

INTERNATIONAL CATHOLIC STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL
CATHOLIC STEWARDSHIP

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A STEWARDSHIP PRAYER
for November

Gracious and loving God,

As the autumn season continues its transformation;
and the days become shorter, the earth cooler;
as we anticipate joining family and friends
in joyful celebration on Thanksgiving Day,
we pause to give You thanks and praise
for the abundant blessings You have bestowed upon us:

For life and health, safety and comfort,
food and nourishment, we are sincerely grateful.

Through your Spirit, open our hearts
so that we may be even better stewards
of these rich and unmerited gifts.

Show us how to be a blessing for the poor,
sick, lonely and all who suffer.

And help us nurture the gift of faith,
revealed to us by your Son, Jesus Christ,
our greatest gift,
who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit,
God forever and ever.

Amen.



Gratitude: The Heart of Thanksgiving

In the United States, Thanksgiving Day is a holiday that is among the nation's finest national traditions. Indeed, setting a day aside for giving thanks to God is not just a U.S. phenomenon. Canadians have a Thanksgiving Day, and many countries worldwide celebrate harvest festivals that express gratitude to God. For Christian stewards, Thanksgiving Day has special meaning, for we know that gratitude lies at the very heart of stewardship.

If we take time to reflect on our lives, we often discover that that for which we are most grateful was a gift which we struggled to receive.

A grateful heart heralds the beginning of discipleship and opens the way to our deepest response, the desire to return to God for the bounty of our lives. The French educator Jean Baptiste Massieu put it beautifully: "Gratitude is the memory of the heart." For what do we thank our Creator? The early American colonists, who gave inspiration to the Thanksgiving Day tradition, were thankful for their very survival in a harsh and unforgiving environment. Many of their compatriots were buried in the soil of their new land, far from all that had been cherished and familiar.



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It's natural to thank God when things seem to turn out the way we had hoped, when disaster is averted, when life seems filled with abundance. Harder, perhaps, is the ability to thank God for being present to us in times of struggle, seeming failure, illness and death. But, in the heart of the Christian steward, the memory of God's presence is a comfort and a gift all its own. If we take time to reflect on our lives, we often discover that that for which we are most grateful was a gift which we struggled to receive. What came to us in the form of hardship has in hindsight revealed itself as gift. This is why each day's struggles and trials should be met with a heartfelt "thank you."

Meister Eckhart, the 14th century Dominican mystic, wrote, "If the only prayer you ever say is 'thank you,' that will suffice." At first, this seems puzzling. What of praise and petition? But Eckhart knew that the most genuine response, and indeed, the first and most spontaneous response of the heart which has discovered God, is "thank you." Gratitude lies at the beginning of true prayer. As we reflect on this time of thanksgiving, let us be present to those moments when God's gifts were hidden in shadow and remember to be thankful for all.

STEWARDSHIP SAINT *for November*

Saint Frances Xavier Cabrini

St. Frances Cabrini, better known as Mother Cabrini, was the first American citizen to be elevated to sainthood by the Catholic Church. Born in 1850, near Milan in northern Italy, she was the youngest of 13 children. As a young girl she was fascinated by the stories of missionaries and made up her mind to join a religious order. She tried twice to enter religious communities but was turned down

Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, was officially approved.

Sister Frances Cabrini dreamt of being a missionary in China, but Pope Leo XIII had other plans for her. He asked her to travel to the United States and minister to the Italian immigrant community in New York. She made that journey in 1889 with the six members of her community.

Said to have possessed remarkable administrative abilities, Frances



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both times because of poor health.

Having earned a teaching certificate, she became a school-teacher in a girls' school, and eventually became headmistress of an orphanage where she drew a small community of women together to live a religious way of life.

Gaining the attention of the local bishop for their way of life and their care of poor children in schools and hospitals, Cabrini and six other women took religious vows and in 1880, their community, the Missionary

Cabrini was responsible for the establishment of nearly seventy orphanages, schools and hospitals, scattered over eight countries in Europe, North America and in parts of Latin America.

There is much that can be learned first-hand about Mother Cabrini because of the letters and diaries she left behind. A very prayerful person, she was able to accomplish in her work what others said could not be done. And even as she was maintaining schools and hospitals and

in charge of hundreds of nuns, she was ever mindful to care for the poor, the homeless and immigrants who were without jobs.

