



INTERNATIONAL CATHOLIC STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL CATHOLIC STEWARDSHIP

June 2016 • e-Bulletin

A STEWARDSHIP PRAYER *for June*

Lord Jesus Christ,

You came to bring peace and offer reconciliation.
You sent your Spirit to heal the separation between people,
and to reveal how it is possible for women and men
to overcome their differences and celebrate their unity
through your body and blood.
You revealed your Father as the Father of all people;
a Father who cares for every single individual
and embraces them with love and mercy.

It is that love and mercy, made manifest by your cross,
that shines your light on us all, creates new life,
offers a new way of living, and brings a Gospel message
that is a sign of hope.

Give us the courage to live your Gospel fully
even when it brings risk,
to share your word vibrantly even if it leads to scorn,
and to respond to others generously even when we feel like holding back.
Show us the way to live as good stewards of your presence among us, and in doing so,
may we shine your light on a darkened world.

Amen.

Hospitality at Mass: A Key to Good Stewardship



For many individuals and families alike, summer means travel. And summer travel may mean new visitors to our parish for weekend liturgies. How we greet and provide hospitality for our guests says a lot about our practice of good stewardship.

Providing hospitality to strangers is a hallmark of Christian stewardship. In the Gospel of Matthew good stewards were commended for their hospitality: "I was a stranger and you welcomed me" (Matt. 25:35). Saint Benedict directed his followers to receive guests and travelers as if they were Christ. Extending hospitality is especially important when it comes to welcoming visitors who may be attending Mass at our parish for the first time.

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There is a lot of anecdotal evidence suggesting that the ability of a first-time visitor to have a meaningful experience of Christ in the liturgy is directly impacted by the warmth of the welcome extended by the local worshipping community. When people say hello, the worship experience is enhanced. A warm welcome is part of evangelization, work necessary in a church's mission to help people discover or renew their faith in Christ.

How do we treat the unknown person who walks by us in church, or who sits next to us at Mass? Do we ignore them? Talk around them? Look at them and say nothing? Do we take the initiative to greet them, smile, extend a warm handshake?

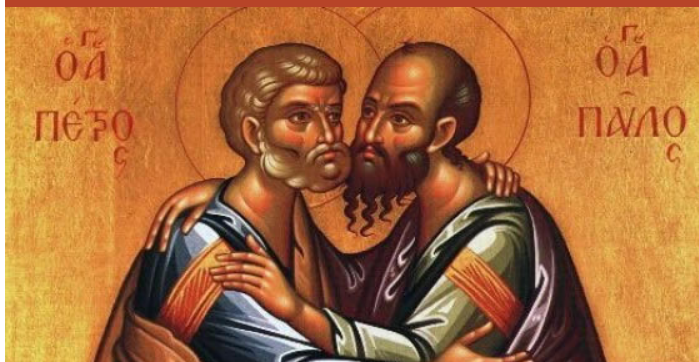
Remember, we are Christ's ambassadors (2 Corinthians 5:20). Our actions and reactions toward visitors at Mass communicate who we are and who we represent. Let us take time to welcome visitors to our parish this summer. Welcoming gestures, however small, will not only have a positive impact on visitors, they will make us more hospitable ambassadors of Christ.

Do You Welcome Visitors to Your Parish?

Welcoming newcomers to your parish is not just the job of the pastoral staff, ushers, ministers of hospitality or greeters. It is everyone's responsibility. Here are ten things you can do to provide better hospitality in your parish.

- 1. Cultivate the virtue of hospitality at Mass.** Many Mass attendees tend to gather into little cliques and ignore those who are not members of their particular clique. They are not really inhospitable, just heedless of the need for hospitality. Make hospitality a new habit when you go to Mass.
- 2. Come early, leave late.** Instead of rushing to Mass to be there on time, and then rushing out at its conclusion, make time to come a little early and linger just a bit later. Make room in your busy life to greet and spend time with others at Mass.
- 3. Go in peace to greet someone!** Seek out someone you've not met before. Shake their hand, introduce yourself, and take a few moments to welcome them to your parish home, God's house.
- 4. Welcome everyone.** Not only do visitors need your warm welcome, regular Mass attendees also need a friendly greeting. Develop a good handshake and be enthusiastic about your parish. You are greeting others in the name of Christ.
- 5. Help newcomers connect.** While you are getting to know visitors, introduce them to other parishioners as the opportunity presents itself. Feel free to invite visitors to sit next to you.
- 6. Say goodbye with genuine warmth.** After Mass, bid farewell to visitors, inviting them to return. Introduce them to the pastor if the opportunity arises.
- 7. Avoid parish business.** Avoid conducting parish business with others just before or after Mass. Focus on hospitality and greeting visitors.
- 8. Give visitors information about the parish.** Ensure that a visitor has a bulletin and other information about the parish before they leave. If there is a social gathering after Mass, invite them.
- 9. Be part of a greeting ministry team.** Parishes are always in need of greeters to serve regularly, and provide ongoing formation to new greeters. Help out, be a greeter. If your parish doesn't have greeters, now is a good time to start!
- 10. Greet those who already minister in the area of hospitality.** It isn't necessary to neglect the people who are already ministers of hospitality in order to make visitors feel at home. A simple wave and a smile go a long way.

