworthiness. Let us pray to the Lord that fear and sin do not distract us from fulfilling the vocation God has given us.

Stewardship Thought

In today’s readings, both Isaiah and Peter hear the call of God and feel themselves unworthy. But, reassured by the Lord, both answer and follow. Do *I* hear the Lord asking, “*Whom shall I send?*” Am *I* prepared to answer, “*Here I am. Send me!*”? (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 28).

Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading – Jeremiah 17:5-8

- In good as well as difficult times, Christian stewards put their full trust in the Lord, not in human beings and things.

Psalm 1:1-4, 6

- We know, as wise stewards, that following God’s law will lead us to eternal happiness.

Second Reading – 1 Corinthians 15:12, 16-20

- We, as faithful stewards, believe in Christ’s resurrection, and, therefore, our own.



Gospel – Luke 6:17, 20-26

- Our Lord calls us, who strive to be His disciples, to feed the hungry and comfort the mourning. How are we using our God-given gifts to accomplish this mission?

Stewardship Thought

The words of the psalmist echo the theme of all of today's readings. "*Blessed are they who hope in the Lord.*" As good stewards, firmly grounded in that hope, may we bear fruit in due season — assisting the poor, feeding the hungry, and consoling the sorrowful whenever we have the chance. See Psalm 1 (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 28).

Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading – 1 Samuel 26:2, 7-9, 12-13, 22-23

- To please God, good Christian stewards always strive to do what is right, and seek justice in our world.

Psalm 103:1-4, 8, 10, 12-13

- Christian stewards give praise and glory to God for His kindness and mercy.

Second Reading – 1 Corinthians 15:45-49

- We, too, are like the first Adam, born to this world. But as Christian stewards, we strive to be disciples of the second Adam, our Lord, Jesus Christ.

Gospel – Luke 6:27-38

- Today's Gospel contains some of the most difficult teachings that Jesus professed during His ministry on earth — love your enemies; give without expecting repayment. Yet, if we are to be His disciples, we need to follow His teaching.

Stewardship Thought

Today's Gospel has encouraging words for good stewards — "*Give, and it shall be given to you. For the measure you measure with will be measured back to you.*" What encouragement to give generously of the resources entrusted to our care! See Luke 6:38 (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 28).

Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading – Sirach 27:4-7

- Our words and deeds tell who we are and what we value.

Psalm 92:2-3, 13-16

- As Christian stewards, it is good to give thanks and praise to the Lord, Most High for His kindness and faithfulness. Planting our life in the Lord will produce good fruit.

Second Reading – 1 Corinthians 15:54-58

- St. Paul encourages us that through Christ's victory over death, we, as His disciples, are to be "*... steadfast and preserving ... fully engaged in the work of the Lord. We are confident that our toil is not in vain when it is done in the Lord.*" These are indeed encouraging words for Christian stewards who are striving to be disciples of Jesus.

Gospel – Luke 6:39-45

- A faithful steward produces good fruit when doing God’s work here on earth.
- Jesus warns His disciples, and us, not to focus on others’ faults until sin has been removed in our own lives.

Stewardship Thought

All of today’s readings remind us that our works reflect what is in our hearts. Do my words and actions reveal a heart that is grateful for — and generous in sharing — the abundance God has poured into my life? (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 28).

Ash Wednesday

First Reading – Joel 2:12-18

- Our Lord God is gracious and merciful, rich in kindness. As good stewards, we acknowledge our failings in appreciating God’s gifts and ask for His forgiveness and mercy.

Psalm 51:3-6, 12-14, 17

- As good Christian stewards, we recognize our sinfulness, and, through God’s grace, ask for His forgiveness.

Second Reading – 2 Corinthians 5:20-6:2

- Understanding stewardship calls us to be reconciled with our Lord, and to gratefully receive His grace.
- Are we, as a parish communion, “ambassadors for Christ”?

Gospel – Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18

- Prayer, fasting, and almsgiving are principles that we embrace as Christian stewards. We do these in gratitude to our Lord, and not to impress others.

Stewardship Thought

Ash Wednesday’s emphasis on prayer, fasting, and almsgiving is an invitation to take a closer look at our stewardship. It is a time to reassess how we are using the gifts God has entrusted to us, and to resolve anew to use our time and resources in the service of His kingdom (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 25).

First Sunday of Lent

First Reading – Deuteronomy 26:4-10

- For the ancient Israelites, agricultural production was the lifeblood of the community. In gratitude for the Lord’s gifts, they returned to Him the first fruits of their harvest. As faithful Christian stewards, we, too, in gratitude, can follow this practice by making a weekly sacrificial gift — the first fruits of our labor — to the Lord.

Psalm 91:1-2, 10-15

- In difficult times, do we, as Christian stewards, put our full trust in God, our heavenly Father?



Second Reading – Romans 10:8-13

- Our Lord, Jesus, died for our sins, and by His resurrection, offers the gift of salvation to all who seek it.

Gospel – Luke 4:1-13

- In today's Gospel, Jesus, is led by the Holy Spirit into the desert for forty days, and is tempted there by the devil. The devil tempted Him in every way, but Jesus, supported by Scripture, did not fall. As stewards of our lives, are we wise and humble enough in times of temptation to call on Jesus' grace and strength to avoid sin?

Stewardship Thought

Today's first reading describes the offering of first fruits the people of Israel were to present to the Lord in thanksgiving for their deliverance from Egypt and the gift of the promised land. Is my offering at today's Mass an appropriate response to the many blessings the Lord has given me? (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 25).

Second Sunday of Lent

First Reading – Genesis 15:5-12, 17-18

- In today's first reading, Abram, later named Abraham, puts his full faith and trust in the Lord. God in turn makes a sacred covenant with Abram, promising him prosperity. As Christian stewards, do we put that same trust in our heavenly Father?

Psalm 27:1, 7-9, 13-14

- The psalmist proclaims, "*The Lord is my light and salvation; whom should I fear? The Lord is my life's refuge; of whom should I be afraid?*" For the Christian steward, these are comforting words in troubled times.

Second Reading – Philippians 3:17-4:1

- St. Paul asks his followers to model their behavior after him, who, in turn, models his behavior after Christ. St. Paul warns the faithful to avoid the destructive behavior of the world, and to focus on heaven. As we grow in making stewardship a way of life, let us avoid worldly temptations that may block our relationship with Christ.

Gospel – Luke 9:28-36

- In today's Gospel, Peter, James, and John have a "mountain top" experience at Jesus' Transfiguration. Our heavenly Father asks them to "*Listen to Him.*" As Christian stewards, are we listening to Jesus and His teachings, or are we following the popular culture of our time?

Stewardship Thought

Peter, James, and John wanted to build a "booth" for Jesus and just stay on the mountain where His Transfiguration took place. But the Son of God, the Chosen One, knew that He must instead keep moving toward His crucifixion. We, too, must rise from worship and do what we can to hasten the coming of the kingdom (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 25).

Third Sunday of Lent

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

First Reading – Exodus 3:1-8, 13-15

- In this first reading, Moses encounters God on the mountain, and answers His call to rescue the Israelites enslaved in Egypt. How do we, as Christian stewards, respond to God's call to serve Him?

Psalm 103:1-4, 6-8, 11

- Good stewards praise and thank God for His gifts of mercy and kindness.

Second Reading – 1 Corinthians 10:1-6, 10-12

- St. Paul reminds us that God provided the Israelites of Moses' time spiritual food and drink. And yet, they grumbled and were ungrateful. As faithful Christian stewards, He warns us to avoid "wicked desires," and follow Jesus Christ as the rock of our faith and source of our salvation.

Gospel – Luke 13:1-9

- In today's Gospel, Jesus warns His followers to repent of their sins, or they will perish. Lent is an excellent time to examine our lives, and seek God's gift of forgiveness through the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Stewardship Thought

The parable in today's Gospel clearly warns that we, like the fig tree, will be judged by our fruit. While God mercifully provides us with time and opportunity, let us give witness to our faith with deeds of kindness and generosity! (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 25).

Fourth Sunday of Lent

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

First Reading – Joshua 5:9-12

- In today's first reading, God's gift of manna ceases for the ancient Israelites forcing them to rely totally on God to find their daily food. As Christian stewards, are we thankful for God's daily gifts of food and shelter, or do we take these gifts for granted?

Psalm 34:2-7

- At all times, both good and bad, a faithful steward finds strength in the Lord.

Second Reading – 2 Corinthians 5:17-21

- In this second reading, St. Paul asks the Corinthians to be a new creation, reconciled with God through Christ. We, as Christian stewards, should follow this advice, and strive during Lent to be reconciled with God and our neighbor.

Gospel – Luke 15:1-3, 11-32

- Like the father and son in today's parable, our heavenly Father has no end of love and mercy for us. How do we, as Christian stewards, show the Lord our gratitude for these tremendous gifts.



Stewardship Thought

The stewardship message in the parable of the prodigal son is that it is never too late to become a good steward. Blessed is the elder brother who had been a good steward all along, but blessed, too, is the prodigal son, who had to lose all he had in order to understand the value of what he'd been given (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 25).

Fifth Sunday of Lent

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

First Reading – Isaiah 43:16-21

- Our heavenly Father gave the ancient Israelites new life through water as they returned from captivity. He, too, offers us life anew. As Christian stewards, are our hearts and minds open to this great gift?

Psalm 126:1-6

- As Christian stewards, we pray that our lives be fruitful in doing our Lord's work to build up His kingdom, in gratitude for the great things He does for us.

Second Reading – Philippians 3:8-14

- St. Paul writes this letter in prison. He is willing to sacrifice his life to profess Christ to all in order that we might rise with Him. As disciples of Christ, are we willing to do the same?

Gospel – John 8:1-11

- In today's Gospel, Jesus shows great mercy and compassion to the woman accused of adultery. As followers of Christ, do we, too, practice mercy and compassion in our lives?

Stewardship Thought

In today's second reading, St. Paul says, "*For His sake I have forfeited everything; I have accounted all else rubbish so that Christ may be my wealth.*" Does my stewardship suggest that I could say the same? See Philippians 3:8 (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 26).

Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion

Procession Gospel – Luke 19:28-40

- Those in Jerusalem praise Jesus, and bless His Holy Name. Yet, we know soon many will shout that He be crucified. As Christian stewards, is our belief in Jesus unwavering, or only caught up in moments of fervor?

First Reading – Isaiah 50:4-7

- Isaiah knows he has received the gifts of speech and prophecy from God. What gifts has our heavenly Father granted us? Through His grace and help, how do we develop these gifts to further His kingdom?

Psalm 22:8-9, 17-20, 23-24

- The psalmist foretells Christ's suffering and death for us. As disciples of Christ, we know in times of our own suffering, we are encouraged to give Him thanks and praise for the strength, peace, and comfort He gives to us.

Second Reading – Philippians 2:6-11

- Good stewards strive to follow Christ's example on the cross by humbly putting others first.

Gospel – Luke 22:14-23:56

- In today's Gospel, Jesus suffers betrayal and denial by His disciples. Some people made false accusations against Him to Pilate, which ultimately led to His humiliating death on the cross. Jesus' suffering and death is done out of His love for us so that we may attain eternal salvation. Are we willing, as Christian stewards, to pay the cost of discipleship and take up our cross daily to become followers of Jesus?

Stewardship Thought

In the Gospel story of the first Palm Sunday, we hear that the owners of the ass had only to be told, "*The Master has need of it,*" to give the animal gladly. Do I give as readily to the Lord's work? See Luke 19:34 (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 26).

Holy Thursday: Mass of the Lord's Supper

First Reading – Exodus 12:1-8, 11-14

- In this evening's first reading, the Lord instructs His servant, Moses, and the ancient Israelites to prepare a year-old lamb without blemish for the first Passover sacrifice, as an offering back to God of the first fruits of their flock. The Passover meal is a foretelling of the Eucharist, Jesus' sacrifice that He instituted for us. As Christian stewards, what sacrificial gifts of our time, talent, and treasure do we bring weekly to the Eucharistic table?

Psalm 116:12-13, 15-18

- The psalmist, in response to his question, "*How shall I make a return to the Lord for all the good He has done for me?*" proclaims, "*The cup of salvation I will take up, and ... call upon the name of the Lord.*" As faithful stewards, we realize that we, too, need to use our God-given gifts to offer ourselves in love and gratitude in service to our brothers and sisters in the Lord.

Second Reading – 1 Corinthians 11:23-26

- In this evening's second reading, St. Paul reminds us how Jesus totally gives of Himself in the Eucharist. As practicing Christian stewards, it is the foundation of our faith that ***we believe*** in His ***true presence*** in this Most Holy Sacrament — and not just a symbolic gesture.

Gospel – John 13:1-15

- In this evening's Gospel, our humble Lord, Jesus Christ, washes the feet of the apostles, to give them an example of how they are to serve one another. We, too, as Christian stewards, strive to follow Jesus' model of service in sharing our God-given gifts with those less fortunate.

Stewardship Thought

On this holy night, as grateful Christian stewards, we reflect on how much Jesus loves us. He instituted the Holy Eucharist to continue His life with us and strengthen our faith in Him. The very word, “Eucharist,” means “thanksgiving.” For His sacrifice, we stand in awe and total gratitude.

Good Friday of the Lord’s Passion

First Reading – Isaiah 52:13-53:12

- Given the prophet Isaiah’s moving description of a man’s suffering, humiliation, and ultimate justification and triumph, Christians take this reading to refer to Jesus’ suffering centuries later. To be Christ’s disciples, we, too, know we must take up our cross daily and follow Him.

Psalm 31:2, 6, 12-13, 15-17, 25

- We find our strength, and take refuge, in the Lord, in the face of the world’s ridicule and humiliation as we strive to be disciples of Christ by following His way.

Second Reading – Hebrews 4:14-16; 5:7-9

- Jesus, our high priest, died for the sins of all humanity. He sympathizes with us for He, too, was tempted in every way. Do we, as Christian stewards, gratefully acknowledge the magnitude of His sacrifice, which opens salvation to all who seek it?

Passion – John 18:1-19:42

- In John’s Passion account, when the soldiers and temple guard declare they are seeking “*Jesus the Nazorean*,” Jesus says, “*I AM*.” Even though they came to arrest Him, the power of His response caused them all to fall to the ground. As Christ’s disciples, we acknowledge His union with God the Father and Holy Spirit and realize what awesome love He has for us.
- From the cross, Jesus presented His Mother to John, His faithful disciple, and to the world as our model of Christian stewardship.

Stewardship Thought

We sometimes ponder why this day is called “Good Friday” because it recalls Jesus’ trial and brutal scourging and death. Yet, as disciples of Christ, we know that without His suffering and death, we would not have His resurrection and promise of eternal life. By reflecting on this day, we, as Christian stewards, become truly grateful of Christ’s ultimate sacrifice for us.

Easter Vigil

First Reading – Genesis 1:1-2:2

- The first and second chapters of the Book of Genesis tell how God, our heavenly Father, created the universe, all creatures, and things. On the sixth day, He created man and woman in His likeness and image. As good stewards of the earth, it is our responsibility to take care of God’s creation. As children of God, we are truly thankful for His gift of life and it is our responsibility to protect all human life from conception to natural death. How seriously do we take these responsibilities?

Psalm 104:1-2, 5-6, 10, 12-14, 24, 35

- Good Christian stewards rejoice in God's beautiful creation and marvel at His power and wisdom in bringing it all forth.

– or –

Psalm 33:4-7, 12-13, 20-22

- The Lord, our God, is the Creator of all things. As faithful stewards, we put our trust in Him and gratefully pray for His kindness to us.

Second Reading – Genesis 22:1-18

- In the second reading, God tests Abraham's love for Him by asking him to sacrifice his only son, Isaac, who was born to Sarah and Abraham in their old age. Abraham never questions God's directive. Out of Abraham's fidelity to Him, God spared Isaac's life and blessed Abraham abundantly. As Christian stewards, are we willing to trust in God's wisdom when He asks us to carry out a difficult task to further His kingdom?

Psalm 16:5, 8-11

- In gratitude, we gratefully rejoice that God is always with us to guide us on our path to eternal life.

Third Reading – Exodus 14:15-15:1

- In the third reading, God delivers Moses and the ancient Israelite community from Pharaoh and his army by parting the Red Sea. By trusting God to save them, Moses and his people escape through the parted Red Sea, while Pharaoh's army is destroyed when the sea closes and rushing waters pour over them. What a powerful lesson to trust God in our times of trouble! As Christian stewards, how much trust do we put in the Lord?

Psalm – Exodus 15:1-6, 17-18

- As Christian stewards, we gratefully respect and praise the Lord for His power and steadfast protection of His people who strive to follow Him.

Fourth Reading – Isaiah 54:5-14

- The setting of the fourth reading is the Babylonian captivity many centuries before Christ. Because of their grave sins against God, the ancient Israelites' homeland, including their sacred temple in Jerusalem, was destroyed, most of them captured, and sent to Babylon. The prophet Isaiah's imagery of an enraged husband taking back his forsaken wife out of mercy and pity symbolizes God's kindness and mercy for His people, the captive Israelites, and for us when we turn away from God because of sin. Our heavenly Father, too, will forgive our sins through Jesus Christ if we, as His disciples, humble ourselves to seek His reconciliation.