Frances Cabrini's legacy continues today through the Missionary Sisters, their lay collaborators and in the innumerable religious institutions that bear her name. Her charism continues to inspire thousands who serve the poor in schools, hospitals and other ministries around the world.

St. Frances Cabrini died in Chicago in 1917 at the age of 67 and was proclaimed a saint in 1946. She is the patron saint of immigrants and hospital administrators. Her feast is celebrated on November 13.

Being Good Stewards of Our Food



In the story of the feeding of the 5,000, when the crowds had their fill, Jesus said to his disciples, “Gather the fragments left over, so that nothing will be wasted” (John 6: 12). How much of the food we consumed last week actually ended up in the garbage? If you cleaned out your refrigerator, how much old food, takeout containers, and spoiled and rotten food did you throw out? As Christian stewards, we are painfully aware that it’s not just industry that wastes food. Estimates reveal that we consumers throw out the most food.

The United Nations maintains that 1.3 billion tons of food is wasted annually. It is not a new problem and our habits are getting worse. One-third of the food that is produced for human consumption is lost or wasted.

Studies reveal that those who suffer from hunger in the United States could be fed with all of the food that is wasted and thrown into the garbage. Pope Francis once said: “Once our grandparents were very careful not to throw away any leftover food. Consumerism has led us to become used to an excess and daily waste of food. . . Throwing away food is like stealing from the table of the poor and the hungry.”

Food waste is also expensive. The United States Department of Agriculture concluded that Americans are throwing out \$165 billion worth of food each year. To fully understand just how much money that is, if you compare it to the U.S. Federal Budget, this is a relatively close comparison to what the federal government spent on education, homeland security, agriculture, commerce, and energy in one year.

Food waste is harmful to the environment as well. When food sits in landfills, it emits methane, which is 20 times more potent than carbon dioxide as a greenhouse gas. As the impact of climate change continues to get more severe, reducing the amount of food that is wasted is one way to reduce our carbon footprint.

There are many simple ways to reduce the amount of food we throw away. Perhaps Thanksgiving could give us a new start. Let us use November 28 as the beginning of a new trend towards reducing food waste and drawing the attention of others to this problem as well.



Estimates reveal that we consumers throw out the most food.

While our massive food waste habits are a problem, there are simple solutions. Tips to reduce food waste include:

- Serving smaller portions and buying less food are two easy ways to reduce food waste.
- Plan your meals for the week before you go shopping and buy only the things needed for those meals.
- Shop in your refrigerator first! Cook or eat what you already have at home before buying more.
- Include quantities on your shopping list noting how many meals you’ll make with each item to avoid overbuying.
- Prepare perishable foods soon after shopping. It will be easier to whip up meals or snacks later in the week, saving time, effort, and money.
- Find out how to store fruits and vegetables so they stay fresh longer inside or outside your refrigerator.
- Produce past its prime may still be fine for cooking. Think soups, casseroles, stir fries, sauces, baked goods, pancakes or smoothies.
- If you have leftovers from any of your meals, plan an “eat the leftovers” night each week.
- At restaurants, order only what you can finish by asking about portion sizes and be aware of side dishes included with entrees. Take home the leftovers and keep them for or to make your next meal.
- Put your food waste in a compost bin. It will help reduce methane emissions from landfills, enriches your soil and reduces the need for chemical fertilizers.

Let's Show Gratitude for Our Parish Family



During the month of November let us remember to include our parish family when we express gratitude for the abundant gifts we have been given. Our parish families are great blessings because they are signs of Christ's active presence in the world today.

Saint John Paul II once described a parish as a "family of families." If we accept that the parish is a family, then surely it takes on the characteristics of a family. And just like a family, the gifts of the Holy Spirit to our parishes include the many different talents and temperaments we find in the pews, parish house and parking lot. They become great strengths when we are united in building up the Body of Christ.

The mission of our parish is to continue the saving work of Jesus Christ, who expressed his own ministry resolutely: "I must proclaim the Kingdom of God" (Lk 4:43). The parish is a steward of this ongoing ministry, and as members of a parish family we too are stewards of Christ's work. That is why it is so important to be nourished by the Eucharist regularly and to participate fully in the great prophetic



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witness of the parish: to offer our time, assist in one or more of the many parish ministries, invite others into our parish life of faith, carry our share of the financial responsibility for the parish and celebrate when our parish family celebrates.

