



INTERNATIONAL CATHOLIC STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL CATHOLIC STEWARDSHIP

May 2012 • e-Bulletin

A STEWARDSHIP PRAYER *for May*

Heavenly Father,
Your Son ascended in great triumph
to sit at your right hand.
You sent your Spirit
to watch over us, guide us
and teach us to be better stewards
of your abundant gifts.

May this Spirit of wisdom
make us better stewards
of our planet.
May your Spirit increase
our awareness
of the dignity of every human life,
and show us the way to be better
stewards of our neighbor.

And through your Spirit,
may we be inspired every day
to live in accordance with
the Gospel,
and to give witness to our
risen Lord.

We ask this through
Jesus Christ, Your Son,
who lives and reigns with you
and the Holy Spirit,
one God forever and ever.

Amen.



Becoming Stewards of the Easter Season



Christ is risen! Indeed, He is risen. If you're thinking this greeting comes a little late, since Easter Sunday was April 8, think again. As Catholic Christians, we celebrate the Easter season for seven weeks, until the fires of Pentecost once again inflame our hearts at the end of May.

Indeed, how could we not continue to celebrate this event that has changed everything for us?

It's easy to slip into a cultural way of thinking about our great feasts. Many people have the Christmas tree taken down at the end of New Year's Day, rather than waiting for Epiphany. Likewise, most of us have long ago put the Easter decorations away.

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The Easter season remains a special time for recommitment to the Lord. One word for this period is "mystagogia," and those who were newly baptized at the Great Easter Vigil are especially familiar with this term. It literally means that we delve more deeply into the mystery of our faith. But exploring this mystery is not just an endeavor for new Christians. As we prepare for Pentecost, we prayerfully examine what the Resurrection means in our own lives.

For Christian stewards, it's a time to reevaluate how faith in the Risen Lord informs every aspect of our lives – how we labor, how we play, the way we pray, how we allocate our resources, where we spend our time, how we love, how we extend our compassion to others. If Christ is truly risen – an astounding and life-altering belief – then this Easter time brings immense joy and a continuing desire to know the Risen Lord.

The Scripture readings of the season are especially helpful. We hear once again the stories of the appearances of Jesus to his friends; how often they failed, initially, to recognize him in his glory. The Acts of the Apostles tell us of the struggles and the excitement of the new community of believers.

We spent forty days in the penitential season of Lent. Now, we are embarked on fifty days of joyous celebration. Let us experience this joy throughout the Easter season, so that when we celebrate Pentecost on May 27, we may truly find our hearts on fire with the Spirit.

STEWARDSHIP SAINT FOR MAY



Saint Bernard of Montjoux

Saint Bernard of Montjoux is the patron saint of hikers, backpackers, mountain climbers and alpine skiers. The accounts of his charity, hospitality, and courage on behalf of travelers in the Pennine Alps between Switzerland and Italy are renowned.

Although little is known of his early life, Bernard was thought to be born in Italy around 923. He studied for the priesthood and was ordained for the Diocese of Aosta which was in northwestern Italy at the foot of the Alps.

In time, Bernard was appointed Vicar General of Aosta, and spent more than four decades building churches and schools, evangelizing and exercising pastoral care over those who lived in the nearby mountains. He is especially remembered for the alpine monastery and hospices he built to aid travelers in the mountain passes leading to Aosta.

Since the most ancient times there has been a path across the Pennine Alps used by French and German pilgrims on their way to Rome. The traditional route of this pass is covered with perpetual snow and drifts sometimes accumulate to the height of forty feet. The pass could be dangerous, especially in the springtime when avalanches occurred. For the safety of the pilgrims Saint Bernard founded a monastery and established travelers' hospices; one at the highest point of the pass, 8,000 feet above sea-level, in the year 962.

Bernard also established a religious community of men who rescued travelers, ministered to those who had fallen victim to mountain hazards, and cleared the passes of bandits. At all seasons of the year, but especially during heavy snow storms, these heroic monks, accompanied by their well-trained herding dogs, went out in search of stranded travelers. They provided them with food, clothing, and shelter.