STEWARDSHIP SAINTS for June



Great Stewards of the Church: Saints Peter and Paul

This month we highlight two of the great stewards of our faith, Saints Peter and Paul, commemorated on June 29. The two apostles are celebrated together as the founders of the early Church of Rome.

St. Peter held a preeminent status among Jesus' disciples. He was very close to Jesus and is the apostle Jesus designated as the "rock" upon which his Church would be built. Even St. Paul acknowledged St. Peter as the pillar of the Church in Jerusalem. The Gospel of St. Luke describes Jesus commissioning St. Peter as the head of the disciples. In the first of his letters contained in the New Testament, St. Peter penned the stewardship reflection placed so prominently in the United States Bishops' pastoral letter on Christian stewardship: "As each one has received a gift, use it to serve one another as good stewards of God's varied grace" (1 Pt. 4:10).

The two apostles are celebrated together as the founders of the early Church of Rome.

Thinkers throughout the ages acknowledge St. Paul as a genius and his success as a missionary was unmatched. He was a highly educated Jew and interpreted his conversion experience on the road to Damascus as Christ's personal call to preach the Good News to the Gentiles. He established Christian communities around the eastern Mediterranean, is noted for three great missionary journeys and wrote letters to various communities. St. Paul believed that exercising good stewardship over the gift of the Risen Christ was fundamental to eternal life.

How Saints Peter and Paul actually exercised stewardship over the Church in Rome is lost to history, but our faith tradition affirms that they jointly founded the Church of Rome, exercised a special authority over it and established its apostolic succession; a succession of bishops and popes that continues to this day.



Photo credit: Alexandre Rotenberg / Shutterstock.com

Today, we are witnessing the worst refugee crisis since the aftermath of the Second World War. The United Nations reports that 60 million people have been forced from their homes worldwide by violence.

Stewards of Our Neighbors: Addressing the Refugee Crisis

Pope Francis transformed the lives of a dozen Syrian refugees in April when he plucked three families from a crowded camp on the Greek island of Lesbos and took them back to Rome where they will receive all the help the Holy See can provide. The Pope's dramatic gesture was intended to give witness to Christ's teaching, "I was a stranger and you welcomed me" (Matthew 25:35).

Today, we are witnessing the worst refugee crisis since the aftermath of the Second World War. The United Nations reports that 60 million people have been forced from their homes worldwide by violence. Many are internally displaced in their own countries. Many languish in refugee camps, hoping to be resettled in a welcoming country. The war in Syria alone has spawned the largest humanitarian crisis of our time. The tragedy is so overwhelming that we risk becoming inured to the depth of it. Yet Syria, though its suffering is horrendous, is but one of many disaster areas whose collective woes have led some experienced observers to assert that 2016 is already the worst year for humanitarian crises in living memory.

Many agencies trying to address this humanitarian crisis are Catholic agencies. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops department of Migration and Refugee Services (MRS) is the largest refugee resettlement agency in the world, and is one of two agencies authorized by the U.S. Department of State to resettle unaccompanied refugee children.

As stewards of our neighbors in the human family, there are many things we can do to help. Here are three to consider: Pray that God extends mercy and compassion to all refugees displaced by violence and persecution. Contact your local Catholic Charities agency to find out if it has a resettlement program and, if so, ask how you can participate in the effort to resettle refugees and help them build new lives of hope. Make a gift to the MRS' **Parishes Organized to Welcome Refugees (POWR)** program, which gives parish and community volunteers an opportunity to help sponsor newly-arriving refugees and provide for their immediate needs.

By offering what help we can to refugees through our family of faith, welcoming the stranger as Christ commanded, we not only share the Good News, we deepen our own involvement in God's active presence in our world today.

Calling All ICSC Parish Members!

ICSC 2016 Parish Stewardship Award Information

Has your parish developed stewardship materials that would help others? Did your committee work hard on resources you are proud of? Please consider applying for one or more ICSC Parish Awards in 2016. Parishes at all stages of the stewardship journey are encouraged to apply!

Entries will be judged by members of the ICSC Parish Stewardship Education and Services Committee. Application Deadline is June 30. All applicants will be contacted by August 15.

For additional information, list of awards, and entry forms [CLICK HERE](#)



Stewards of Our Strengths at the 54th Annual ICSC Conference

by Leisa Anslinger, author and co-founder of Catholic Strengths and Engagement Community (CSEC).