Psalm 30:2, 4-6, 11-13

- As Christian stewards, we have God's great gift of forgiveness when we fail to follow His commands.

Fifth Reading – Isaiah 55:1-11

- Our heavenly Father promises His comfort and nourishment to those who seek Him. God expects us, as faithful stewards, to follow His Word and do His will throughout the world.

Psalm – Isaiah 12:2-6

- In gratitude, we, as good stewards, give praise and thanking to the Lord for giving us courage and strength to follow Him as His disciples.

Sixth Reading – Baruch 3:9-15, 32-4:4

- In the sixth reading, Wisdom is depicted as a woman who assists God in His works. She is one we should seek as we try to walk in the way of God, in prudence and peace. Wisdom is also one of the seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit. In our daily prayer life as Christian stewards, do we ask the Holy Spirit for wisdom and guidance?

Psalm 19:8-11

- The law of the Lord, our God, is perfect, right, and trustworthy. May the hearts of good stewards rejoice in the blessings received by following His way.

Seventh Reading – Ezekiel 36:16-28

- In the seventh reading, the prophet Ezekiel blasts the ancient Israelite community for profaning God's name and worshipping false idols. Because of their sins, they are dispersed among the nations during the Babylonian exile. Yet, our heavenly Father forgave them, just as He forgives us out of His love for us. In return, God commands us to follow His law, even in the face of human laws that are contrary to His. As good Christian stewards, let us pray for strength in this modern world to be diligent in our obedience to God's laws as taught by the Church.

Psalm 42:3, 5; 43:3-4

- Good stewards desire to be with God forever. We praise and thank Him in song and instrument in His sacred house where we worship Him.

– or –

Psalm 51:12-15, 18-19

- God forgives us when we stray from His love. As good Christian stewards, we acknowledge our failings and ask God to create clean hearts in us.

Epistle – Romans 6:3-11

- St. Paul tells us that through our gift of Baptism, we die to sin and share in Christ's resurrection. We have life anew — a rebirth. Christian stewardship, too, requires a conversion of heart and mind — a new way of life. Where are we as Christian stewards on our stewardship journey?

Psalm 118:1-2, 16-17, 22-23

- The psalmist says it all for us: "*Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good, His mercy endures forever.*" We do well to thank and praise Him for His many gifts of grace.

Gospel – Luke 24:1-12

- Two angels tell Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Mary the mother of James, “*Why do you seek the living One among the dead? He is not here; He has been raised up.*” They left the tomb and proclaimed this great news to the apostles and other followers of Jesus. As Christian stewards, do our lives show witness to our belief in the Good News of the risen Christ?

Stewardship Thought

As our RCIA catechumens are Baptized, are Confirmed, and receive their First Holy Communion, may we, as good and faithful Christian stewards, welcome them with hospitable hearts to our faith communion. May we be examples of true Christian stewardship to them by the way we share our time, talent, and treasure with our parish communion in the light of our risen Lord!

Easter Sunday

First Reading – Acts of the Apostles 10:34, 37-43

- Jesus’ life culminated in His triumphant resurrection and victory over the cross. His gifts of forgiveness, salvation, and membership in His Church are open to all who believe in Him.

Psalm 118:1-2, 16-17, 22-23

- As Christian stewards, we are grateful for our many blessings received through the Lord’s goodness, mercy, and power that endure forever.

Second Reading – Colossians 3:1-4

- We can seek what is above by sharing what we have here on earth. This is what Christian stewardship is all about. We realize that anything we have here on earth is not nearly as important as being with Christ. Once we realize that, sharing what we have is easy (Used with permission from the Archdiocese of St. Louis, www.archstl.org/Stewardship, Stewardship Bulletin Inserts, December 2007 – March 2008).

– or –

Second Reading – 1 Corinthians 5:6-8

- Through the Sacrament of the Eucharist, we as a Christian community are renewed in sincerity and truth.

Gospel – John 20:1-9

- Christ is risen! The disciples saw His wrappings in the tomb and believed in Him. God, our heavenly Father, gives us the greatest gift of all — salvation through His Son, Jesus.

Stewardship Thought

In the second reading today, St. Paul reminds the Colossians that they have been raised with Christ, exhorting them to “*think about the things above rather than things of earth.*” We, too, have been raised with Christ. Let us rejoice and be glad! See Colossians 3:2 (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 26).



Second Sunday of Easter (Divine Mercy)

First Reading – Acts of the Apostles 5:12-16

- Out of faith and humble service, St. Peter and the other apostles performed many signs and miracles for the people in the early days of the Church. As a result, many joined. As Christian stewards, does our daily example of discipleship in Christ help draw people of today to the faith?

Psalm 118:2-4, 13-15, 22-24

- In troubled times, faithful stewards gratefully rejoice in the day the Lord has made, and the strength and courage He gives us. His mercy and love is everlasting.

Second Reading – Book of Revelation 1:9-13, 17-19

- In the second reading, Jesus tells John in his vision, “*There is nothing to fear.*” He has overcome death. During difficult times, these are comforting words to faithful stewards.

Gospel – John 20:19-31

- How many times along our stewardship journey do we find ourselves being a “doubting Thomas” before we humbly profess, “*my Lord and my God*”?

Stewardship Thought

“*Blessed are they who have not seen and yet believe,*” Jesus says in today’s Gospel. For those who have not seen to believe, however, we must be good stewards of our faith, living it joyfully and sharing it generously. Then, in our time too, “*men and women in great numbers*” will be “*added to the Lord.*” See John 20:29; Acts 5:14 (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 26).

Third Sunday of Easter

First Reading – Act of the Apostles 5:27-32, 40-41

- In this first reading, Peter and the apostles are brought before the Sanhedrin because they have been fearlessly teaching in the name of Jesus. As Christian stewards and disciples of Christ, are we as bold when ill-treated for proclaiming His name?

Psalm 30:2, 4-6, 11-13

- Good Christian stewards give praise and thanksgiving to the Lord for His strength, protection, and good will.

Second Reading – Book of Revelation 5:11-14

- The Lamb of God that was slain for our salvation is praised and glorified for all eternity.

Gospel – John 21:1-19

- Sometimes in our lives, we fail to recognize what our Lord calls us to do until an event occurs that leads us to understand. As stewards on a journey, we trust in the patience of the Lord.



Stewardship Thought

In today's Gospel, Jesus tells Peter again and again, "*If you love Me, feed my sheep.*" He says the same to each of us, "If you love Me, use the gifts I have given you to serve your brothers and sisters." See John 21:15 (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 27).

Fourth Sunday of Easter

First Reading – Acts of the Apostles 13:14, 43-52

- In this first reading, Paul and Barnabas make it clear that salvation through Jesus Christ, our Lord, is open to all who believe in the Word of God and follow His teaching. Are we, as Christian stewards, open to the Word of God?

Psalm 100: 1-3, 5

- As Christian stewards, we strive to serve the Lord gratefully. We praise and worship Him as our Creator for His endless gifts of kindness and love.

Second Reading – Book of Revelation 7:9, 14-17

- Faithful stewards, willing to go through trials for the Lord's sake, will be refreshed and purified in the blood of the Lamb of God.

Gospel – John 10:27-30

- As Christian stewards, we know we can put our faith and trust in Jesus, the Good Shepherd. His ultimate gift to us is eternal salvation for those who listen to and follow Him.

Stewardship Thought

Paul and Barnabas encountered both violent rejection and joyful acceptance of the message that they preached. We, too, may meet with mixed reactions when we use our gifts in the service of God. But, the Gospel assures us, the reward for those who follow faithfully is eternal life (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 27).

Fifth Sunday of Easter

First Reading – Acts of the Apostles 14:21-27

- Do we, as Christian stewards, have the courage to persevere in the face of difficulties that arise because we are disciples of Christ?

Psalm 145:8-13

- In thanksgiving, good Christian stewards praise and glorify God, our heavenly Father, for His mighty works, His mercy and kindness.

Second Reading – Book of Revelation 21:1-5

- God's promise to the good and faithful steward is eternal life — His promise of eternal peace.

Gospel – John 13:31-35

- To be faithful disciples, we are called by Christ to love one another as He has loved us. Do we show the world we are His disciples by our love for one another?

Stewardship Thought

In today's Gospel, Jesus gives His disciples — and us — a new commandment: "*Love one another.*" Good stewards who spend their time and talents in service to others are well on their way to fulfilling this commandment. See John 13:34 (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 27).

Sixth Sunday of Easter

First Reading – Acts of the Apostles 15:1-2, 22-29

- Leaders of the early Church resolved differences through prayer and the Holy Spirit. When tensions occur between members of our parish communion, do we, as Christian stewards, ask the Holy Spirit to guide us as peacemakers with our brothers and sisters?

Psalm 67:2-3, 5-6, 8

- Christian stewards give thanks and praise to the Lord for His justice and mercy.

Second Reading – Book of Revelation 21:10-14, 22-23

- The imagery of the Lord, God the Almighty, Light of the new Jerusalem, and the Lamb as the lamp, is profound, as is the Church, the Bride of Christ. Are we good stewards of the Church through our gifts of time, talent, and treasure?

Gospel – John 14:23-29

- Faithful stewards give praise and thanksgiving to God, our heavenly Father, through His Son, Jesus Christ, for His gifts of love, peace, and the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

Stewardship Thought

Today's reading from Revelation offers a vision of the City of God, the new Jerusalem. "But," the Bishops' Pastoral on stewardship reminds us, "*that 'life to come' is in continuity with this present life through the human goods, the worthy human purposes, which people foster now*" (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 27).

The Ascension of the Lord

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

First Reading – Acts of the Apostles 1:1-11

- In gratitude, Christian stewards acknowledge God's gift of the Holy Spirit as proclaimed by Jesus, our risen Lord.

Psalm 47:2-3, 6-9

- Christian stewards praise God in song and instrument for His glory and rule in our lives.

Second Reading – Ephesians 1:17-23

- Stewards thank our heavenly Father for the gift of wisdom, which reveals His glory to us.
- We should always strive to be good stewards of His Church — the Body of Christ on earth.

Gospel – Luke 24:46-53

- Before His ascension, Jesus reminded the apostles what they had witnessed — His suffering, death, and resurrection. He fulfilled His Father’s promise of the Holy Spirit. As Christian stewards, do we call upon this great sacrifice and gift to guide us in truth and wisdom as we continue our stewardship journey?

Stewardship Thought

Jesus ascended into heaven, blessing His disciples and promising that they would soon receive the power of the Holy Spirit. We who have received that promised gift of the Spirit are now empowered to be His witnesses to the ends of the earth — to use our time and talents to spread the Good News of salvation (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 34).

Seventh Sunday of Easter

(When the Ascension is not celebrated on Sunday)

First Reading – Acts of the Apostles 7:55-60

- Like Stephen, is our faith, as disciples of Christ, strong enough to be willing to give our life for the Gospel?

Psalm 97:1-2, 6-7, 9

- As faithful stewards, we acknowledge the justice and judgment of the Lord in His rule over all the earth.

Second Reading – Book of Revelation 22:12-14, 16-17, 20

- Stewardship is a conversion of mind and heart to be a disciple of the Lord, and accept Him as the Alpha and Omega — the Beginning and the End. Let us boldly proclaim, “*Come, Lord Jesus!*”

Gospel – John 17:20-26

- We, as Christian stewards, seek unity throughout the world through the love of our heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus.

Stewardship Thought

The second reading today contains the somber warning that Jesus is coming soon and will bring to each person the reward that his or her conduct deserves. Has my stewardship of the blessings entrusted to me been such that I could respond joyfully, “*Amen! Come, Lord Jesus!*”? (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 27).

Pentecost Sunday

First Reading – Acts of the Apostles 2:1-11

- Our heavenly Father sent His gift of the Holy Spirit to the Apostles, giving them the courage and strength to go forth to proclaim the Good News of Jesus. As good stewards, do we call upon the Holy Spirit to inspire our lives?

Psalm 104:1, 24, 29-31, 34

- Good Christian stewards strive to please God, and are thankful for His many gifts, especially His tremendous gift of life in the Holy Spirit.



Second Reading – 1 Corinthians 12:3-7, 12-13

- The Body of Christ, the Church, consists of many parts, all gifts from our heavenly Father. What do we, as faithful stewards, bring to the Eucharistic table each weekend? How do we share our unique God-given gifts with our parish communion?

Sequence

- We thank our heavenly Father for His gift of the Holy Spirit, Who gives us comfort, healing, and forgiveness. He shows us the way to eternal salvation.

Gospel – John 20:19-23

- Peace is a gift generated from God the Father, through Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. How do we use our God-given talents to create peace among our parish communion?
- The power of the priest to forgive sins is also a gift from our Triune God. Do we, as Christian stewards, seek God's forgiveness by participating regularly in the Sacrament of Reconciliation?

Stewardship Thought

One miracle of Pentecost was that, despite their diversity, each listener heard God's word in his or her own language. The meaning for stewardship is that, by sharing the gifts poured out on us by the Holy Spirit, we will be empowered to meet the needs of our brothers and sisters, whatever they may be (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 27).

Most Holy Trinity

First Reading – Proverbs 8:22-31

- Father, Son, and Spirit are present before and after the creation of the earth. God is very pleased with His work. Are we responsible stewards of God's creation?

Psalm 8:4-9

- Christian stewards marvel at God's creation, and our place in His divine plan.

Second Reading – Romans 5:1-5

- Like St. Paul, we, as disciples of Christ, endure trials in our lives that, through our faith, will draw us closer to the Lord. When challenges arise, our hope is the strength we have in the love of God, through the Holy Spirit, which we gain by faith.

Gospel – John 16:12-15

- The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are one in the same God. If, as Christian stewards, our hearts and minds are open, He will guide us to the truth.

Stewardship Thought

Today's psalm reminds us that we have been crowned with glory and honor and given rule over the works of God's hands. But we must be good stewards, for the Lord will surely hold us accountable for the use of those gifts! (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 33).

Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ (*Corpus Christi*)

First Reading – Genesis 14:18-20

- In this first reading, the king and high priest Melchizedek brought out bread and wine, and offered a blessing to God for Abram, later named Abraham. As Christian stewards, do we understand the high priest's actions as a precursor of Christ's Eucharistic gift for us?

Psalm 110: 1-4

- Our heavenly Father promised to be with the king and high priest Melchizedek in the midst of his enemies. He, too, makes that promise to us.

Second Reading – 1 Corinthians 11:23-26

- At the Last Supper, Jesus left us Himself — His true presence in the Eucharist. In thanksgiving, do we, as His disciples, show our reverence and respect for this awesome gift?

Gospel – Luke 9:11-17

- Our Lord, Jesus Christ, with only five loaves and two fish, miraculously fed over 5,000 followers. This miracle foreshadows His institution of the Eucharist on the night before He died. For us, the Eucharist is the foundation of our faith. This tremendous gift sustains us spiritually in this life as we work toward our goal of eternal life with God, our heavenly Father.

Stewardship Thought

In today's Gospel, the disciples suggest that Jesus disperse the crowd so that they might *individually* seek food and lodging. The miracle of the feeding of the five thousand is Jesus' powerful reminder that when we *share* our gifts in His name there is always more than enough! (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 34).

Ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading – Kings 8:41-43

- God is in His temple, and all who come to this sacred place, including strangers, acknowledge it was built in His honor. As Christian stewards, how do we welcome the stranger who attends our parish church?

Psalm 117:1-2

- The Lord, our heavenly Father, is always faithful to us. As Christian stewards, are we always faithful to His teachings and commands?

Second Reading – Galatians 1:1-2, 6-10

- St. Paul warns of those who preach false gospels contrary to the Gospel of Christ. He condemns their actions. As we continue to strive to be disciples of Christ, we, too, must avoid the false teachings of moral relativism today, including abortion, embryonic stem-cell research, euthanasia, and other threats against human life. Christian stewards embrace the Church's teachings on the sanctity of all life to be protected from conception to natural death.



Gospel – Luke 7:1-10

- The centurion in today’s Gospel put his complete faith in Jesus, and his servant was healed. Can we, as stewards, claim the same faith in our Lord?

Stewardship Thought

We cannot “give to get.” Jesus cured the centurion’s servant in today’s Gospel, not because the centurion deserved God’s favor because of his kindness and generosity to the Jewish people, but because of his great faith. Good stewards know that “*steadfast is God’s kindness toward us*” and trust Him to supply what they need. See Psalm 117 (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 28).

Tenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading – Kings 17:17-24

- In this first reading, Elijah knows how precious the life of the widow’s son is to her, and, in faith, calls on God to bring him back to life. God answers his prayer. As faithful stewards, we, too, know all life is a gift from our heavenly Father, and must strive to protect the sanctity of life from conception to natural death.

Psalm 30:2, 4-6, 11-13

- Christian stewards give thanks and praise to God for His gift of faith to us, and for His mercy and goodness.

Second Reading – Galatians 1:11-19

- St. Paul relates how the Lord turned his life around through the revelation of Jesus. May our daily journey in Christian stewardship make us zealous followers of the Gospel message.

Gospel – Luke 7:11-17

- Out of Jesus’ pity for the poor widow, He brings her only son back to life. As disciples of Christ, how do we show our compassion to those who have lost loved ones?

Stewardship Thought

Both the first reading and the Gospel remind us powerfully that every breath we take is a gift from God. How conscious am I of this first and most precious gift? Am I a good steward of the life and time which I have been blessed? (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 29).

