

INTERNATIONAL CATHOLIC STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL

CATHOLIC STEWARDSHIP

February 2026 • e-Bulletin

A STEWARDSHIP PRAYER for February

Merciful God,

We embark on our journey of renewal through difficult and uncertain times; times of division and strife, and for many suffering and discouragement.

But our journey is with your son, Jesus, who bore his cross and suffered in ways we cannot imagine.

We journey with Jesus toward the great paschal feast of Easter, where we have the grace to experience the true joy of Resurrection.

Teach us to be good stewards of your mercy and forgiveness, so that we may extend these gifts to others.

Give us the strength to bear witness to your son at all times, even during these times of stress and adversity.

And fill our hearts with love that we may be faithful to the Gospel Jesus proclaimed and ready to celebrate our unity with him and each other.

Grant this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever.

Amen.

Metanoia: The Challenge of Lent

As we prepare ourselves for the beginning of Lent (Ash Wednesday, February 18), we might consider a Greek word that resonates during the season: metanoia. Just the sound of it is challenging and commands our attention. Literally, the word means “to change one’s mind.” In our Christian tradition it has come to be connected with repentance and more importantly, to conversion. But perhaps the online Merriam-Webster dictionary defines it most beautifully: metanoia- a transformative change of heart. To Catholic stewards, that phrase perfectly defines our yearning during Lent. We yearn to be transformed by a change of heart. Actually, that kind of change can be a scary proposition. It sounds risky. It’s certainly life-changing. If metanoia actually took place within us, if we allowed that kind of heart-based transformation into our lives, would our lives be different?



Perhaps our Lenten resolve shouldn’t be limited to the usual small sacrifices or token pieties, but to a deep commitment to a daily prayer that asks for the courage to be transformed by a change of heart.

On the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord (January 11) the Gospel reading revealed to us that Jesus walked down to the Jordan River and asked John the Baptist to baptize him. There were two men, utterly transformed. John would call others to repentance in preparation for the coming of the Messiah. Jesus would be led by the Holy Spirit into the desert before embarking on a ministry that proclaimed the Kingdom

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of God. John would be beheaded for his ministry; Jesus would be crucified.

Are we ready to be transformed during this Lenten season? Yes, we want to be good during Lent, attend extra Masses, lay off the chocolate,



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make sure the family attends Holy Week liturgies. But metanoia?

Transformation alters us, opens our hearts in radical ways. We witness it in the doctor who travels to Sierra Leone to take care of Ebola patients during his vacation time; in the couple who adopted, with very little time for discernment, three kids who had been orphaned and needed to be kept together; in the family that makes a decision to tithe despite their financial worries. Transformation requires courage. It is not a thing casually approached.

Perhaps our Lenten resolve shouldn't be limited to the usual small sacrifices or token pieties, but to a deep commitment to a daily prayer that asks for the courage to be transformed by a change of heart. Let this simple prayer suffuse our Lent: "Even if it takes time, Lord, make me smaller in the world, bigger in the kingdom." Metanoia – let us rise to the challenge of the Christ who beckons us to follow him this Lent into the desert.

STEWARDSHIP SAINT for February



Saint Margaret of Cortona

Margaret of Cortona is the patron saint of single mothers and the homeless. Her story begins in 1247 in Laviano, Tuscany, where she was born into a farming family. Her mother died when Margaret was seven years old and life with her stepmother was very difficult. At age seventeen, Margaret met a young Tuscan nobleman of Cortona, moved out of the family home, and into the young man's castle.

Margaret lived as a mistress to the cavalier, who for nine years promised to marry her but never did. In the meantime she gave birth to his son. During this period, Margaret revealed a deep compassion for the poor, and sought out quiet places to pray and ask for the Lord's guidance to change her station in life.

One day the young cavalier was discovered murdered in a nearby forest. It was an event that shocked Margaret so badly that she left her companion's castle, gave his gifts and heirlooms to his family and returned to Laviano with her young son.

When Margaret discovered that she was unwelcome in her hometown, she returned to Cortona to seek shelter. She was desperate for herself and her son, and fought the temptation to trade her beauty for a meal and place to stay. She prayed not to give in.

Two women in Cortona, noticing that she was homeless, took her home with them. They introduced her to the Franciscan friars at the Church of San Francesco. Margaret found spiritual solace in the Franciscan way of life. She embraced this life of simplicity, prayer, penance and self-denial. Her devotion to the Eucharist increased as well.

Under the guidance of a Franciscan spiritual director, she established a hospital for the poor and the homeless.

In 1277, three years after her return to Cortona, Margaret became a Franciscan tertiary. She established a congregation of tertiary sisters from which she recruited nurses for the hospital. Her commitment to prayer and her devotions fueled her growing ministry and drew people to her for advice and inspiration.

Margaret's son would become a Franciscan friar, and Margaret herself would remain in Cortona for the rest of her life, providing hospitality to the homeless and caring for the sick and impoverished. She passed away when she was 50 years old in Cortona, on February 22, 1297. Her feast day is February 22.