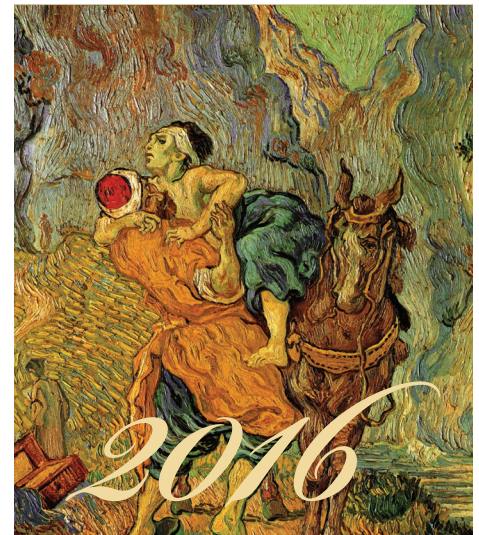
When my parish first began its stewardship journey, it was not uncommon to have conversations that began like this: "I understand the need to be a good steward of my time. Each of us only has so many hours in a day, and we never know when our life will end. I 'get' that we need to be stewards of our treasure.



Even though I always feel I need more money, I can learn to separate my wants from my needs. But stewards of our talents? What are our talents? What does it mean to be a steward of talent?" For many years, we searched for ways to help people become aware of and grow as stewards of their talents. That is one of the many reasons why we were so excited when we discovered *StrengthsFinder*. Many ICSC members have used *StrengthsFinder* to help their parishioners identify their talents and build strengths, growing as good stewards of their talents and finding new meaning and purpose in life as a result. In the next few columns, I will share with you a little of what we have learned about stewarding talents. Read to the end of this column for some exciting news about becoming better stewards of our strengths.

StrengthsFinder is based on research conducted by Dr. Donald Clifton and his colleagues over 60 years ago. The research helps us understand talents as natural ways of thinking, feeling, and behaving. We are born with natural tendencies: things that we do well, that we enjoy, in which the steps come easily, that give us energy. Our talents come so naturally to us, however, that we may not recognize them without help. In fact, we often think the things we do well are things that everyone does well! That is where the *StrengthsFinder* questionnaire comes in: It helps us recognize our greatest areas of talent and to begin to build strengths by applying those talents in all of the aspects of our lives.

For many years, ICSC members have asked for more opportunities to learn about strengths and to more effectively lead people in their parishes to become good stewards of their strengths. We are excited to announce a great opportunity for this in the form of a pre-conference workshop. We invite you to attend *Stewards of Our Strengths*, just before the annual ICSC conference begins. *Stewards of Our Strengths* is for everyone, beginners and those who have experience with strengths. Join us for this great opportunity to grow as leaders who help one another be good stewards of our talents!



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CONFERENCE

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for the International Catholic
Stewardship Council's
54th Annual Conference

October 2-5, 2016



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Visit catholicstewardship.com
to register TODAY!



Tenth Sunday in Ordinary Time
Weekend of June 4/5, 2016

Saint Paul begins today's second reading by stating that he was "called" to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ. As baptized Catholics who have an opportunity to share in Christ's life through the Eucharist regularly, we too are called to proclaim the teachings of Christ. We are stewards of Christ's Gospel. But how are we responding to that call? Do we listen for the guidance of the Holy Spirit? Do we evade, dodge or ignore the Lord's call? Do we attempt to proclaim the Gospel in a spirit of compassion and love? Reflect on how you exercise stewardship over the Gospel.

Eleventh Sunday in Ordinary Time
Weekend of June 11/12, 2016

In today's Gospel we encounter the Pharisee who is rather inhospitable to Jesus. He doesn't seek Jesus' friendship. And yet the unknown woman who appears is quite eager to be where Jesus is and to show him her tremendous gratitude. She does some extraordinary things: She gets down by Jesus' feet, and, weeping, she wets his feet with her tears and wipes them with her hair! She even kisses his feet and anoints them with some perfumed oil. The woman lavishes her love and appreciation for Jesus. Christian stewards show their love for Jesus in tangible ways every day. Others don't really seek his friendship. Who are we more apt to be like in this Gospel story, the Pharisee or the grateful woman?

Twelfth Sunday in Ordinary Time
Weekend of June 18/19, 2016

In today's Gospel Jesus tells his disciples that if they wish to follow him they must deny themselves and take up his cross daily. In Jesus' time the cross was not something nice or cool that one could hang on the wall or around one's neck. It was an instrument of torture and execution. His point: We are to lay down our lives and let him take control. Good stewards hand over their lives to Jesus no matter the cost. They realize that all they take with them into the next life is their relationship with Christ Jesus. What are we pursuing? A life that tries to bring fulfillment to ourselves or a life that brings us closer to Jesus?

Thirteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time
Weekend of June 25/26, 2016

Today's Gospel reveals to us the beginning of Jesus' journey to Jerusalem. We will journey with Jesus for many Sundays to come, and along the way he will teach us about the demands of discipleship. His instructions may seem harsh and unreasonable to our ears. His response to legitimate requests to postpone the journey reminds us that there are always justifiable excuses to defer the journey or put off the responsibilities of discipleship. Other important matters compete for our attention. Some of us must make heart-wrenching choices, but there is urgency about Jesus' mission to bring forth God's kingdom. His demand is that we proclaim the Kingdom of God now. Is this our first priority, or do we have other priorities?