Eleventh Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading – 2 Samuel 12:7-10, 13

- King David repented of his sin, and the Lord forgave him. We, as Christian stewards, also know of God’s unending mercy, and realize that with contrite hearts and our participation in the Sacrament of Reconciliation, God will forgive any sin.

Psalm 32:1-2, 5, 7, 11

- In gratitude, we, as faithful disciples, humbly thank our God, through Christ, His Son, for His gift of forgiveness of sin.

Second Reading – Galatians 2:16, 19-21

- As faithful stewards, we live, not by merely following rules, but by our faith in Jesus Christ, Who, out of His tremendous love, gave Himself up for our salvation.

Gospel – Luke 7:36-8:3

- In today's Gospel, Jesus teaches us a profound lesson of love, contrition, and forgiveness. Jesus' lesson also teaches that we, as Christian stewards, must be hospitable and welcoming to visitors and newcomers in our parish.

Stewardship Thought

Like David in today's first reading, we sin when we begin to feel entitled and act as if what we have is ours by right, when we forget that everything we have is an unmerited gift from God. But God is gracious and forgiving — even when we use His gifts wrongly or squander them thoughtlessly — if, like David, we confess our guilt and ask His pardon (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 29).

Twelfth Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading – Zechariah 12:10-11

- In today's first reading, the prophet Zechariah prophesies many years before Christ's time on earth the mourning of His death on the cross. As disciples of Christ, we must be sensitive and give comfort to those who mourn the loss of loved ones.

Psalm 63:2-6, 8-9

- Good Christian stewards thirst for the Lord, marvel at His power and glory, and are grateful for the abundance He gives us.

Second Reading – Galatians 3:26-29

- Through our faith in Jesus, we are children of God. All who are baptized in Christ, regardless of status, are one in the Lord.

Gospel – Luke 9:18-24

- To become disciples of Christ, we must recognize Him, and be willing to pay the price of denying ourselves, taking up our cross daily to further God's kingdom here on earth in service to others.

Stewardship Thought

"Who do you say that I am?" Jesus asks Peter in today's Gospel. Does my use of the gifts and talents entrusted to me accurately reflect my answer to that same question? How willing am I to deny myself, take up my cross, and follow in His steps? See Luke 9:20 (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 29).

Thirteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading – Kings 19:16, 19-21

- In this first reading, Elijah, through God's intervention, calls Elisha to be his attendant. Elisha, too, will become a prophet, and in doing so, sacrifices everything to accept Elijah's invitation. Are we, as we continue our stewardship journey, open to hear God's call in our lives?



Psalm 16:1-2, 5, 7-11

- Day or night, we, as faithful stewards, rejoice in confidence that the Lord is always with us.

Second Reading – Galatians 5:1, 13-18

- In this second reading, St. Paul echoes Christ's commandment and states, "*You shall love your neighbor as yourself.*" As Christian stewards, how are we fulfilling this commandment in service to those in need?

Gospel – Luke 9:51-62

- On Jesus' journey to Jerusalem, He calls many to follow Him. Most gave reasons to delay answering His call. Do we, as we strive to embrace Christian stewardship as a way of life, answer His call unconditionally?

Stewardship Thought

In today's second reading, St. Paul provides a wonderful one-sentence summary of Christian stewardship: Out of love, place yourselves at one another's service (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 29).

SS. Peter and Paul, Apostles (June 29)

First Reading – Acts of the Apostles 12:1-11

- As good stewards, we know that our heavenly Father hears our prayers and we gratefully trust His guidance to follow His will, and not our own.

Psalm 34:2-9

- Faithful stewards make time daily to pray, to thank God for His abundant blessings, to praise Him, and to call out to Him when in need.

Second Reading – 2 Timothy 4:6-8, 17-18

- At the end of our lives here on earth, will we, as Christian stewards, be able to show that, through the Lord's strength and inspiration of the Holy Spirit, we did use our time, talent, and treasure to further God's kingdom?

Gospel – Matthew 16:13-19

- Peter recognized Jesus as his Lord and God, and was not afraid to say so. He boldly accepted Christ's call to be the "Rock" on which the Church is built to carry on Christ's ministry to the world. As faithful disciples, do we accept His call to our vocation in life?

Stewardship Thought

Saints Peter and Paul worked tirelessly to spread the Gospel. Not all can be apostles, but we, too, must be good stewards of *our* vocations, using the gifts we have been given in the service of God's kingdom (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 34).

Fourteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading – Isaiah 66:10-14

- As Christian stewards, we gratefully trust and rejoice that the Lord's peace and comfort will flow to us like a river.

Psalm 66:1-7, 16, 20

- As faithful stewards, we sing praise to the Lord, our God, for His wondrous deeds, and His kindness and mercy to us.

Second Reading – Galatians 6:14-18

- St. Paul reminds us that all who strive to become disciples of Christ will become a new creation, and be rewarded with the Lord's gifts of peace and mercy.

Gospel – Luke 10:1-12, 17-20

- In today's Gospel, Jesus commissions the seventy-two to go out and spread the Good News about God's kingdom. Interestingly enough, He asks them to accept the generosity of others for food and housing. The Church today still relies on our generosity to carry out its mission. Are we, as Christian stewards, making a prayerful and well thought out sacrificial gift to the Lord of the first fruits of our labors, or do we give only what is left of our funds?

Stewardship Thought

"The harvest is rich," Jesus tells the seventy-two in today's Gospel, *"but the workers are few."* The situation is the same today. How can *I* help with God's harvest? Am *I* called into the field? Am *I* one who could provide food or shelter or wages to those who toil in the fields of the Lord? See Luke 10:2 (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 29).

Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading – Deuteronomy 30:10-14

- Moses encouraged the ancient Israelites to believe whole-heartedly in the Lord God, and follow His commandments. Their faith was not somewhere up in the sky, but already in their hearts. As Christian stewards on our journey, we understand God is always near us.

Psalm 69:14, 17, 30-31, 33-34, 36-37

- We, as faithful stewards, rejoice in knowing that whatever the need, our Lord is there to provide strength, comfort, and healing.

Second Reading – Colossians 1:15-20

- St. Paul teaches that Christ *"... is the head of the body, the Church."* All was created through Him and for Him, and in Him everything continues in being. What awesome truths for us as we strive to embrace Christian stewardship as a way of life.

Gospel – Luke 10:25-37

- In today's Gospel, Jesus gives us the parable of the good Samaritan. "Good Samaritan" even in our times means one that helps others in need. As Christian stewards, are we Good Samaritans towards others?



Stewardship Thought

The good Samaritan was also a good steward, giving his time and treasure to meet his neighbor's need. At the end of this familiar story, Jesus urges His hearer — and us — to go and do the same! (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 29).

Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading – Genesis 18:1-10

- In today's first reading, Abraham was a gracious host to his three guests, and welcomed them into his house. Creating an atmosphere of hospitality in Abraham's example is a hallmark of a successful stewardship parish. As Christian stewards, do we create a welcoming environment in our parish communion?
- The Lord, through His angels, tells Abraham that he and Sarah, though aged, would have a son within a year. As faithful stewards, do we believe that, through prayer, anything is possible with God?

Psalm 15:2-5

- The faithful steward who lives a just life will live in the peace of the Lord.

Second Reading – Colossians 1:24-28

- St. Paul knows that in being a disciple of Christ, he will suffer for the Gospel, which he preached so all would believe in Christ. To be faithful stewards, we likewise must take up our cross daily and follow the Lord.

Gospel – Luke 10:38-42

- In our hectic world, there are many distractions that impact our pursuit of discipleship with our Lord, Jesus Christ. In today's Gospel, Jesus teaches Martha that her sister Mary has put aside these distractions to focus on the Lord's teachings. As Christian stewards on our journey, do we focus on the Word of the Lord?

Stewardship Thought

Today's readings speak of hospitality. Abraham, who cheerfully did for his guests all that desert hospitality required, was rewarded with his heart's desire — a son. Martha also busied herself with all the details of hospitality, but grudgingly and with complaint. Am I a cheerful or a grudging giver? (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 29).

Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading – Genesis 18:20-32

- Abraham challenges the Lord to show His mercy, even to grave sinners. God, our heavenly Father, is kind and merciful, even when we fail as stewards of His blessings.

Psalm 138:1-3, 6-8

- We, as Christian stewards, praise God, knowing that in times of distress, He will strengthen us and answer our prayers.

Second Reading – Colossians 2:12-14

- In this second reading, St. Paul reminds us that Christ, through His death and resurrection, freed us from all sin. How do we, as Christian stewards, respond to new life in Christ through this tremendous gift of forgiveness and reconciliation?

Gospel – Luke 11:1-13

- In today's Gospel, Jesus teaches His disciples — and us — how to pray, and to be persistent in prayer. Christian stewardship begins with grateful prayer to God for all His blessings to us. Prayer is how we communicate with God. As we continue our journey in stewardship, do we make time for daily prayer?

Stewardship Thought

Jesus is describing God's immeasurable generosity when He says in today's Gospel, "*Whoever asks, receives; whoever seeks, finds; whoever knocks, is admitted.*" But it should also be the description of us as Christian stewards — those seeking to follow Christ by using our gifts in service to others. See Luke 11:10 (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 30).

Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading – Ecclesiastes 1:2; 2:21-23

- This first reading warns that the quest for wealth and property is all done in vain. As Christian stewards, God's wisdom reveals to us that material riches are only temporary. Instead, we should seek what is lasting in Him.

Psalm 90:3-6, 12-14, 17

- We, as faithful stewards, gratefully sing praise to the Lord for the love and care He gives us.

Second Reading – Colossians 3:1-5, 9-11

- In today's second reading, St. Paul encourages all peoples to take off the old self of worldly desires and put on a new self in Christ. Christian stewardship also requires a conversion of mind and heart to become a disciple of Christ Jesus.

Gospel – Luke 12:13-21

- Jesus warns in today's Gospel against greed and storing up of earthly possessions. We, as Christian stewards, know that at the end of our lives, God will ask an accounting of how we used our God-given gifts of time, talent, and treasure to further His kingdom and help the needy. If the Lord called us today, how would we answer?

Stewardship Thought

Jesus urges us to be rich in what matters to God. The psalmist warns us against hardening our hearts. Are our hearts open to what really matters? (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 30).

Transfiguration of the Lord (August 6)

First Reading – Daniel 7:9-10, 13-14

- We, as good Christian stewards, recognize God as Lord and King of our lives. How do we use our God-given talents to praise and serve Him?

Psalm 97:1-2, 5-6, 9

- The Lord is King and the Most High. His justice reigns in heaven and on earth. In gratitude, how do we glorify His Holy Name?

Second Reading – 2 Peter 1:16-19

- Peter witnessed our heavenly Father proclaiming to the world during Jesus' Transfiguration that He is "*well pleased*" with His Son. Would He also be pleased with how we are using our time, talent, and treasure to embrace His kingdom?
- Peter and the other apostles were prophets. As faithful stewards, are we listening to the prophets of the Church today?

Gospel – Luke 9:28-36

- As we use God's gifts to further His work, we are confident that through His gift of faith and our good deeds, as His faithful disciples, we, too, can have a "mountain top" experience with our Lord, Jesus Christ.

Stewardship Thought

In the Gospel today, Peter yearns to *do* something to make concrete the Transfiguration he had witnessed. But to be a good steward of this spiritual gift, he was instructed to *be still*, to *listen* to Jesus, and to *wait* for His direction. Good advice for us, too! (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 34).

Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading – Wisdom 18:6-9

- For the ancient Israelites, the first Passover must have been a frightening experience. Yet, they placed their faith and put their courage in the Lord to deliver them and save them from their enemies. In frightening and difficult times, do we, as Christian stewards, put our trust in the Lord for strength and courage, or do we seek other sources?

Psalm 33:1, 12, 18-22

- The Lord responds to stewards who put their total faith and trust in Him. We praise and glorify Him at all times for His kindness to us.

Second Reading – Hebrews 11:1-2, 8-19

- St. Paul relates the deep faith Abraham, Sarah, and their descendants had in the Lord's goodness. As faithful stewards on our own journey, we do not know where God's plan will take us, but we do know that we must place our faith and trust in Him.

Gospel – Luke 12:32-48

- In today's Gospel, Jesus says, "*Much will be required of the person entrusted with much, and still more will be demanded of the person entrusted with more.*" This a strong message to us, as Christian stewards, that we indeed need to use at all times all of our God-given gifts of time, skills, and material resources to do God's work here on earth.

Stewardship Thought

Today's Gospel urges us to give generously, and thus build up treasure in heaven. For "*wherever your treasure lies, there your heart will be.*" See Luke 12:34 (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 30).

Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary (August 15)

First Reading – Revelation 11:19; 12:1-6, 10

- The woman described in the passages from Revelation can be seen as a symbol of Mary, the model Christian steward, or of the Church, the Bride of Christ. Either way, as we practice Christian stewardship and draw closer as disciples of our Lord, Jesus Christ, we are promised the gift of grace to do good and resist evil.

Psalm 45:10-12, 16

- As stewards, do we strive to follow Mary's example, and honor the Lord as our King?

Second Reading – 1 Corinthians 15:20-27

- Christ's message to us is one of unity because His kingdom is above all nations. At the "*resurrection of the dead,*" will we be able to show Jesus that we used our God-given talents and shared our "first fruits" to further His kingdom on earth?

Gospel – Luke 1:39-56

- Mary's canticle is a beautiful expression of her humbleness and praise to God in calling her to be the Mother of our Lord, Jesus Christ. As Christian stewards, do we follow her example of trusting God completely and always?

Stewardship Thought

"After Jesus, it is the Blessed Virgin Mary, who by her example, most perfectly teaches the meaning of discipleship and stewardship... She was called and gifted by God; she responded generously, creatively and prudently; she understood her divinely assigned role as 'handmaid' in terms of service and fidelity" (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops [USCCB], *Stewardship: A Disciple's Response*, Tenth Anniversary Edition, 2002, page 41).

Twentieth Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading – Jeremiah 38:4-6, 8-10

- God gave Jeremiah the gift of prophecy. Jeremiah's proclamations to the people were not well received, but it did not deter him from speaking the truth. As Christian stewards, how faithful are we in listening to the truth proclaimed by the teachings of the Church?

Psalm 40:2-4, 18

- We, as faithful Christian stewards, gratefully bless and praise God, knowing that, in times of trouble, we can put our full trust in the Lord.

Second Reading – Hebrews 12:1-4

- In this second reading, St. Paul encourages us, who strive for discipleship with Christ, to focus on Jesus and persevere through the inspiration of our Lord's endurance of the cross. Do we, trusting in the strength of our Lord, continue to seek His grace with our struggle against sin?

Gospel – Luke 12:49-53

- Practicing our discipleship with the Lord, may cause divisions in our families. As faithful stewards through our Baptism, are we strong enough to follow Jesus regardless of the consequences?

Stewardship Thought

In today's second reading, St. Paul encourages us not to grow weary or lose heart, but to persevere in following Jesus. Our willingness to give of ourselves, even in the face of conflict and division, is one way to measure our discipleship (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 30).

Twenty-First Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading – Isaiah 66:18-21

- God, our heavenly Father, sent out His messengers throughout the world so that all may know His glory, and come to worship Him on His holy mountain, Jerusalem. Do we accept His invitation?

Psalm 117:1-2

- In gratitude, we, as Christian stewards, praise and glorify the Lord for His enduring kindness and fidelity to us.

Second Reading – Hebrews 12:5-7, 11-13

- In this second reading, St. Paul encourages faithful stewards to endure trials that may cause great pain and suffering, because this "*discipline*" produces the "*fruit of peace and justice*".

Gospel – Luke 13:22-30

- Our heavenly Father desires that all be saved through His Son, Jesus Christ. The Church teaches that we all have free will to choose between good and evil. Are we, on our journey as disciples, making good choices?
- Jesus proclaims, "*Some who are last will be first, and some who are first will be last.*" In God's kingdom, it does not matter who you are, where you live, or what you have gained here on earth. You will be held accountable only for how you used God's gifts of time, talent, and material resources to serve the Lord and your neighbor.

Stewardship Thought

Today's reading from Isaiah describes the Israelites bringing their offering to the Lord "*in clean vessels.*" The gift of myself — my patient endurance and fidelity to the will of God — is as important as the monetary gift I offer. See Isaiah 66:20 (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.* page 30).

Twenty-Second Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading – Sirach 3:17-18, 20, 28-29

- As Christian stewards, we strive to conduct our lives, not in arrogance, but in humility with our Lord.

Psalm 68:4-7, 10-11

- Faithful stewards are glad and rejoice before God, our heavenly Father, for His care of those in need.

Second Reading – Hebrews 12:18-19, 22-24

- As Christian stewards, we are drawn to God, in festal joy, through Jesus and the new covenant.

Gospel – Luke 14:1, 7-14

- In today's Gospel, Jesus invites us to be humble, and to take care of the poor, the sick, the crippled, and the blind — those who cannot repay us. The faithful steward's efforts will surely be blessed.

Stewardship Thought

In the Gospel today, Jesus warns us not to give in to hopes of repayment, but to give openhandedly to the poor and needy. That sort of giving mirrors the bountiful giving of God, and Jesus assures us it is blessed indeed! (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 30).