Even through the 20th century Bernard's hospices were well known for the generous hospitality extended to all travelers over the Great and Little St. Bernard alpine passes, named in his honor.

Bernard was canonized in 1681, and then paid a unique tribute in the late 1800s when European dog breeders renamed their alpine herding and rescue dogs, the St. Bernard. His feast day is May 28.



Stewardship and Faithful Citizenship

Saint Paul wrote: "Examine yourselves to see whether you are living in faith. Test yourselves. Do you not realize that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless, of course, you fail the test" (2 Cor 13:5). Christian stewards understand that Saint Paul is challenging us to measure our values, attitudes, decision-making and actions with the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the teachings of his Church. The 2012 election season in the United States offers a unique opportunity to reflect on our call to be good stewards of our faith, which includes the obligation to good citizenship and bringing the values of Jesus Christ into the marketplace, the public square and the voting booth.

We are stewards of life, stewards of our neighbor, and stewards of our citizenship.

The teachings of the United States Catholic bishops in their document *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship* offer a good reference to reflect on our own responsibility to preach the Gospel, even more vigorously in an election season. In that

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document, the bishops do not tell us how or for whom to vote. Rather, they challenge us to be mindful of our moral responsibilities. The document's teaching is not just for the registered voter in the United States, but also for discerning Catholics everywhere who believe that Catholic social teaching can contribute to any nation's dialogue on public policy issues.

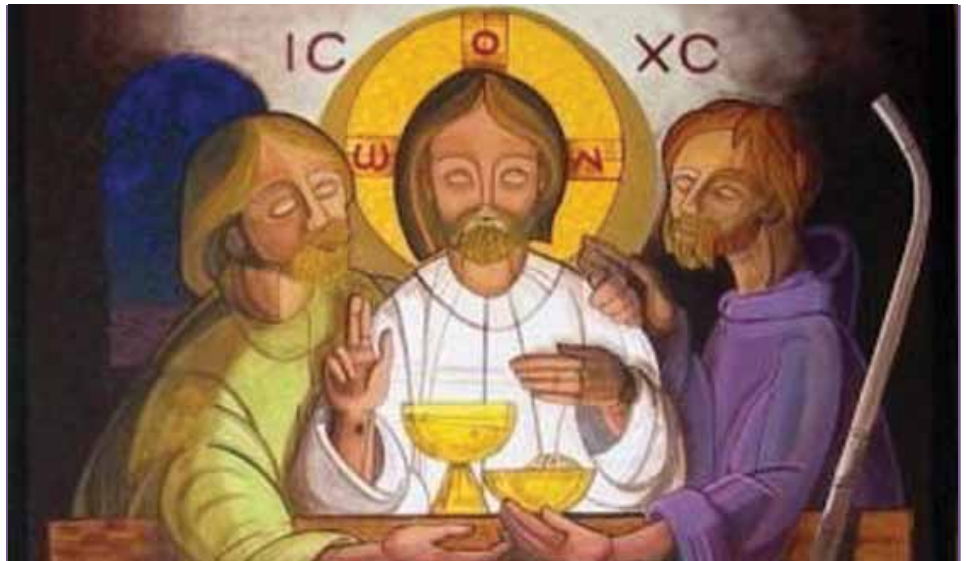
Simplicity is key to the reflections of good stewards, so when Jesus said we must love our enemies, do good to those who hate us (Luke 6:27), forgive seventy times seven (Matt 18:22) – or when we feed the hungry, care for the sick, and welcome strangers – we do it for him (Matt 25:40), good stewards take it seriously. Stewards don't just

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seek to do what is right, they seek to act according to the mind of Christ, to choose to live a life that points to Jesus Christ as its daily guide.

Of course, the teachings of Jesus are easier to read in the New Testament than to apply to our daily lives. The demands of the Gospel are never fully understood or embraced, especially when trying to apply them to public policy issues such as health-care, immigration, and armed conflict.