Remember as well our pastors and those other priests and pastoral professionals who seek to nourish us with the Bread of Life and to help us understand more fully our faith and the actions which spring from that faith.

The life of faith we experience in our parishes is not perfect. What family is perfect? Our parish family never has been and never will be perfect because we are not perfect. But part of what we share in our parish is Christ's love, which is perfect. The love that we share is a gospel that has been given to us to live and proclaim in word and deed. It is a gospel that gives us hope. And for that, we should be grateful.



Psalms of Praise and Thanksgiving

The Thanksgiving holiday is an excellent time to rediscover the psalms of praise and thanksgiving.

When you find a quiet moment, sit and relax with your Bible. Think of a time when awe and gratitude overwhelmed you. Maybe it was a sunrise, or children playing in a park, an inspirational hymn at Mass, a family gathering, or a walk in the woods. Remember how you appreciated that special moment. Then, open your Bible to one of the psalms of thanksgiving and recite it to yourself. Take Psalm 118 for instance:

Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love endures forever.

Listen to the words. Close your eyes. Let the psalm speak to you.

Other psalms of praise and thanksgiving you might consider include Psalms 92, 95, 98, 100, 103, 104, 105, 107, 111, 117, 145, and 147.

Whatever psalm you choose for that quiet moment, thank God for that special time of awe as well as all the good things in your life, and praise God for his glorious deeds.

Be a Good Steward of Thanksgiving Day

Your Thanksgiving Day can be more than just enjoying a great meal and turning on the television to search for the traditional parades and football games. How about expressing your stewardship of this day in a more meaningful way? Here are some suggestions for making Thanksgiving an opportunity for expressing our gratitude to the Lord in creative ways:



Go to Mass and count your blessings. Start the day off on a positive note and celebrate the Eucharist. In your prayer reflect on five things you are most grateful for in your life. Then reflect on how you can be an even better steward of these gifts.

- Write "I'm thankful for you" cards and give them out or e-mail them on Thanksgiving (or mail them beforehand).
- Share your Thanksgiving meal with someone who is alone this Thanksgiving. Look for someone, such as a neighbor, co-worker, fellow parishioner, college student or armed services personnel who may be separated from family and ask them to join in your Thanksgiving dinner.
- Volunteer your time at a soup kitchen to help prepare and serve Thanksgiving dinners to others.



- Visit the sick. Check with hospitals, assisted living facilities or nursing homes in the area to see if there are volunteer opportunities to visit with patients or residents on that day.
- Practice ecumenism! Many parishes make Thanksgiving an opportune time to join in ecumenical services with other Christian worshipping communities, or inter-faith activities. Find one nearby and experience something new and enriching.
- Help someone if you can. Extend your generosity and blessings beyond your own family. Be part



of an adopt-a-family effort, help distribute food baskets, or bring canned foods or clothing to St. Vincent de Paul centers.

- Take a walk. Find a place to enjoy God's gift of creation. Head out the door for a refreshing walk. Invite family, friends or others to share the experience too.



- Most important! Take advantage of the Thanksgiving holidays to focus on what you're grateful for and the things you appreciate about yourself and others. It is an ideal time to remember and to celebrate the many blessings in our lives.



A STEWARDSHIP MOMENT

For the weekend of November 2/3, 2024 Thirty-first Sunday in Ordinary Time

In today's Gospel Jesus said: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." It was not meant to be a suggestion or an option. He didn't say when it fits into our day or suits our time schedule, or after we've completed our various recreations. It is a requirement for Christians; to exercise good stewardship over the neighbors entrusted to us by God. It is a requirement often ignored when we put up barriers of anger, fear, or intolerance for a neighbor. How can we look beyond our own personal difficulties to see what we can do to love the person who lives next door, works next to us, or who sits next to us in the church pew?

For the weekend of November 9/10, 2024 Thirty-second Sunday in Ordinary Time

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

For the weekend of November 16/17, 2024 Thirty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time

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

For the weekend of November 23/24, 2024 Solemnity of Christ the King

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