Twenty-Third Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading – Wisdom 9:13-18

- The Holy Spirit guides us, as Christian stewards, away from the burdens of earth and on the straight path to gain our eternal salvation.

Psalm 90:3-6, 12-17

- The psalmist says, "*... prosper the work of our hands for us! Prosper the work of our hands.*" Christian stewards rejoice in the glad understanding that our prosperity comes from God's kindness.

Second Reading – Philemon 9-10, 12-17

- In this letter, St. Paul teaches us about the oneness of mankind in Christ, regardless of status. Do we, as Christian stewards, welcome everyone as our brother or sister in the Lord?

Gospel – Luke 14:25-33

- In today's Gospel, Jesus asks us to give up our possessions to be His disciples, a counter-cultural statement in today's society. On our continuing journey to make Christian stewardship our way of life, do we let go of possessions that have mastered us, or are we still mastered by them?

Stewardship Thought

Jesus tells the crowd that only those who renounce all of their possessions can be His disciples. Is He truly asking us to give up *everything*? Perhaps instead, He is trying to help us see that everything we think we own is really a gift from God. Good stewards know that and strive to use those gifts accountably (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 30).

The Exaltation of the Holy Cross (September 14)

First Reading – Numbers 21:4-9

- Do we complain against God when life is not going well, or do we follow the route of the faithful steward, and put our faith and trust in our heavenly Father, Who will deliver us from our plight?

Psalm 78:1-2, 34-38

- God, our heavenly Father, in His infinite mercy, forgives us when we sin against Him. As Christian stewards, do we show forgiveness to those who wrong us?

Second Reading – Philippians 2:6-11

- Christ's example gives us the model for placing the needs of others above our own interests — by humbling Himself, God rewarded and glorified Him.

Gospel – John 3:13-17

- Because of God's love, He gave us His only Son as a gift to all people and, through Christ's death and resurrection, eternal life for all who believe in Him. As Christian stewards, how do we show our gratitude for this great gift of our salvation?

Stewardship Thought

Even though the Lord led them out of Egypt and provided for their every need, the people in today's first reading were complaining and ungrateful. Does my stewardship of God's gifts show that I know from whom they came and am grateful? (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 34).

Twenty-Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading – Exodus 32:7-11, 13-14

- As stewards on a journey, what modern day idols must we avoid that prevent us from discipleship with our Lord, and from making stewardship a way of life?
- Christian stewards are grateful for God's faithfulness and kindness.

Psalm 51:3-4, 12-13, 17, 19

- As faithful stewards, we take comfort in God's mercy, love, and forgiveness in His dealings with us in spite of our sins.

Second Reading – 1 Timothy 1:12-17

- In gratitude, practicing Christian stewards give praise and glory to God, our heavenly Father, through His Son, Jesus Christ, for His abundant gifts of mercy and forgiveness of our sins.

Gospel – Luke 15:1-32

- In today's Gospel, Jesus tells a parable in three parts: the shepherd who loses one of a hundred sheep; the woman who loses one coin out of ten; and one of the most familiar stories in the Gospels: the prodigal son. In each case, great rejoicing occurs at the finding of the lost sheep, the missing coin, and the lost son. We, as faithful stewards, take comfort in knowing that if we stray from our heavenly Father's love and mercy, we can be welcomed back to the parish communion, and reconciled with God through the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Stewardship Thought

We can hear God speaking to us today in the words of the father to his elder son: "*You are with me always and everything I have is yours.*" What is my response to such remarkable generosity? Do I give joyfully and generously as God gives to me? See Luke 15:31 (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 31).

Twenty-Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading – Amos 8:4-7

- In dealing with others, the good and faithful steward is fair and does not cheat his neighbor.

Psalm 113:1-2, 4-8

- God, our heavenly Father, is deserving of glory and praise, for He lifts up the poor and lowly.

Second Reading – 1 Timothy 2:1-8

- As faithful disciples to Christ's teaching, we pray for our national, state, and local civic leaders that they seek justice for all, and their minds and hearts be converted to the truth of God's directive to protect all life from conception to natural death.

Gospel – Luke 16:1-13

- In today's Gospel, Jesus tells His disciples, "*You cannot serve both God and money.*" As Christian stewards, we know we are to use our material blessings to further God's work here on earth. But the question is: where do our hearts lie?

Stewardship Thought

The dishonest manager in today's parable knew how to manipulate money to his advantage. But the Gospel warns that no one can serve both God and money. Which do I serve? Is my stewardship such that anyone can tell? (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 31).

Twenty-Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading – Amos 6:1, 4-7

- In this first reading, the prophet Amos is critical of the elite that live the “good life” while others suffer greatly. As Christian stewards, how compassionate are we to those suffering and in need? How do we use our resources from God to help the less fortunate?

Psalm 146:7-10

- Our heavenly Father blesses the faithful steward who keeps the faith, secures justice for the oppressed, and gives food to those in need.

Second Reading – 1 Timothy 6:11-16

- In today’s second reading, St. Paul encourages those loyal to God to, “... *pursue righteousness, devotion, faith, love, patience, and gentleness*” and “*to keep God’s commands.*” Are we, as stewards on a journey, heeding his advice?

Gospel – Luke 16:19-31

- In today’s Gospel, Jesus warns the Pharisees — and us — through the parable of Lazarus and the rich man, that the rich man committed very serious sin by ignoring the needs of the poor and hungry. To faithful Christian stewards, the task of relieving hunger throughout the world seems overwhelming. Yet, our faith in the Lord gives us hope that we can make a difference by sharing our blessings with our neighbor in need.

Stewardship Thought

The sin of the rich man in today’s parable was not that he was rich, but that he failed to share his wealth with the beggar at his gate. He knew Lazarus, perhaps walked by him every time he came in or out, but did nothing to relieve his suffering. Is there a Lazarus in my life? What am I doing to help? (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 31).

Twenty-Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading – Habakkuk 1:2-3; 2:2-4

- In today’s first reading, the prophet Habakkuk reminds us that in spite of misery and strife around us, “*the just one, because of his faith, shall live.*” Are we as Christian stewards, true to this vision?

Psalm 95:1-2, 6-9

- As Christian stewards, we give praise and glory to God, our heavenly Father, Who created us, leads us, and gifts us with His abundant blessings.

Second Reading – 2 Timothy 1:6-8, 13-14

- In this second reading, St. Paul reminds us of the strength God gives us through the Holy Spirit in order to defend our faith. This strength enables lay witnesses to proclaim their personal stewardship journey.

Gospel – Luke 17:5-10

- Jesus asks us, as His servants, to do His will through our complete faith in Him, there is no minimum.

Stewardship Thought

When will I have given enough — of my income, of my time, of my talents? Today's Gospel suggests that only *total* stewardship will do: "*When you have done all you have been commanded to do, say, 'We are useless servants. We have done no more than our duty.'*" See Luke 17:10 (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 31).

Twenty-Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading – 2 Kings 5:14-17

- Through Elisha, God healed Naaman. In gratitude, Naaman offered back to Elisha a gift and asserted that he would now worship the true God. As Christian stewards, what gratitude do we show the Lord, our God, for His abundant blessings?

Psalm 98:1-4

- As faithful Christian stewards, we praise our heavenly Father in word and song for His wondrous deeds and our salvation.

Second Reading – 2 Timothy 2:8-13

- To be disciples of Christ, we, like St. Paul, must be willing to endure much for His sake, confident in the strength given us through the Gospel.

Gospel – Luke 17:11-19

- In today's Gospel, Jesus healed ten lepers. Yet, only one came back to thank Him; the rest only followed the directions under the law. As we embrace stewardship, are we sincere in thanking our Lord for everything in our lives?

Stewardship Thought

Jesus healed ten lepers in today's Gospel. Only one (ten percent) came back to say thank you. I, too, have received many blessings from the Lord — indeed, all I am and all I have is a gift! How and how often have I remembered to thank Him? (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 31).

Twenty-Ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading – Exodus 17:8-13

- Faithful stewards know that in our life battles, through our faith communion, God will deliver us.

Psalm 121:1-8

- Christian stewards know God, our heavenly Father, watches over us as our protector and guardian against all evil. Are we persistent in calling on His name?



Second Reading – 2 Timothy 3:14-4:2

- In this second reading, St. Paul encourages us to keep faithful to what we have learned from Scripture, and to use it as a learning tool in drawing closer to Jesus Christ, and through Him, to our salvation. The Church, through our Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI, encourages all the faithful to read and understand the Bible.
- As we continue our stewardship journey, do we make it a habit to pray and find inspiration daily from reading the Sacred Scripture?

Gospel – Luke 18:1-8

- In today's Gospel, Jesus encouraged His disciples to pray always and, through the parable of the widow and the judge, to be persistent in their prayer. Our journey into stewardship begins with the fundamental principle of grateful prayer. It is our direct communication with God that draws us closer to Him. Do we, as Christian stewards, make time for daily prayer?

Stewardship Thought

Today's theme is perseverance — Moses keeping his hands upraised throughout the battle, Paul urging Timothy to stay with the task of preaching and teaching, and the widow appealing to the corrupt judge. To be faithful stewards of God's gifts, we, too, must persevere in the roles to which we are called (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 31).

Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading – Sirach 35:12-14, 16-18

- Our God is a God of justice. He hears the cry of the poor and blesses those who willingly serve Him. How do we, as faithful stewards, use our resources to help the poor and oppressed?

Psalm 34:2-3, 17-19, 23

- We, as Christian stewards, bless and praise the Lord for His strength in helping us confront evil and His encouragement in difficult times.

Second Reading – 2 Timothy 4:6-8, 16-18

- As Christian stewards, are we faithful in following Christ's way? Do we continue to trust our Lord when others abandon us?

Gospel – Luke 18:9-14

- In today's Gospel, Jesus teaches us about prayerful humility in His story of the Pharisee and the tax collector. How humble and grateful is our approach to God for His infinite mercy and kindness?

Stewardship Thought

Both the first reading and today's psalm say clearly that the Lord hears the cry of the poor. Have I been given the gifts — of time or money or abilities — to be the means by which God answers their need? (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 31).

All Saints (November 1)

First Reading – Revelation 7:2-4, 9-14

- Faithful stewards know the white garment of salvation comes from and through Christ as symbolized in the Sacrament of Baptism, which washes away the stain of sin.
- As disciples of Christ, we strive to build our relationship with God through prayer, meditation, and adoration.

Psalm – 24:1-6

- Do we strive, like the saints, to be Christ's faithful stewards with sinless hands and clean hearts?

Second Reading – 1 John 3:1-3

- God's great love calls us to be His faithful children. Are we using our time and talents to lead virtuous lives, so that by our example, the world will know we are Christ's disciples?

Gospel – Matthew 5:1-12

- To be good Christian stewards, we must make every effort to live the Beatitudes. As faithful stewards, we profess to follow Christ's example by losing our lives completely in His service to others.

Stewardship Thought

Today's psalm makes clear that we and everything we think we own actually belongs to God instead: "*The Lord's are the earth and its fullness, the world and those who live in it.*" We are *stewards*, not owners, of our own lives and all we possess! See Psalm 24 (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, pages 34-35).

The Commemoration of all the Faithful Departed (All Souls – November 2)

First Reading – Wisdom 3:1-9

- God grants peace in death to faithful stewards who strive to live holy lives, faithful to Him.
- Our heavenly Father gives us grace and peace, and is merciful to us always.

– or –

First Reading – Daniel 12:1-3

- We, as faithful stewards, strive to live just and holy lives pleasing to God, Who will judge us on our last day according to our actions.

Psalm 23:1-6

- Just as the Lord, our Shepherd, refreshes our souls, we, as good Christian stewards, should extend a spirit of hospitality in our home and in our parish communion.

Second Reading – Romans 5:5-11

- As Christian stewards, we put our hope in God, Who does not disappoint, but instead pours out His love for us, especially through His Son, Jesus Christ, Who has redeemed us, even though we are sinners.

– or –

Second Reading – Romans 6:3-9

- We, as Christian stewards, believe that through our Baptism we receive grace to live with Christ. He died for our sins, and, if we die to sin, we, too, will unite with Him in our resurrection.

Gospel – John 6:37-40

- Are we, as faithful stewards, striving to follow our Lord’s will, and, by truly believing in His Son, seeking to be raised with Him on the last day?

– or –

Gospel – John 11:17-27

- Jesus states, “*I am the resurrection and the life; whoever believes in Me, even if he dies, will live ...*” All of us, even those who believe in our Lord, will experience physical death, but our souls will live forever. These are comforting words for us, who, as disciples of Christ, strive to follow His commandments and do His will.

Stewardship Thought

On the Feast of All Souls, we pray for those who have gone before us and stand in judgment before God. May we share with one another the treasure of love’s memory, and console one another with the assurance of Resurrection in Christ Jesus (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 35).

Thirty-First Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading – Wisdom 11:22-12:2

- Wisdom teaches us that God loves His creation, and that all things are His.
- In gratitude, faithful stewards give thanks and praise to God, our heavenly Father, for His mercy and love.

Psalm 145:1-2, 8-11, 13-14

- In a spirit of gratitude, we, as good Christian stewards, praise God for His mercy and kindness, faithfulness, and support in challenging times.

Second Reading – 2 Thessalonians 1:11-2:2

- If our Lord came today, would we, as Christian stewards, be prepared to render an account of how we have answered His call by using our God-given gifts of time, talent, and treasure to build His kingdom for His glory?

Gospel – Luke 19:1-10

- Through Zacchaeus’ faith, and his generosity to the poor and anyone he wronged, Jesus states that salvation has come to his house. How generous are we, as Christian stewards, in giving back to God a portion of our financial gifts — especially in difficult economic times?

Stewardship Thought

We are called to be good stewards of our personal vocations. St. Paul’s prayer for the Thessalonians is therefore ours, too — “*that our God may make us worthy of his calling and powerfully bring to fulfillment every good purpose and every effort of faith.*” See 2 Thessalonians 1:11 (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 32).

Thirty-Second Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading – 2 Maccabees 7:1-2, 9-14

- In this first reading, seven brothers and their mother exhibit faith and courage by dying as martyrs for not violating God’s law. They were strengthened in their belief that they would be returned to life in God. As Christian disciples, is our faith as strong as theirs?

Psalm 17:1, 5-6, 8, 15

- A faithful steward seeks the Lord’s strength and protection in following His path.

Second Reading – 2 Thessalonians 2:16-3:5

- As Christian stewards, we pray confidently for our heavenly Father to give us strength to do good works and to protect us against evil.

Gospel – Luke 20:27-38

- In today’s Gospel, the Sadducees, who did not believe in a resurrection after life, try to trick Jesus by presenting the story of seven brothers, who under Mosaic Law, should marry the same widow after the death of each preceding brother. The Sadducees asked who will be married to her in the next world. Jesus responded that earthly marriage as such does not exist in heaven where all are alive in God, and are like angels. As faithful stewards, our salvation is a tremendous gift to us who strive to use our God-given talents to do His will here on earth.

Stewardship Thought

In today’s second reading, St. Paul prays that the Thessalonians may be strengthened “*in every good deed and word.*” May, we, too, be strengthened and empowered to use our time and talents for the good of others. See 2 Thessalonians 2:17 (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 32).

The Dedication of the Lateran Basilica in Rome (November 9)

First Reading – Ezekiel 47:1-2, 8-9, 12

- Christian stewards are grateful for the gift of water as the source of life on earth that sustains our existence and, as a gift from God, symbolizes His grace flowing throughout the world.

Psalm 46:2-3, 5-6, 8-9

- In times of economic challenges, faithful stewards trust in God’s strength and guidance; He is with us always.

– or –

Psalm 84:3-6, 8-11

- As Christian stewards, we yearn to live in the house of God.

Second Reading – 1 Corinthians 3:9-11, 16-17

- St. Paul states, “*Do you not know that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?*” Are we good stewards of our spiritual, mental, emotional, and physical health?



Gospel – John 2:13-22

- As Christian stewards, are we dealing honestly with others in our financial matters, understanding that every material resource is God’s gift to us?

Stewardship Thought

As we pray today for an increase of spiritual gifts, we are reminded by the Bishops’ Pastoral Letter on stewardship that good stewardship of the Church “*means cherishing and fostering the gifts of all, while using one’s own gifts to serve the community of faith*” (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 34).

Thirty-Third Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading – Malachi 3:19-20

- In today’s first reading, Malachi prophesies about the end times, contrasting the fate of evildoers with that of His faithful ones. If the Lord called us home today, would He find that we have been wise and just in how we used our time, our gifts, and our treasure to do His will here on earth?

Psalm 98:5-9

- We, as grateful stewards, give glory and praise to the Lord by instrument and in song for He rules the earth with justice and equity.

Second Reading – 2 Thessalonians 3:7-12

- We, as Christian stewards, know God provides us the gift of employment. How are we using this gift to further His kingdom?

Gospel – Luke 21:5-19

- Jesus warns us to be prepared, for we know not when the end time will occur, nor even our own death. But Jesus also promises to protect us if we are faithful to Him. Are we faithful to His teachings and practicing the fundamentals of Christian stewardship in a way that would be pleasing to Him?

Stewardship Thought

Today’s readings paint a somewhat frightening picture of the end of time. But the Gospel ends with the assurance to faithful stewards that those who persevere will be saved (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 32).