We are stewards of life, stewards of our neighbor, and stewards of our citizenship. Prayerful study of *Faithful Citizenship* is a good way to follow Saint Paul's injunction to examine our attitudes during this 2012 election season. It can be found at the Web site of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/faithful-citizenship/



Congratulations!

Our Lady of Hope Parish

Rosemont, Illinois

Archdiocese of Chicago

Has just won the drawing for a **FREE REGISTRATION** to the 50th Anniversary ICSC Conference.

YOU CAN WIN A FREE REGISTRATION TOO!

Any individual, parish, diocese or other organization having registered for the 2012 ICSC International Conference by May 31, will be entered in a drawing for one free additional registration to the conference.

Our Next Drawing for a Free Conference Registration is Friday, June 1, 2012!

The theme for our 50th anniversary conference is *With Hearts on Fire*, from Saint Luke's story of the walk to Emmaus. The two disciples journeying to Emmaus are unaware that the stranger who walks by their side is the Risen Lord. Later, after they recognize him in the breaking of the bread, they recall, "Did not our hearts burn within us as he talked to us on the road?"

Christian stewardship helps us to encounter and recognize Jesus: in our understanding of self, in prayer, in others, in the giftedness we discover and share. Stewardship opens the door to gratitude, a door which beckons us to a sacred encounter. The ICSC conference provides opportunities to learn about Christian stewardship and how it can set our hearts on fire.



Register online at www.catholicstewardship.org



A STEWARDSHIP MOMENT

Fifth Sunday of Easter **Weekend of May 5 /6**

Jesus offers a quintessential stewardship statement in today's Gospel reading: "Whoever remains in me and I in him will bear much fruit, because without me you can do nothing." Jesus Christ offers us the fullness of eternal life. Do our lives reveal that this is what we want? Do we believe that by hearing the Word of the Lord and responding we not only produce "good fruit," but abide in the very life of God?

Sixth Sunday of Easter **Weekend of May 12/13**

Jesus calls his disciples his "friends" and commands them to love one another as he has loved them. We are called to be stewards of this friendship; to love one another as Jesus loves us. Do we give serious attention to what this love requires of us? Does this require us to actively seek the welfare of others? What is the price of this friendship with the Lord?

The Ascension of the Lord **Thursday, May 17 or Weekend of May 19/20**

Before he ascended into heaven, Jesus instructed his disciples to proclaim the Gospel to all of creation. As stewards of this legacy, we too are called to give witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ in our words and actions; in how we live and how we treat others. Are we sharing the life

of Christ with others in our day-to-day lives? In what ways do we see ourselves proclaiming the Gospel? In what ways can we do better?

Seventh Sunday of Easter **Weekend of May 19/20 (When Feast of the Ascension is celebrated on Thursday, May 17)**

In today's Gospel we listen to Jesus, praying to his Father. He prays for the well-being of his followers. He prays that they may be protected, that they may know God's truth, that they share in Christ's joy. How do we exercise stewardship over the gift of prayer? What is our attitude toward prayer? Do we speak to the Lord about our personal concerns? Do we pray for others? Do we listen to the Lord? Do we believe the Lord listens to us?

Pentecost Sunday **Weekend of May 26/27**

Today we celebrate the gift of the Holy Spirit, the birth of the Church and the beginning of its mission in the world. Pentecost Sunday reminds us that our lives are filled with the Holy Spirit and God has accomplished creative things in us through this gift. We have been entrusted with this great gift of the Holy Spirit. Now is a good time to ask: Are we being good stewards of this gift? What creative things have we done to glorify God's accomplishments in us?

INTERNATIONAL CATHOLIC STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL

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We encourage you to check out the ICSC Forum at www.catholicstewardship.org under 'members' where members can share ideas and questions. The Parish Stewardship section is reviewed every day by members of the Parish Stewardship Education and Services Committee.