Christ the King

First Reading – 2 Samuel 5:1-3

- In today’s first reading, David accepts his calling to be anointed king of Israel. Centuries later, Christ is born from this royal line of David. He, too, accepts His calling to do His Father’s will — even to die on a cross for our salvation. Do we, as disciples of Christ, accept our calling to further His kingdom, regardless of cost?

Psalm 122:1-5

- Like the ancient Israelites, we, too, as Christian stewards, honor the Lord’s house and give thanks and praise to His Holy Name.

Second Reading – Colossians 1:12-20

- In today's second reading, referring to Christ, St. Paul says, "... *all things were created through Him, and for Him.*" All creation gives Him honor; He is the head of the Body, the Church. Do we, as faithful stewards, strive to give God, our heavenly Father, through His Son, Jesus Christ, that same reverence and honor?

Gospel – Luke 23:35-43

- Jesus extends to us, as His disciples, the gifts of love and path to eternal salvation by His death on a cross and triumphant resurrection. We are reconciled with God in the example of the repentant thief. What gratitude do we show our Lord for these tremendous gifts?

Stewardship Thought

Today we celebrate Christ the King and are reminded that all was created through Him and for Him. Does my stewardship of the blessings entrusted to me give evidence that Christ is Lord of *my* life? (Our Sunday Visitor, *ibid.*, page 32).



PART FIVE:

The Annual Renewal

PART FIVE: THE ANNUAL RENEWAL

THE ANNUAL RENEWAL

An annual renewal of commitment to Christian stewardship is vital in order for a parish to maintain its importance in understanding discipleship in Christ. The annual renewal involves new parishioners, those who did not fully participate in the previous year and those who will be energized and reinvigorated by their recommitment.

The pastor and lay leadership of the parish should use the annual renewal as a time to evaluate the stewardship effort currently in place. Are people keeping their commitments? Are they extending the concept of stewardship into every corner of their lives? How does the parish compare spiritually and financially to what it was a year ago? Keep in mind that parishioners deserve an honest appraisal of their stewardship. Publishing a financial statement at least once a year or giving updates on parish ministries will help parishioners feel that they are an active part of the parish community.

As you establish your period of renewal for the next year, keep in mind:

- For the best results, plan your renewal period for a time when it will be the only major activity in the parish. Other activities competing for time and attention may minimize the importance of Christian stewardship.
- The pastor, associate pastors, religious, and parish office staff should all be present and available during the renewal period.

You might consider an annual gathering, such as a dinner, reception, or parish picnic, to focus your parish's attention on the rewards and challenges of Christian stewardship. This opportunity to call your people together in a celebration of sharing and giving can also serve as a time to remind everyone about the work remaining to be done. It will also give new parishioners an excellent opportunity to learn more about Christian stewardship and to see first hand its personal and parish-wide rewards. Parishioners who have not participated as fully as they might will have another tangible means of joining in — if they attend the gathering, they will feel the enthusiasm and commitment that may be missing in their own lives. Even parishioners who have been engaged in their own stewardship journey will find the renewal process valuable. They can use the event as a milestone from which to measure — and perhaps change — their level or type of involvement.

Like the initial invitation to the journey of Christian stewardship, there are three phases to the annual renewal of commitment to continue on the journey. On the following pages, you will find a comprehensive timetable that allows you to see the activity that is to take place in each of the phases. The phases are described briefly as follows:

Phase I is the preparation stage for the annual renewal process and begins prior to the activities of Week 1. While not as extensive as preparation for the initial invitation, there are tasks to be accomplished, such as recruiting volunteers and lay witnesses, and obtaining the materials necessary for an effective renewal effort.



Phase II of the annual renewal process begins in Week 1 with the mailing of Pastor Letter #1 and follows through the succeeding stewardship weekends up to and including Commitment Weekend. It is most effective when the Pastor Letters and others are personalized using computer document merge techniques.

Phase III is the follow-up process. This phase begins with the sorting of Commitment Forms that parishioners return on Commitment Weekend, sending acknowledgment letters, acknowledging volunteers in bulletin announcements, and following-up with non-respondents.

TIMETABLE II – CALENDAR FOR CONDUCTING A CHRISTIAN STEWARDSHIP ANNUAL RENEWAL INVITATION

Christian stewardship is a journey, not a program. Our commitment to stewardship should be renewed annually. We commit to home mortgages and automobile financing. Why shouldn't we commit to a life of discipleship in Jesus — and do it every year?

To allow your parish flexibility in conducting your stewardship annual renewal invitation at any time of the year, we suggest that you first establish the date of your Commitment Weekend, and then work backward to fill in the other dates of the renewal timetable. We suggest the following timetable for renewing Christian stewardship in the parish:

Week 1

- Insert 1st Bulletin Announcement.
- Order parish letterhead and envelopes from local printer.
- Schedule volunteers for mailings to parishioners.
- Design or order Commitment Form.
- Plan special activities, such as making posters or banners.
- Pastor and Stewardship Commission begin recruiting lay witnesses to speak at all Masses during Weekend 3.
- Mail: (1) Pastor's Renewal Letter #1 (end of Week 1).
(2) Brochure #1, *Christian Stewardship*.
(3) Brochure #2, *Praying to God with Grateful Hearts*.
(4) Brochure #3, *Nurturing our Family with Time and Love*.

Week 2

- Insert 2nd Bulletin Announcement.

Week 3

- Insert 3rd Bulletin Announcement.
- Mail: (1) Pastor Renewal Letter #2 (beginning of Week 3).
(2) Brochure #4, *Sharing our God-Given Gifts with the Parish Communion*.
(3) Brochure #5, *Giving Back to God the First Fruits of Our Labors*.

Weekend 3

- Lay Witness Presentation on Christian stewardship (emphasize prayer in thanksgiving for God's gifts of time, talent, and treasure, which we share with our parish communion).

Week 4

- Insert 4th Bulletin Announcement.
- Mail: Lay Witness Renewal Acknowledgment Letter (middle of Week 4).

Weekend 4

- Pastor's Homily on Christian Stewardship and Prayer.
- Optional – Hold a "ministry fair."

Week 5

- Insert 5th Bulletin Announcement.
- Mail: (1) Pastor Renewal Letter #3 (beginning of Week 5).
(2) Commitment Form.
(3) Lay Witness Presentation text
- Optional – Place Commitment Forms and pencils in the pews.

Weekend 5

STEWARDSHIP COMMITMENT RENEWAL WEEKEND

- Present completed Commitment Forms at Mass.
- Optional – In pew solicitation.

Week 6

- Insert 6th Bulletin Announcement (can be run more than one week).
- Mail: (1) Renewal Commitment Form Acknowledgment Letters to parishioners who have returned Commitment Forms (end of Week 6).
(2) Renewal Follow-up Letter to those who have not responded.

Volunteer Acknowledgment

- Insert Volunteer Acknowledgment Bulletin Announcement (can be inserted Week 6 or after)

SAMPLE RENEWAL BULLETIN ANNOUNCEMENTS

Following are suggested bulletin announcements for use during the annual Christian stewardship renewal process. You may adapt them to fit your parish's circumstances.

1st Bulletin Announcement

(Last year/A few years ago), our parish family was introduced to the biblical concept of Christian stewardship. We were invited to pray about stewardship as a way to give ourselves back to a generous and loving God, Who has blessed us abundantly. We were also invited to make a commitment to the Lord by putting in writing a pledge to share our many gifts with our parish family. Over the next few weeks, our parish family will again be invited to reflect on how we can live our lives as Christian stewards and to renew the annual written pledge of our gifts to God through our parish. Please prayerfully consider how you might recommit yourself to being a good steward of all the gifts God has entrusted to you and your family.

2nd Bulletin Announcement

Over this past week, you should have received a letter from [NAME THE PASTOR]. Enclosed with his letter were three brochures about Christian stewardship, prayer, and nurturing our family. Please take some time to reflect on these fundamental principles of Christian stewardship. In three weeks, our parish family will be invited to reflect on the importance of Christian stewardship, and to recommit to being good stewards through a written pledge of our gifts to God for the coming year.

3rd Bulletin Announcement

In the past week, [NAME OF THE PASTOR] sent everyone a letter reflecting on our annual commitment to a life of Christian stewardship. Enclosed with his letter were brochures discussing the sharing of our time and talents with the parish and community and giving back to God the "first fruits" of our labors. Please prayerfully reflect on these fundamental principles of Christian stewardship. In two weeks, our parish family will be invited to reflect on the importance of Christian stewardship in our lives and the life of our parish, and to recommit our gifts and financial resources to God for the next year. This weekend, we thank [NAMES OF LAY WITNESSES] for speaking at Masses about their family experiences in their stewardship journey and its impact on their lives.

4th Bulletin Announcement

Next weekend, [DATE], is Stewardship Commitment Renewal Weekend, when everyone in our parish family will be invited to recommit their time, talent, and income to the Lord for the next year. All of us can offer some service to the Lord, beginning with prayer, and we should prayerfully consider our sacrificial gift to the offertory collection. Please pray this week that our hearts be open to the possibility of giving more of ourselves and our income to our Lord, Jesus Christ.

5th Bulletin Announcement

God has given us many gifts. How do we use them? How do we commit them to the service of the Lord and our brothers and sisters in our parish this Stewardship Commitment Renewal Weekend? Today we are asked to recommit ourselves to be good stewards of the gifts God has entrusted to us, and to share our time, talent, and treasure as a sign of the love and gratitude we have for Him.

6th Bulletin Announcement (can be run more than one week)

Thank you to the many parishioners who returned their Commitment Forms last weekend. If you forgot to bring your Commitment Form today, it is not too late. Please drop it off or mail it to the parish office this week. Again, thank you for your recommitment and participation in this important event for our parish family.

Volunteer Acknowledgment Bulletin Announcement (can be run Week 6 or after)

For the last few weeks, we at [NAME OF PARISH] have been deepening our understanding of what it means to be a Christian steward and renewing our commitment to practice stewardship as a way of life. Preparation and implementation of our annual stewardship renewal depends on the dedicated work of many volunteers and the parish staff who shared their time and their talent in the variety of tasks required as we continue along our stewardship journey. I am personally grateful for their efforts and pleased to acknowledge their contribution to this important enrichment of our parish life. Please join me in thanking: [NAMES OF VOLUNTEERS AND STAFF].

Sincerely yours in Christ,
[NAME OF PASTOR]

SAMPLE RENEWAL PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL

Prayers of the Faithful — Week 1

That we be shown how to be good stewards of the many blessings God has entrusted to us so that we may use these blessings to build up His kingdom
... we pray to the Lord ...

Prayers of the Faithful — Week 2

For a deeper understanding of how the stewardship of our prayer life and nurturing our families brings us closer to Jesus Christ
... we pray to the Lord ...

Prayers of the Faithful — Week 3

For a deeper understanding of how the stewardship of our time, talent, and sacrificial offering brings us closer to the Lord
... we pray to the Lord ...

Prayers of the Faithful — Week 4

For all the parishioners contributing to our parish's needs, may our gifts be an expression of thanksgiving for the gifts God has given us
... we pray to the Lord ...

Prayers of the Faithful — Week 5

For the many blessings God has bestowed upon us, which are gratefully reflected by our Commitment Forms offered today, that these gifts may enable us to carry out more effectively the mission of our Church
... we pray to the Lord ...

Prayers of the Faithful — Week 6

That our parish family's ongoing stewardship education efforts open our hearts to live as disciples of Christ our Lord
... we pray to the Lord ...



SAMPLE PASTOR RENEWAL LETTER 1

[DATE]

[FAMILY NAME]
[ADDRESS]
[CITY, STATE ZIP]

Dear [NAME]:

Again this year, all of us at [NAME OF THE PARISH], including our new parishioners, will have an opportunity to renew our commitment to living the life of a good and faithful steward. As we reflect on God's many blessings in our lives, we prayerfully ask whether our corresponding gifts back to the Lord through our parish communion are in proportion to what He has given us. Many members of our parish family are making a most generous response and can attest to the sense of peace and the deepening of faith they have experienced by sharing their time, talent, and treasure with our parish and others.

Enclosed are three brochures. The first brochure, *Christian Stewardship*, will help us learn more about the true meaning of stewardship. The second brochure, *Praying to God with Grateful Hearts*, tells about the first fundamental principle of Christian stewardship, and will surely inspire you to continue your spiritual journey through a deeper prayer life. Even if you cannot participate in our invitation to share your time, talent, and treasure, you can make a valuable contribution by praying for the success of the parish and its programs. The third brochure about the second fundamental principle of Christian stewardship, *Nurturing Our Families with Time and Love*, will again challenge you to take a closer look at your family life.

My thanks to each of you for all you have done in the past, and for your continuing generosity to [NAME OF PARISH].

Sincerely yours in Christ,
[PASTOR'S NAME]
Pastor

Enclosure



SAMPLE PASTOR RENEWAL LETTER 2

[DATE]

[FAMILY NAME]

[ADDRESS]

[CITY, STATE ZIP]

Dear [NAME]:

Oftentimes, when parishioners hear the word “stewardship,” they think, “uh-oh, here goes the money talk again.” It’s a common misconception. In reality, the most important part of stewardship is thankful prayer, along with the sharing of our time, talent, and treasure. We as Catholics must remember that everything we have is from God and is for us to use wisely in His service. He asks us to share it with our family and friends, with our parish family, and with those less fortunate in our community, our nation, and the world.

In the past, I have discussed the need for parishioners to lend their time and talent to the parish. Our volunteers are our lifeblood, and we could not accomplish what we do without your help. I have enclosed a brochure for your prayerful reflection, *Sharing our God-Given Gifts with the Parish Communion*. This is one of the fundamental principles of Christian stewardship.

Sharing our treasure is another fundamental principle of stewardship. Our parish is sustained only by your financial support. Everything we do, such as faith formation, worship, and adult and children’s programs, is made possible through your offertory donation. I have enclosed a second brochure, *Giving Back to God the First Fruits of Our Labors*, and ask that you prayerfully reflect on this fundamental principle of Christian stewardship.

To continue our process of learning more about Christian stewardship, we will hear from [NAMES OF LAY WITNESSES] at all Masses this weekend. Please join me in welcoming them as they share their stewardship stories about how their families use their God-given gifts for the benefit of others and what it means in their families’ lives. I want to thank them in advance for their witness.

Your prayers and sharing of God’s gifts of time, talent, and treasure are sincerely appreciated. God bless you for your generosity!

Sincerely yours in Christ,

[PASTOR’S NAME]

Pastor

Enclosure



SAMPLE LAY WITNESS RENEWAL ACKNOWLEDGMENT LETTER

[DATE]

[FAMILY NAME]
[ADDRESS]
[CITY, STATE ZIP]

Dear [NAME]:

On behalf of the leaders of the commissions and organizations that are represented at [NAME OF PARISH] and myself, I sincerely thank you for sharing your personal Christian stewardship experience and its impact on your daily lives. Your testimony provided meaningful guidance and inspiration to our parish communion.

Our parish has been truly blessed with a faith communion that is prepared to take some extra steps in the practice of our discipleship with our Lord, Jesus Christ. I am pleased with the way our parish is responding to the renewal of our commitment to Christian stewardship. Your own testimony has played an important role.

Your prayers and sharing of God's gifts of time and talent are greatly appreciated. God bless you for your generosity!

Sincerely yours in Christ,
[PASTOR'S NAME]
Pastor



SAMPLE PASTOR RENEWAL LETTER 3 (COMMITMENT FORM LETTER)

[DATE]

[FAMILY NAME]

[ADDRESS]

[CITY, STATE ZIP]

Dear [NAME]:

I hope you have had the opportunity to read the letters and review the brochures reflecting on the fundamental principles of Christian stewardship that I have mailed to your home over the past several weeks. It is now time to prayerfully consider your commitment to stewardship as a way of life for the coming year.

Each of us is blessed in different ways. Every year we are asked to look at our blessings, our talents, and our financial resources to reflect on whether what we are returning to the Lord is appropriate in return for the great gifts He has given to us.

Enclosed is our parish Commitment Form. Please reflect on it and indicate which current ministries you wish to continue and any new ones you would like to begin during the coming year. Also, please recommit to put aside more time for prayer and spending more quality time with your family. Finally, I ask you to renew your financial commitment to the parish and encourage you to pray about what is an appropriate sacrificial gift in your family's circumstances. This will allow us to better budget our parish finances and human resources this next fiscal year.

This past weekend, we heard from [NAMES OF LAY WITNESSES]. I thank them for their witness. I enclose a copy of their testimony for your reflection. I hope that it will help provide some guidance and inspiration for you as we continue on our journey toward Christian stewardship.

I am touched by the continued generosity of all of our parishioners here at [NAME OF THE PARISH], and I am confident of your annual recommitment to our journey as a communion of Christian stewards.

Sincerely yours in Christ,
[PASTOR'S NAME]
Pastor

Enclosures

(See Sample Christian Stewardship Annual Commitment Form, Appendix II.)



SAMPLE RENEWAL COMMITMENT FORM ACKNOWLEDGMENT LETTER

[DATE]

[FAMILY NAME]
[ADDRESS]
[CITY, STATE ZIP]

Dear [NAME]:

Our parish has been truly blessed with a faith communion that is prepared to take some extra steps in the practice of our discipleship with our Lord, Jesus Christ. I am pleased with the way our parish has responded to our annual renewal invitation to Christian stewardship; your own response is most important in the life of our parish. Thank you again for reflecting on your life with God and for returning your Commitment Form. You are among the first members of our parish family to do so, and your leadership is sure to inspire others to follow your lead and make their personal commitments as well.

I am grateful that you have recommitted to spend time in daily prayer and quality time with your family.

I sincerely thank you for the recommitment you have made to share your God-given gifts of time and talent to the following ministries and activities in the parish: [MINISTRY AND SERVICE].

I also thank you for your recommitment to give back to God through the offertory collection in the amount of [AMOUNT OF COMMITMENT] for the [YEAR] calendar year.

None of us can ever truly comprehend God's unending love for us. As you can see from our parish's annual renewal response to the call to be better stewards of our gifts as published in the bulletin, we all are making a wonderful effort to show, by our own measure, that our love of God is also great and that we strive to follow Him as disciples.

Sincerely yours in Christ,
[PASTOR'S NAME]
Pastor

SAMPLE RENEWAL FOLLOW-UP LETTER

[DATE]

[FAMILY NAME]
[ADDRESS]
[CITY, STATE ZIP]

Dear [NAME]:

Recently, we offered informative presentations at Mass by some of our fellow parishioners and sent several mailings to you regarding our parish's annual recommitment to a life of Christian stewardship. This renewal process emphasized our need to enter into a more prayerful life, to spend more time with our families, to share our time and talent with our parish and community, and to give a portion of our material blessings back to God. The response to our effort has been very encouraging. More than [NUMBER] individuals and families have responded and recommitted to these fundamentals of Christian stewardship.

The annual renewal to Christian stewardship that we have undertaken during the past several weeks is very important to our parish family. I want to be sure that everyone has an opportunity to take part in our process of renewing and deepening our relationship with the Lord. We have not yet received your response and would like very much to invite you again to participate in our parish's stewardship journey.

Enclosed is a Commitment Form for your convenience. Please take time to proclaim your recommitment to prayer and your family as well as make a recommitment of sharing your time, talent, and financial resources with our parish communion. Please mail the Commitment Form, take it to the parish office, or drop it in the offertory collection at Mass.

God has blessed us in abundant fashion. We show our gratitude by being good stewards of His abundant gifts.

Thank you for your recommitment to our parish communion.

Sincerely yours in Christ,
[PASTOR'S NAME]
Pastor

Enclosure





PART SIX:
Family Finances

PART SIX: FAMILY FINANCES

The essence of Christian stewardship is giving thanks to our generous and merciful God for the many gifts He gives to each of us. In this manual, we have studied the fundamental principles of Christian stewardship: praying to God with grateful hearts, nurturing our family with time and love, sharing our God-given gifts with the parish communion, and giving to God the first fruits of our labors.

These last two principles emphasize our need as Christians to share and to give of our God-given gifts of time, talent, and treasure. But this stewardship does not end with the sharing of a portion of God's gifts through sacrificial giving. Faithful stewards must manage all of God's gifts prayerfully, wisely, and prudently. Consider this: If we use the biblical tithe — 10 percent of our income — as the benchmark for giving our treasure back to God, we still have 90 percent to manage as Christian stewards. That 90 percent rightfully belongs to God, and He expects us to manage it wisely in His service. God reminds us most forcefully in this telling passage in the words of Moses in the Book of Deuteronomy:

“Remember then, it is the Lord, your God, Who gives you the power to acquire wealth, by fulfilling, as He has now done, the covenant which He swore to your fathers. But if you forget the Lord, your God, and follow other gods, serving and worshiping them, I forewarn you this day that you will perish utterly” (Deuteronomy 8:18-19).

Moreover, in the Gospels, Jesus spends nearly as much time teaching us about the management of money and possessions as He does teaching about the kingdom of God. He must have thought the subject held important lessons for us.

Phil Lenahan, in his book, *7 Steps to Becoming Financially Free: A Catholic Guide to Managing Your Money* (Huntington, Indiana: Our Sunday Visitor Publishing Division, 2006.), 18-19, describes “God’s Plan for Your Finances”:

“When most people think about what it takes to successfully manage their money, what comes to mind are budgets, checkbook management, reconciling of bank accounts, monitoring of investments, and tax planning, among other things. Sure, these are all important...but there’s something even more crucial: The *attitude* you have toward money will do more for determining whether you become truly financially free than any other issue. In fact, I believe that people’s attitudes represent 90 percent of the reason that they either succeed or fail with their finances.

What do I mean by attitude? It starts with the role money plays in your life. Is it a means of fulfilling your God-given responsibilities, or is it an end in itself? Are your financial goals determined by the culture, with an emphasis on having? Or do they have as their foundation the sure-footed principles we find in Scripture and the teaching Tradition of our Catholic faith, which emphasized “being” over “having”?

The way you can achieve true financial freedom and peace is to recognize that *God has a plan for your life — including your finances*. He is our Father and wants what’s best for us. Our faith provides the answers we’re looking for, so we can develop



a healthy, wholesome, and holy attitude when it comes to how we manage our money. In fact, how you handle your money is one of the best indicators of the strength and vitality of your spiritual life. The Bible teaches about money on two levels. Many Bible references deal with principles that guide our attitude about money. These recognize an inherent tension that exists between our attitude toward money and our relationship with God. They help us place money in its proper perspective so that we can grow closer to the Lord. Other references, especially from the book of Proverbs, provide plenty of very practical guidelines for daily living.

For too long we've allowed a wall to separate our faith lives from our money. It's time we break down that barrier and move forward on the journey to true financial freedom — freedom from debt, learning to be generous, and knowing how to set godly priorities, which includes saving for the important things in life.”

In another publication Mr. Lenahan authored, *Finances for Today's Catholic Family* (Temecula, California: Financial Foundations for the Family, 1996.), 7, he sets forth “Five Principles You Can Bank On”:

1. Seek First the Kingdom of God.
2. Trust in the Providence of God.
3. Develop a Charitable Spirit.
4. Practice the Virtue of Temperance.
5. Develop Personal Responsibility.

While it is beyond the scope of this manual to delve in detail into practical ways of developing a spiritual attitude about family finances, it should be noted that prayerful, wise, and prudent money management is important in family relationships. Today's culture of spending, acquiring, and worrying about “having enough” leads to tensions that cause anxiety, divorce, substance abuse, and other ills that we read and hear about every day.

Most workshops and books about managing money cover charting current expenditures; composing a family spending plan, including reducing debt and increasing savings; investing; estate planning; and teaching children about managing money. As Christian stewards, we should approach these topics with the understanding that we are dealing with God's gifts to us.

Several organizations have developed materials for small groups in parishes to use during discussion sessions on managing money in a Christian spirit. These materials include guides for the discussion leader, study guides for participants, and charts and schedules for accumulating and organizing the family's financial information.

Two organizations have a Catholic approach to the study and discussion of family finances, and focus on the teachings in Scripture and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* about managing God's material gifts to us. They are Our Sunday Visitor Publishing Division and Crown Roman Catholic U.S.

Our Sunday Visitor Publishing Division's *7 Steps to Becoming Financially Free: A Catholic Small Group Study*, is produced by Phil Lenahan (and is discussed on page L-1). This is a kit of materials for conducting small group discussions on family finances. More information about this program is available at www.veritasfinancialministries.com.

Crown Roman Catholic U.S., www.crowncatholic.org, is part of Crown Financial Ministries, an interdenominational approach to the spiritual discussion about money management. Crown Roman Catholic U.S. supplements these materials with reflections on Catholic thought and the *Catholic Catechism*.

Because the spiritual approach to managing our money and possessions is an important element of Christian stewardship, we strongly encourage parishes to consider developing a study program along the lines of these resources.



PART SEVEN:

Christian Stewardship for Children and Youth

PART SEVEN: CHRISTIAN STEWARDSHIP FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

As the primary religious educators for their children, parents need to know not only what Christian stewardship is, but also how to share that message with their children. Parents learn this through the ongoing Christian stewardship education and formation process in the parish. Christian stewardship education helps adults understand the theology of stewardship, which they can then share with their children at their comprehension level.

Christian Stewardship for Children and Youth in the Parish and the School

Christian stewardship education and formation helps children and youth realize that they are a unique gift from God, understand that they have special talents and gifts, and discover all that God has given them. This can be accomplished in a number of ways during religious education and in school classrooms at all grade levels. However, one lesson or activity is not enough. Just as Christian stewardship education is an ongoing process for adults, we must also continually educate children and youth. In addition, effective Christian stewardship education in school and parish religious education programs cannot be effective unless an ongoing Christian stewardship awareness process is in place in the parish, as well as support from the following:

- Pastor
- Parish Pastoral Council
- Stewardship Commission
- Stewardship Implementation Committee
- School principal and staff
- Religious Education staff

Christian stewardship education as an integral part of the religious education program in the parish and in the school can begin with one or more of the suggestions described below. As the parish progresses in the Christian stewardship way of life, additional activities can be added.

Children and Youth Stewardship Envelopes

Envelopes designed specifically for children and youth are available from most parish envelope companies. Many of these envelopes allow children to describe their special stewardship activities, such as helping with household chores. If children earn an allowance, the envelopes would allow them to make a small monetary offering each week. The practice of placing their envelope in the offertory will assist them in understanding the fundamental principles of Christian stewardship.

Children's Corner in the Bulletin

In the parish bulletin, highlight the time and talent offering entries the children and youth make on their envelopes. Include pictures of parish and school children participating in stewardship activities, such as preparing Christmas baskets for needy families, as graphic examples of practical Christian stewardship.



SAMPLE SERVICE PROJECTS FOR PARISH CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Family Projects

- Plant a tree for Earth Day
- Clean the house and/or yard of an elderly or sick neighbor
- Participate in a neighborhood clean-up day
- Participate in a walk for a charity, such as Focus: HOPE WALK and Diversity Festival
- Work at a soup kitchen or food bank

Pre-school Projects

- Have a birthday party for Jesus
- Participate in a Lenten project, such as “Operation Rice Bowl”

Elementary School Projects

- Perform appropriate Pre-school Projects listed above
- Pack lunches for the homeless
- Collect personal care items and medicines (shampoo, lotion, pain reliever, etc.) for local homeless shelters or foreign mission projects
- Collect baby items (diapers, bottles, sleepers, etc.) for a crisis pregnancy center
- Write thank you notes to parish priests and seminarians
- Write welcome letters to RCIA candidates
- Collect school supplies for students in mission schools
- Serve as altar servers at Mass
- Participate in the parish paper recycling program

Middle School Projects

- Perform appropriate Elementary School Projects listed above
- Work a booth at the parish festival
- Collect food for a food bank
- Assist at a parish Christmas workshop in December, offering crafts and fun for younger children
- Make sandwiches for the homeless
- Make Valentine’s Day cards to be distributed to nursing homes or assisted living facilities
- Assist at an Easter egg hunt for younger children
- Make rosaries for mission churches
- Serve as ushers at Mass

High School Projects

- Perform appropriate Middle School Projects listed above
- Serve as lectors, Eucharistic ministers, and hospitality ministers at Mass
- Volunteer in a soup kitchen
- Volunteer at a nursing home or an assisted living facility
- Participate in a CROP Hunger Walk
- Participate in the annual Focus: HOPE WALK and Diversity Festival
- Volunteer with a Habitat for Humanity project
- Staff a booth at the parish festival
- Serve as mentors at middle school retreats
- Volunteer in the parish nursery
- Hold a church grounds clean-up day
- Wrap Christmas gifts at a local program for the less fortunate
- Volunteer at the Special Olympics
- Sort clothing at the local thrift store
- Volunteer at a crisis pregnancy center

OTHER CHILDREN AND YOUTH CHRISTIAN STEWARDSHIP SUGGESTIONS

Parish Stewardship Newsletter

- Highlight the activities of young stewards in the parish
- Give reminders about the meaning of Christian stewardship
- Highlight a service project involving children and youth

Stewardship Lessons During the Year

- Focus on what it means to be a disciple of Jesus
- Highlight modern stewards, such as Mother Teresa

Other Christian Stewardship Suggestions

- Incorporate Christian stewardship language as much as possible into religious education and classroom lessons
- Create age-appropriate Christian stewardship brochures
- Find children and youth willing to serve as lay witnesses
- Form a children's stewardship committee
- Compile a children and youth time and talent card
- Hold a children and youth time and talent fair
- Hold a poster contest for annual Parish Christian Stewardship Renewal weekends. Display poster entries throughout the parish buildings
- Profile outstanding stewards on a bulletin board
- Plan periodic liturgies featuring children and youth as lectors, ministers, and ushers
- Send a letter from the pastor to children and youth encouraging a life of Christian stewardship
- Hold an annual essay contest on a Christian stewardship topic. Include essays in the parish newsletter, bulletin, and on the parish Web site



PART EIGHT:

*Christian Stewardship, Your Will,
and Planned Charitable Giving*

PART EIGHT: CHRISTIAN STEWARDSHIP, YOUR WILL, AND PLANNED CHARITABLE GIVING

Life is uncertain and we must be prepared for those uncertainties. News accounts of dramatic events, like deadly storms, or the sudden death of a celebrity, bring home to us Christ's admonition at the end of His parable of the five wise and five foolish virgins: *"Therefore, stay awake, for you know neither the day nor the hour"* (Matthew 25:13). We usually associate these words of Jesus with our spiritual life and how we will be judged on our last day. However, His words also apply to the importance of planning for our end-of-life here on earth.

Modern society grows ever more complex as families are more mobile, retirement planning is increasingly important and estate and probate laws change frequently. Moreover, health care concerns everyone as those costs increase and people live longer. Perhaps most important in the health care planning process, what happens when you cannot make medical decisions for yourself because an accident or illness has left you incapacitated?

St. Paul admonishes us, *"If anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith, and is worse than an unbeliever"* (1 Timothy 5:8). Certainly, failure to have a will and other appropriate estate planning documents, such as a revocable living trust and durable powers of attorney for property and for health care, is a failure to provide for family and loved ones, and is definitely not good stewardship of God's gifts to us.

As we learn in our Christian stewardship journey, growth in stewardship means growth in our ability to see life as a sacred trust. We must also prayerfully reflect on whether that sacred trust will end at our death, or whether our nurturing, sharing, and giving will continue. Indeed, our stewardship will end in large measure if we fail to develop an effective estate plan.

St. Paul reminds us, *"For we brought nothing into the world, just as we shall not be able to take anything out of it"* (1 Timothy 6:7). While this idea is easily understood, developing an estate plan, beginning with making a will, is often thought to be either an elaborate scheme for the wealthy to avoid tax or a concern only for the elderly. For the Christian steward, however, developing an estate plan has a broader and more spiritual scope.

Developing an estate plan involves the four fundamental principles of Christian stewardship we have been exploring:

1. Praying ... to God with grateful hearts for guidance as Christian stewards on the ultimate disposition of our estate.
2. Nurturing ... our family with time and love, and being always mindful of their need to be cared for after our death.
3. Sharing ... our God-given gifts with the parish communion, and providing means through legacy gifts in our estate plan for parish ministries and services to continue.
4. Giving ... back to God the first fruits of our labors.



Why Do We Need a Will?

An effective estate plan begins with making a will. Making a will is more than merely writing a legal document that passes assets from one generation to the next. For the Christian steward it is a process of prayerfully reflecting on the blessings God has given us during our lifetime, then asking: How best do we share those blessings with our family and friends, parish, Archdiocese, and charities? To accomplish this sharing, we do need to prepare the necessary legal documents.

Studies indicate that about 60 percent of adult Americans have not executed a valid will. When asked why one does not have a will, the response often is, “Everything I have is joint with my spouse, so I don’t need a will.” That may be true for when the first spouse dies, but what about on the death of the surviving spouse? What if both spouses die in a common tragedy? Who will care for minor children if both parents are gone? And what if I’m not married? Our inaction is often the result of our not wanting to contemplate these unpleasant aspects of death. Scripture, however, advises us that we need to take action: *“Thus says the Lord, ‘Set your house in order, for you are about to die’* (2 Kings 20:1).

If we fail to prepare a will, state law will control the disposition of our assets and determine the care for minor children and similar matters. Any similarity between these state law determinations and our wishes for our family can only be pure coincidence. State law will definitely not provide for any “giving back to God” of a portion of our material wealth. Returning some of our earthly possessions to the Lord is a fundamental principle of Christian stewardship, and one that we neglect when we lack a valid will.

Revocable Living Trust

While your will is the basis for your estate plan, establishing a revocable living trust may also be advisable. A trust is designed to exist for several years if needed and will provide effective asset management and tax benefits for your estate and trust beneficiaries. Under the usual trust agreement, you would be the trustee during your life with a successor trustee named to take over at your death. As another important function of a revocable living trust, your successor trustee can manage your property should you become incapacitated during your lifetime, thus avoiding court proceedings to appoint a guardian and conservator for you. In order for your trust to be effective, when you establish the trust you should transfer your assets into the trust name for your continued management during your life and smooth transition to your successor trustee.

Durable Powers of Attorney

Who will handle your affairs when you die is an important question to answer when discussing your will and estate plan. But an equally important question — and one not often raised — is, “Who will handle my affairs if I am alive but disabled or incompetent?” In modern living, it is not at all unusual for a person to become incapable of making important decisions because of an accident, illness, dementia, or other such serious and tragic circumstances.

Should such a situation occur, it is very important that you have executed valid durable powers of attorney, authorizing someone to act for you. Otherwise, your family must go to court to have a guardian and conservator appointed to handle your personal and financial matters, including health care. Court proceedings are expensive, and since they are public hearings, may be very embarrassing for the family. And myriad legal and family emotional problems can arise over issues of health care if you are unable to make medical decisions for yourself.

Durable Power of Attorney for Property and Financial Matters

A durable power of attorney for property and financial matters (DPOA) is a legal document that authorizes another person to act as your “agent” or “attorney-in-fact.” Your DPOA would cover the assets not transferred to your revocable living trust. Your DPOA should list in detail the powers you are conferring on your agent. These powers could include such matters as signing checks, making bank deposits, signing deeds, paying bills, selling real property and investments, exercising options to buy stock or other property, handling legal matters, handling retirement and other employment benefits, filing tax returns, making gifts to family and charities, and executing forms to represent you before the Internal Revenue Service and other government agencies. You should consider your specific circumstances in enumerating the powers you give your agent. Of course, since your agent will have significant authority over your property and financial affairs, you should name someone you trust to handle your affairs capably and act prudently in your best interest.

Medical Power of Attorney

A medical power of attorney (MPOA) authorizes a person to make health care decisions for you when you are unable to do so. In Michigan, a MPOA is also called a Designation of Patient Advocate or Durable Power of Attorney for Health Care. In your MPOA, you give your patient advocate instructions about your medical treatment. These instructions should address treatments you do or do not want, such as life-sustaining measures and relief from pain. Your patient advocate signs the MPOA, acknowledging your instructions and agreeing to follow them.

MPOA instructions are sometimes referred to as “advance directives,” a term also associated with a “living will.” A living will is not legally binding in Michigan, since it is merely a statement of your wishes that someone must interpret. In an MPOA, however, you authorize a named person to make decisions based on your wishes and your particular medical condition. It is a bit of an understatement to say that your patient advocate should be someone you trust. Your patient advocate’s decisions will literally be a “matter of life or death” — yours!

Of course, your MPOA should also reflect the teaching of the Catholic Church on the sanctity of life. Pope John Paul II’s encyclical, *Gospel of Life*, is an excellent guide in making life decisions. In addition, the Michigan Catholic Conference and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops have resources on the teaching of the Church on these important end-of-life issues.

After you have executed your MPOA, you should furnish a copy to your patient advocate and successor advocates, your physician, your pastor, and anyone else who may be involved in your medical treatment. These people will then have a clear understanding of your wishes and instructions about your treatment when you are unable to make medical decisions for yourself.

What is Planned Charitable Giving?

“Planned Charitable Giving” is simply charitable giving coordinated with financial and estate planning for your family. Therefore, it generally begins with making your will. Through planned charitable giving, you, as a Christian steward, celebrate God’s goodness by sharing His blessings with your family and your communion of faith. Your material wealth and financial resources continue God’s work on earth — making your stewardship a lasting expression of your Christian discipleship.

Through planned charitable giving, there are many ways for you to share your gifts with your family and with the Church. The following are some of those sharing techniques.

Appreciated Securities

While cash is the most usual form of charitable gift, lifetime gifts of corporate stock or other appreciated securities provide you and the Church many benefits. Dividends and other income from your appreciated securities often are not so large relative to their asset value as to have a significant impact on overall family income. You can, therefore, probably make a larger gift with appreciated property than might be the case with cash. Also, you are not subject to tax on the appreciation on the gift. These benefits for you likewise increase the funds available to the Church to carry out its ministries and programs.

Outright Bequests

You can create a legacy of your faith by including a bequest to the Church through your parish or the Archdiocese in your will or revocable living trust. A bequest can be specific dollar amount, a specific security or other property, a stated percentage of your estate, or the residue of your estate after your other bequests and obligations have been satisfied.

If given as an endowment, your bequest will benefit the Church for many future generations. The income from the endowment will support Church ministries, with the principal invested to continue to generate that income.

In making a bequest it is important to use appropriate language to clearly identify the intended charitable beneficiary. In making a bequest to your parish or the Archdiocese, the following is the appropriate language:

To your parish: *“To Most Reverend Allen H. Vigneron, Archbishop of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Detroit, or his successors in office, for [PARISH NAME] in [CITY and STATE].”*

To the Archdiocese of Detroit Endowment Foundation: *“To the Archdiocese of Detroit Endowment Foundation, Detroit, Michigan.”*

Charitable Gift Annuities

In a charitable gift annuity arrangement, you make a gift to the Church while providing annuity payments for yourself or your beneficiary. To establish a charitable gift annuity, you simply deposit money or securities with the Archdiocese of Detroit Endowment Foundation in exchange for the foundation's irrevocable promise to pay a fixed amount for life to you or your beneficiary. A portion of the annuity payment would be tax-free, and you would be entitled to a charitable contribution income tax deduction based generally on your age or that of another annuitant. The annuity rate likely would be higher than the earnings on the money or other property you transfer in the annuity arrangement. Moreover, if you transfer appreciated securities for the annuity, you will avoid part of the capital gain on those assets.

You can also establish a charitable gift annuity for a beneficiary as a bequest through your will or revocable living trust.

Charitable Remainder Trusts

A charitable remainder trust (CRT) is another form of charitable giving through which you or other beneficiaries can receive income. Under the terms of the CRT agreement, you or your designated beneficiaries would receive an income distribution for life or a term of years, and then the remainder interest would pass to the Church. You would be entitled to income and estate tax deductions in establishing a CRT.

You can also establish a CRT for a beneficiary as a bequest through your will or revocable living trust. The bequest language noted above for your parish and Endowment Foundation is also appropriate for a CRT beneficiary designation.

An excellent asset to use to fund a CRT is the remaining interest in your retirement plan or IRA. This asset may be the largest asset in your estate and might be subject to both income and estate taxes. However, by naming a CRT as a successor beneficiary of some part of your retirement plan with the Church as the beneficiary of the CRT, you would avoid some of these taxes, and thereby provide more funds for your family while also making a significant gift to the Church.

Charitable Lead Trusts

A charitable trust (CLT) is best understood as the reverse of the CRT. With a CLT, the Church would receive income from the trust for the number of years you specify. At the end of that time, the principal of the trust would either be returned to you or distributed to your family beneficiaries. Besides the benefit provided to the Church, a CLT is useful for passing property to your family at reduced transfer tax cost.

You can also establish a CLT as a bequest through your will or revocable living trust. The bequest language noted above for your parish and Endowment Foundation is also appropriate for CLT beneficiary designation.

Life Insurance

You can use your life insurance to make a gift to the Church. You can assign ownership of a life insurance policy to the Church, or you can retain ownership of the policy, but name the Church as primary beneficiary, as contingent or secondary beneficiary, or as residuary beneficiary. Life insurance is an excellent way to make a much larger gift than would be possible with an outright gift of money.

The bequest language noted above for your parish and Endowment Foundation is also appropriate for the life insurance beneficiary designation.

Retirement Plans

Similar to changing the beneficiary on your life insurance policies, you can use your qualified retirement plans, such as a 401(k) or IRA, to make a gift to the Church. Such retirement plans generate taxable income to the beneficiaries of your estate who actually receive the distributions from plan. Since the Church is tax-exempt, if you name the Church as a beneficiary of your retirement plan your beneficiaries will avoid tax on those plan distributions. Your estate plan could instead provide your family or other individual beneficiaries with assets not subject to income tax.

Retirement plans are another excellent means to make a much larger gift to the Church than might be possible with an outright gift of money. The bequest language noted above for your parish and the Endowment Foundation is also appropriate for retirement plan beneficiary designation.

Bringing Estate Planning to the Parish

As noted above, about 60 percent of adults do not have a will; in other words, they have not planned for the distribution of their possessions. Therefore, a parish's Christian stewardship education program should include a module on wills and estate planning. The Department of Development and Stewardship is available to conduct Wills Awareness and Planned Giving seminars as part of the parish stewardship education program. These seminars consist of a brief and basic presentation that encourages parishioners to give prayerful thought to developing a will and estate plan that will benefit their families and provide such planned charitable gift possibilities as a final bequest to their parish, the Archdiocese, and their favorite charities.

If you would like a Wills Awareness and Planned Giving seminar conducted at your parish, please contact the Office of Planned Giving in the Department of Development and Stewardship at (313) 883-8657 or toll-free at (800) 986-3925.



APPENDIX I

Prayers for Christian Stewardship

APPENDIX I

PRAYERS FOR CHRISTIAN STEWARDSHIP

Prayer, especially in thanksgiving to God for all His generous gifts to us, is the first fundamental principle of Christian stewardship. Following are prayers with various themes for use in parish meetings and gatherings as well in parishioners' private prayer time. As your parish proceeds along your Christian stewardship journey, you may develop additional prayers to guide you on your way to discipleship in Christ.

TO BE GOOD STEWARDS

A Stewardship Prayer

Good and loving God,

Source of every grace and blessing, we bring You thanks this day for the many gifts You have given us. We seek to be good stewards, Lord! Bless us as we gather to share Your gifts.

Send us Your Spirit and be present among us –
in the mouth of all who speak,
in the ears of all who listen,
at the heart of all we say and do.

We ask in Jesus' name.

Amen.

National Catholic Stewardship Council 1998 Conference Prayer

A Stewardship Prayer

Dear Lord,

I pray that You give me the wisdom to guide me on this faith journey of stewardship.

Help me to understand that everything I have is a gift from You.

Open my heart and my mind so that I may use these marvelous gifts to give back to You here on Earth.

I pray that You welcome me into Your kingdom at the end of my life and that You are pleased with what I have done with all your gifts.

Amen.



Prayer for Christian Stewardship

Lord God,

You alone are the source of every good gift, of the vast array of our universe, and the mystery of each human life. We praise You and we thank You for Your great power and Your tender, faithful love.

Everything we are and everything we have is Your gift, and after having created us, You have given us into the keeping of Your Son, Jesus Christ. Fill our minds with His truth and our hearts with His love, that in His Spirit we may be bonded together into a communion of faith, a parish family, a caring people.

In the Name and Spirit of Jesus, we commit ourselves to be good stewards of the gifts entrusted to us, to share our time, our talent, and our material gifts as an outward sign of the treasure we hold in Jesus.

Amen.

Prayer for Christian Stewardship

Dear Jesus,

I thank You for everything You have given me. My gifts of time and talents are precious gifts. Enable me to use them to do Your will.

I offer You this day all my words, actions and good intentions to reflect my love for You and my neighbor. Please help me realize that I need to share these gifts and all my gifts with the Church and others. Help me to be generous, patient, forgiving and holy.

Amen.

Prayer for Christian Stewardship

Creator God,

At Baptism, we accepted the call to follow Jesus. Be with us as we move along on our faith journey. Send us Your Holy Spirit, that we might have wisdom for the journey.

Help us develop and share our gifts as good stewards, that we may use them in love and service in Your kingdom.

We ask this through Christ, our Lord.

Amen.

Prayer to Be a Good Steward

O Lord,

I know that at the end of my life You will ask me to account for the talents and gifts You have bestowed on me. May I be able to reply that I made a difference on behalf of Your kingdom on earth.

I know, O Lord, that You seek a response from me, expressing my love for You. In carrying out my response, may I find joy in being of service to Your creation, Your Church worldwide, my country, my parish, my neighborhood and my family.

Calling on the Holy Spirit for guidance, may my response to You bring me gladness of heart, in knowing that the image of Your Son is growing stronger in my soul, as I become a good steward of Your gifts.

Amen.



Stewardship Prayer for Discipleship

Almighty and ever-faithful Lord,

Gratefully acknowledging Your mercy and humbly admitting our need, we pledge our trust in You and each other.

Filled with desire, we respond to Your call for discipleship by shaping our lives in imitation of Christ. We profess that the call requires us to be stewards of Your gifts. As stewards, we receive Your gifts gratefully, cherish and tend them in a responsible manner, share them in practice and love with others, and return them with increase to the Lord.

We pledge to our ongoing formation as stewards and our responsibility to call others to that same endeavor. Almighty and ever-faithful God, it is our fervent hope and prayer that You who have begun this good work in us will bring it to fulfillment in Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Amen.

FOR MEETINGS AND GROUPS

Prayer for the Success of Meetings and Seminars

Divine Spirit, sent by the Father in the name of Jesus, pour out Your graces on this gathering.

O Gentle Teacher and Consoler, enlighten our hearts. May this coming together produce abundant fruits; may the light and power of the Gospel be more widely diffused in human society and may new vigor be imparted to us. May we all acquire a more profound knowledge of the Church's doctrine and a wholesome increase of Christian stewardship in our daily lives.

O Gentle Guest of our souls, confirm our minds in truth and dispose our hearts to find in us a generous consent and prompt obedience to the call of Christian Stewardship.

Grant that this holy Church, united in prayer around Mary the Mother of Jesus, and under the leadership of Peter, may extend the kingdom of the Divine Savior, a kingdom of truth and justice, a kingdom of love and peace.

Amen.

Adapted from the National Catholic Stewardship Council 1998 Roman Seminar Prayer



A Litany of Generosity

Leader: Dear Lord,

We come before You today to ask You to help us be more generous.

We pray:

Leader: Gracious God, give us generous hearts ...

All: ... so we may fully appreciate Your many gifts to us.

Leader: Gracious God, give us generous hearts ...

All: ... so we may give without counting the cost.

Leader: Gracious God, give us generous hearts ...

All: ... so we may share without expecting something in return.

Leader: Gracious God, give us generous hearts ...

All: ... so we may know the joy of helping others.

Leader: Gracious God, give us generous hearts ...

All: ... so we may share all that You have given us.

Leader: Gracious God, give us generous hearts ...

All: ... so we may hold all our treasures in an open hand.

Leader: Gracious God, give us generous hearts ...

All: ... so we may recognize Your many blessings in each new day.

Leader: Gracious God, give us generous hearts ...

All: ... so we may learn the difference between what we need and what we want.

Leader: Gracious God, give us generous hearts ...

All: ... so we may ever thank You and serve You.

Leader: Lord, we ask all of this, knowing that You will always give us all that we need.

Please bless the work we do for You today and always.

All: Amen.

Adapted from Diocese of Colorado Springs



Pastoral Council Prayer

Leader: We praise You, O God, for all Your works are wonderful. We praise You, O God, forever is your love.

All: Lord, thank You for each moment,
for the blue-sky moment,
for the softening earth,
for freshening wind,
for the sap flowing,
the bird nesting,
the yellow bush,
for my full heart,
and the joy rising in us!

Leader: Soften us to receive whatever comes as gift and to praise You in it!

All: Lord, thank You for each moment,
for the twilight moment,
the pause,
the good tired,
for quiet reflection,
the slowing down,
the mysterious sunset,
for our hearts,
and the wisdom growing in us!

Leader: Gentle us to feel whatever comes as gift and to praise You in it!

All: Lord, thank You for each moment,
for the high-noon moment,
the work of our council,
the necessary routine,
the straining struggle,
the high risk challenge,
for our fierce hearts,
and the courage gathering in us!

Leader: Focus us on whatever comes as gift and to praise You in it! May You find praise in the works of this council. We praise You, O God, for all your works are wonderful. We praise You, O God, forever is your love.

All: Amen.



Prayer for Sharing

Leader: Let us bow our heads and acknowledge the presence of God Who shares all things with us unconditionally.

Lord, let us give life to one another. You have taught us that, yes, we are our neighbor's keeper. More than that — We are one flesh, one Body with all who are members of Christ. Give us a sense of the whole. Let us live with one another and for one another as members of Your Body, giving ourselves, dying to ourselves, for the good of the whole that we might live in You, and You might live in us, and speak in us, and act in us, and through the priesthood of our personhood give Your life to the world.

All: Amen.

Leader: What does it mean to take Jesus seriously?

Response: To be open to the Father, Creator of life; to Jesus, the Lord of my life; to the Spirit, the Life of my life.

Leader: What is the cost of discipleship?

Response: It is to empty myself out, to open myself to sharing my life, to share all that I am and all that I have, to have the mind of Christ Jesus.

Psalms 133 and 134 (Psalms Now by Brandt)
(Alternating sides)

Side 1: O God, how precious it is for us,
And how pleasing it must be for You,
When your sons and daughters learn how to live
And work together in unity!

Side 2: It is in the measure that we do this that we begin to resemble You,
And to carry out most effectively your purposes,
In our disjointed and discordant world.

Side 1: Come let us together bless God's name,
Rejoice in God's loving concern for us,
Declare God's worth to all creatures,
And walk in obedience to God's call.

Side 2: It is the same God, Who made heaven and earth
And all of us who dwell therein.
Let us worship and serve Him together.

Moment of Silence for Reflection



Prayer of Praise and Thanksgiving

Leader: Father, You have given us so much to be thankful for throughout our lives. You have even revealed Yourself to us as a parish communion and given us a command to do what is most life-giving — love one another in communion. We wish to place before You now our prayers of gratitude for these and for Your other blessings on us.

Leader: For calling us together as adults in Christian communion in the Church,

Response: We thank You, Lord.

Leader: For the freedom to grow in life and vision, individuality, and vibrant hope,

Response: We thank You, Lord.

Leader: For the ever-abiding presence of Your Holy Spirit, who binds us in meaningful love,

Response: We thank You, Lord.

Leader: For the affection and encouragement, sympathy, truth and love of those in our communities,

Response: We thank You, Lord.

Leader: For giving to us abundantly our lives, our talents and our treasure,

Response: We thank You, Lord.

Leader: For filling us with the spirit of goodness that calls us to share all that is ours, especially the gift of our person,

Response: We thank You, Lord.

All: *“Let us give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord, Jesus Christ! For in our union with Christ He has blessed us by giving us every spiritual blessing in the heavenly world. Even before the world was made, God had already chosen us to be His through our union with Christ, so that we would be holy and without fault before Him.*

Because of His love, God had already decided that through Jesus Christ He would make us His children — this was His pleasure and purpose. Let us praise God for His glorious grace, for the free gift He gave us in His dear Son! For by the sacrificial death of Christ we are set free, that is, our sins are forgiven. How great is the grace of God, which He gave to us in such large measure!”
(Ephesians 1: 3-9).



Prayer for Committee

Dear God,

We, as Jesus' disciples and Christian stewards, recognize You as the origin of life, giver of freedom, and source of all things. We are grateful for the gifts we have received and are eager to use them to show our love for You and for one another.

We look to the life and teaching of Your Son, Jesus, for guidance in living as Christian stewards. Please help us as the Stewardship Committee to provide leadership, education and guidance to improve the understanding of stewardship in our parish.

Dear God, thank you for the support You provide and for Your continued blessing.

Amen.

Stewardship Prayer

Leader: *"Let us give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord, Jesus Christ! For in union with Christ He has blessed us by giving us every spiritual blessing in the heavenly world. Even before the world was made, God had already chosen us to be His through our union with Christ so that we would be holy and without fault before Him"* (Ephesians 1:3-4).

Moment of Silence for Reflection

Side 1: O God, I resolve to put You first in my life. I recognize that You have blessed me with all that I have and all that I am.

Side 2: I commit to giving back to You the first portion of my blessings. Doing so may seem scary at times, but I hear Your reassurance in Scripture: *"Do not worry anymore,"* and know that I can depend on You.

Side 1: As Your steward, I resolve to sacrifice when necessary but always to do so out of a spirit of sincere love, just as Your Son, Jesus, did for me. I humbly accept the challenge to share my means rather than from my excess.

Side 2: I recognize that being a good steward is nothing more than being truly Christian. From my heart, I thank You, Lord, for blessing me and I trust in Your love.

All: Dear God, I resolve to be generous with my time, talent, and treasure, giving in the proportion of the gifts I have received. I commit myself to taking care of my body and all of creation. At times I may fail, but I pledge to keep trying. In so doing, I will confidently live each day with a spirit of true peace and joy.
Amen.

Adapted from the Northwest Synod of Wisconsin Resource Center

IN THANKSGIVING AND SHARING

Stewardship Prayer in Thanksgiving and Sharing

Heavenly Father,

Eternally kind and gracious, we thank You for all we are and all we possess; this is all fruit of Your unlimited generosity and benevolence.

We thank You because we do not possess anything, not even our lives; this has all been a gift from You.

Enlighten our minds, so that we can use wisely all the gifts we receive from You daily.

Help us understand that it is better to give than to receive; because giving helps our soul give up the material and temporal, in order to ally it with a spirit of altruism and charity.

Help us comprehend more each day that by the means of giving, we can adjust the inequities of the human race, this is the only way the strong and the powerful can help the weak, so that social peace can reign among us.

We place this in the name of Your beloved Son, Jesus, Who lives and reigns in the unity with the Holy Spirit forever and ever.

Amen.

National Catholic Stewardship Council 1999 Conference Prayer

Prayer of Thanksgiving

O Lord,

It is right to give You thanks for this day. For it is from You that all good things come. It is from You that we receive so many abundant blessings.

We give You thanks for Your grace, for Your love, and for Your care for us and our families.

We praise You for the gift of faith, of repentance, and for forgiveness.

We give You thanks for Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Savior.

Thank You, Lord, for so many gifts You have given us, for so many favors You grant us, for so many wonders You have shown us. For so much, thank You, Lord. Always help our hearts be grateful and turned toward You.

We pray this through Christ, our Lord.

Amen.

Prayer of Thanksgiving

Loving God,

I come to You in thanksgiving, knowing that all I am and all that I have is gift from You.

In faith and love, help me to do your will. I am listening, Lord God. Speak Your words into the depth of my soul, that I may hear You clearly.

I offer you this day all the facets of my life — whether it be at home, at work, or at school — to be patient, to be merciful, to be generous, to be holy.

Give me the wisdom and insight to understand Your will for me and the fervor to carry out my good intentions.

I offer my gifts of time, talent and possessions to You as a true act of faith, to reflect my love for You and my neighbor. Help me to reach out to others as You, my God, have reached out to me.

Amen.

Archdiocese of Philadelphia

Stewardship Prayer for Sharing

Good and gracious God,

We thank You for all we are, and all we possess. Everything is a gift from Your infinite generosity. How bountiful is Your kindness. How enduring Your mercy.

You have bestowed all these blessings on us, Your unworthy servants. Our use of these gifts will manifest both our gratitude and our awareness of just how dependent we are on Your grace.

As we explore our responsibility to be good stewards, fill us with the compassion of Jesus, Your Son.

Give us eyes to see the needs of those around us, in the faces of our neighbors near and far.

Give us hearts that are moved by the pleas of those who cry out on behalf of the children, the refugees, the sick, and the suffering.

Give us hands that are eager to share what You have entrusted to us.

Give us feet to venture wherever the Spirit leads.

As we resolve to be mindful of the needs of others, we pray that You instill in us *Your* kindness and *Your* mercy. Free us from all attachments to things of this world. Keep us focused in our mission of good stewardship.

In Jesus' name, we pray.

Amen.

Stewardship Prayer on Thanksgiving

O Divine Gift-giver,

I stand beneath the endless waterfall of Your abundant gifts to me. I thank You especially for the blessing of life, the most precious of all Your gifts to me.

I thank You, ever-generous One, for clothing to wear, for food and drink to nourish my body, for all the talents and skills that You have bestowed upon me.

I thank You for the many joys of my life, for family and friends, for work that gives to me a sense of purpose and invests my life with meaning.

I thank You as well for the sufferings and trials of my life which are also gifts and which, together with my mistakes, are among my most important teachers.

Grant that I may never greet a new day without the awareness of some gift for which to give You thanks.

And may constant thanksgiving be my song of perpetual praise to You.

Amen.

Prayer for Stewardship in Thanksgiving and Sharing

Loving and Generous God,

You are the source of all that we are and all that we have, the Giver of life and abundant grace, Father of every generation. We thank You and we praise You.

We thank You for the gift of your Son, Jesus, Who brought us your mercy and salvation through His Death and Resurrection.

We thank You, Lord, for sending us Your Spirit to complete the work of Jesus and bring us to the fullness of your grace.

Open our hearts to the gift of Your grace. Make us faithful stewards, good receivers and generous givers. Teach us that we serve You as we share the blessings we have received, building bridges of service to people of all ages, especially those in most need of kindness and comfort.

Be with us, Lord, as we witness to Your Good News in all that we do in our homes, parishes, and in the workplace. Open our eyes to see Your presence in all we encounter. Open to Your love, may it always flow through our hearts.

This we pray through your Son, our Lord Jesus, Who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever.

Amen.

Archdiocese of Detroit 2008 Catholic Services Appeal Prayer



ON LIFE'S VOCATION

A Workplace Prayer

Lord Jesus,

As I enter this workplace, I bring Your presence with me, I speak Your peace, Your grace, and Your perfect order into this office. I acknowledge Your Lordship over all that will be spoken, thought, decided, and accomplished within these walls.

Lord Jesus, I thank You for the gifts You have given me. I do not take them lightly, but commit to using them responsibly and well. Give me a fresh supply of truth and beauty on which to draw as I do my job.

Anoint my creativity, my ideas, my energy so that even my smallest task may bring You honor. Lord, when I am confused, guide me; when I am weary, energize me. Lord, when I am burned out, infuse me with the light of Your Holy Spirit.

May the work I do and the way I do it, bring hope, life, and courage to all I come in contact with today. And, O Lord, even in this day's most stressful moments, may I rest in You.

In the name of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, I pray.

Amen.

Author Unknown

Prayer of Cardinal John Henry Newman on Life's Vocation

God created me to do Him some definite service. He has committed some work to me, which He has not committed to another. I have a mission. I am a link in a chain, a bond of connection between persons.

Therefore I will trust Him. Whatever I am, I can never be thrown away. If I am in sickness, my sickness may serve Him; if I am perplexed, my perplexity may serve Him; if I am in joy, my joy may serve Him; if I am in sorrow, my sorrow may serve him. He does nothing in vain. He knows what He is about.

Prayer of Pope John Paul II on Service

O Lord,

May my soul be flooded with Your light and know You more and more profoundly!

Lord, give me so much love, love forever, serene and generous, that I will be united with You always!

Lord, let me serve You and serve You well, on the pathways that You wish to open to my existence here below.

Amen.

FOR STEWARDSHIP OF THE CHURCH

Prayer for Stewardship of the Church

Gracious and Loving God,

We come to you in gratitude, nourished by grace, blessed by Your bountiful gifts.

We rejoice in the transformation of Your Son's suffering and death into the victory of new life and resurrection.

Help us be transformed as well so that we may have the power to change, to renew our Church and to bring about greater justice and peace in our homes and in our world.

Strengthen our commitment to be faithful stewards and more generous in our response to Your Church's needs.

Show us the power of Your love so that we may be joyful, comforted by hope, and drawn ever closer toward the vision of Your glory.

We ask this through Christ, Our Lord,

Amen.

Archdiocese of Detroit 2003 Catholic Services Appeal Prayer

Prayer for Stewardship of the Church

Lord God,

You are the source of all we have and we thank You for Your abundant gifts, especially the gift of Your Church and its living story of faith; a story of peace and joy, pain and suffering, truth and grace.

Send down Your Spirit, Lord, to open our hearts to the call of Jesus, our teacher, Who invites us to live as disciples, serve as good stewards and respond with generosity to the needs of Your people.

Through the work of Your Church, may we also be renewed and strengthened, in order to live our story faithfully, in hope and love.

We ask this through Christ, Your Son, Who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever.

Amen.

Adapted from the Archdiocese of Detroit 2006 Catholic Services Appeal Prayer

Prayer for Stewardship of the Church

We come to You, Father

Blessed by Your Son, Jesus Christ, Who died for us and is our Risen Lord; nurtured by the Holy Spirit, Who has bestowed upon each of us an abundance of spiritual gifts.

Open our hearts so that we may become ever more faithful in celebrating the sacraments, proclaiming your Word, and affirming the gifts of the Spirit.

Give us the wisdom and courage to be good stewards of our life of faith, our Church and all those in need of Your loving care. And guide us on our pilgrim way, so that we, too, may share in the victory of Christ and the bounty of eternal life.

We pray this through Christ, our Lord.

Amen.

Archdiocese of Detroit 2007 Catholic Services Appeal Prayer

FOR OUR PARISH

Stewardship Prayer for Our Parish

O God,

Our loving Creator and Giver of all good gifts, bless our parish, strengthen our faith and grant us the spirit of Christian stewardship so that we may give generously of our time, talent and treasure to the spreading of Your kingdom here in our parish and throughout the world. This we ask through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, Who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

Prayer for a Stewardship Parish

Dear Heavenly Father,

My parish is composed of people like me; I help make it what it is.

It will be friendly, if I am.

Its pews will be filled, if I help fill them.

It will do great work, if I work.

It will make generous gifts to many causes, if I am a generous giver.

It will bring other people into its worship and fellowship, if I invite and bring them.

It will be a parish of loyalty and love, of fearlessness and faith, and a parish with a noble spirit, if I, who make it what it is, am filled with these same things.

Therefore, with Your help, O God, I shall dedicate myself to the task of being all things that I want my parish to be.

FOR GENEROSITY

Stewardship Prayer for Generosity

Dear Lord,

Teach me to be generous as You have been generous with me. Teach me that all I am and have are gifts from You. And gifts, Lord, are meant to be shared.

Show me the joys of generosity. Help me to understand that others, perhaps unknown to me, depend on me for help.

Remind me that my world, my parish, need “Good Samaritans” to heal the wounds of our times.

Make me a gift to others in Your name.

Amen.

Stewardship Prayer for Generosity

Lord Jesus,

You came to show us that the meaning of life consists in giving.

You told us that those who cling too tightly to what they have — without thought of You or others — end up losing everything.

You offered us new values by which to measure the worth of a person’s life.

Help us to realize it is not temporal success or riches or fame that gives life meaning.

Rather, it is the service rendered to You and others that brings fulfillment and makes our lives worthwhile.

May all our service help build the kingdom of God,

and may our obedience bring true freedom,

our generosity increase love,

our sacrifices bear much fruit,

and our death lead to eternal life.

Amen.

STEWARDSHIP PRAYER FOR THE GIFT OF THE EUCHARIST

Gracious and loving God,

The Eucharist leads us into a deeper encounter with Your Son, Jesus Christ;

Who through the Mystery of His Body and Blood reveals Your active presence in each moment of our lives.

May the gift of the Eucharist transform us, and give us new meaning. May it make us good stewards of Your abundant blessings and open our hearts to the needs of our Church and to the hunger in the world.

Nourish our family of faith; give us wisdom and compassion; and by the power of Your Spirit, show us how to walk in the footsteps of Jesus as we journey together to the peace and joy of Your divine love.

We ask this through Christ, our Lord.

Amen.

Adapted from the International Catholic Stewardship Council 2005 Roman Seminar Prayer



PRAYER TO THE HOLY SPIRIT

Creator Spirit,

Come and bless us with Your heavenly grace.

You are called by the names of Paraclete, Gift of God Most High, Spring of Life, Fire, Love and the Soul's Anointing.

You are the finger of the Father's right hand. You are the clear promise of the Father.

Give our human tongues the grace of inspired speech.

Kindle your Light in our minds, pour Your Love into our hearts

And uphold with Your Unfailing Strength the frailty of our human nature.

Drive our enemy far from us and give us Your gift of peace. Ever guiding us, may we be always the stewards of Your Love.

Grant that through You, Most Holy Spirit, we may know the Father and the Son, and our faith professing, God Three in One. Holy Spirit of Love, teach us that stewardship is the disciple's response.

Amen.

Adapted from the International Catholic Stewardship Council 2006 Conference Prayer

STEWARDSHIP PRAYER IN HONOR OF OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE

Gracious and loving God,

We praise You for the gift of Your love made manifest in Your Son, and for the gift of Your Holy Spirit, Who binds us in unity through the richness of our diversity.

We praise You for the gift of Our Lady, the Virgin Mary of Guadalupe, whom we honor as Patroness of the Americas.

Give us the wisdom to follow her example; to be good stewards of our faith, our Church and of all those in need of Your loving care.

Teach us how to respond generously, with courage, prudence and hope.

And guide us on our pilgrim journey with Our Lady, who shows us the way to Your Son in justice and peace.

We pray this through Christ, Our Lord.

Amen.

International Catholic Stewardship Council 2007 Conference Prayer

PRAYER FOR STEWARDSHIP RENEWAL

Generous God,

I give You thanks for the gifts you have given me — my life, my family, my friends, my time, talents, and material possessions. All that I have comes from You. Help me to remember this and rejoice in Your goodness.

Walk with me, my God. Help me on my spiritual journey, so that I may constantly renew my relationship with You and all the good people in our parish and community.

Renew in me Your Spirit. Give me the strength and courage to become a better follower of Jesus — to be a disciple.

Help me hear Your call to “*Come, follow me.*” I give glory to You, my God, as I make stewardship a way of life.

Amen.

PRAYER OF ST. THOMAS AQUINAS ON STEWARDSHIP OF CREATION

Loving God,

Who sees in us nothing that You have not given Yourself, make my body healthy and agile, my mind sharp and clear, my heart joyful and contented, my soul faithful and loving. And surround me with the company of people and angels who share my devotion to You.

Above all, let me live in Your presence, for with You all fear is banished, and there is only harmony and peace.

Let every day combine the beauty of spring, the brightness of summer, the abundance of autumn, and the repose of winter. And at the end of my life on earth, grant that I may come to see and to know You with the fullness of Your glory.

Amen.



APPENDIX II

Brochures

Christian Stewardship

Praying to God with Grateful Hearts

Nurturing Our Family with Time and Love

Sharing Our God-Given Gifts with the Parish Communion

Giving Back to God the First Fruits of Our Labors

Christian Stewardship Annual Commitment Form

Documents in Appendix II are available separately for download at
www.AODonline.org/stewardship.



APPENDIX III

Study Guides

Stewardship: Caring for the Household of Faith (Parish Study Guide on the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' Pastoral Letter, *Stewardship: A Disciple's Response*)

Part One: The Call to Stewardship

Part Two: The Example of Jesus

Part Three: Living as a Steward

Part Four: Stewards of the Church

Facilitator Notes

Prayer Services

Documents in Appendix III are available separately for download at
www.AODonline.org/stewardship.



APPENDIX IV
Resources

The list of resources in Appendix IV is available separately for download at www.AODonline.org/stewardship.