Stewardship and the Power to be Transformed

by Leisa Anslinger

The Lenten season is a perfect time to reflect on how you were first introduced to stewardship as a way of life. When did this spirituality first begin to shape the way you live, the decisions you make, and the way in which your faith directs your daily life? I have been thinking about this quite often of late, as I have reflected on the potential each of us has to touch others with the stewardship message.

Many years ago now, a friend who worked in publishing and I were talking about parish life. I was fumbling around, trying to explain the impact that stewardship was having on our parishioners and on the parish. My friend suddenly stopped me and said, "Well of course this is happening! Stewardship can really change our lives, can it not?" His comment broke through my stumbling thoughts, as his remark echoed the U.S. bishops' insight in *Stewardship: A Disciple's Response*. At the very beginning of



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the bishops' pastoral letter they write: "Stewardship is an expression of discipleship that has the power to change how we understand and live out our lives." What stunned me about my friend's comment was how passionately he expressed his understanding and how clearly he saw this. I realized that my experience of him as a giving and generous person was a result of his growth as a steward. His witness in the course of an everyday conversation between friends has remained with me for over ten years, and has urged me on in times when my own "disciple's response" has seemed weak or lagging.

It seems to me that if we are to lead others along the stewardship journey, we must ourselves live, grow and allow ourselves to be transformed by the power of stewardship. We must be prepared to witness to the ways in which stewardship has changed how we "understand and live out our lives." We may never know the impact our personal sharing or ministerial coordination will have on others, but I can tell you from my own experience of being touched by my friend that the potential is there for us to truly make a difference. What is your story? With whom might you share it during this Lenten season?

Twenty Ways to Exercise Good Stewardship of Lent and Easter

Are you looking for ideas to help you with your Lenten experience? Don't worry, you have the end of February, the month of March and the beginning of April to be a good steward of the gift of Lent and the Easter Triduum. Here are 20 ideas to fill the days of Lent and the beginning of the Easter season.

1. Attempt a more intentional prayer life – start a habit in the morning and before bedtime. Also, embrace periods of silence each day.

2. Read a book on Christian spirituality, one that will enrich your spiritual journey. Also consider keeping a journal during Lent to reflect on your spiritual highs and lows.

3. Attend a weekday Mass.



4. Pray the rosary.

5. Make a point of experiencing the sacrament of reconciliation at the beginning and end of Lent at minimum.

6. Give up meat on Fridays but don't substitute lobster. Make fasting something that is truly sacrificial.

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7. Resolve to stop engaging in rumors, gossip, and negative chatter that devalues others.
8. Begin and end each week with an e-mail thanking someone for all that they do.
9. Be sure to say grace at any restaurant you frequent (don't dodge making the Sign of the Cross either).
10. Reconcile with someone you've hurt or aren't speaking to.
11. Invite someone who's been away from the church to attend Mass with you.
12. Make a gift to a charitable cause. Make it a sacrificial gift, not what's "left over."
13. Thank a bishop, priest or member of a religious congregation for their public witness. Invite them out for coffee or a meal.



14. Visit someone who's alone.
15. Reflect on the most pressing challenges confronting our Church and pray for a Spirit-filled response.
16. Pray the Stations of the Cross.
17. Find out if there is a person participating in your parish's OCIA program and send a note of encouragement.
18. Discover the ways your diocese is ministering to the poor and see how you can help.
19. Attend your parish's Good Friday liturgy.
20. Invite someone you know will be alone to Easter Sunday dinner.



Good Stewards Live the Beatitudes

Three weekends in our February liturgical calendar will turn our attention to Jesus' teachings in the Gospel of Matthew explaining what is to be expected of those who choose to follow him. This is the familiar Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5:1 – 7:29), the most quoted part of the Bible. Jesus' sermon begins with messages of comfort, the Beatitudes (Matt. 5:3-12).

Blessed are the poor in spirit,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
Blessed are they who mourn,
for they will be comforted.
Blessed are the meek,
for they will inherit the land.
Blessed are they who hunger and thirst
for righteousness, for they will be satisfied.
Blessed are the merciful,
for they will be shown mercy.
Blessed are the clean of heart,
for they will see God.
Blessed are the peacemakers,
for they will be called children of God.
Blessed are they who are persecuted
for the sake of righteousness,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
Blessed are you when they insult you and persecute you and utter
every kind of evil against you (falsely) because of me.
Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven.

The word "Beatitude" refers to a state of deep happiness or joy. But these sayings are paradoxes. They turn our normal expectations upside down. Jesus is bringing us a new law, new expectations on how to live. He is bringing forth the Kingdom of God. As the United States bishops wrote in their 1992 stewardship pastoral, "Jesus does not waste time proposing lofty but unrealistic ideals; he tells his followers how they are expected to live. The Beatitudes and the rest of the Sermon on the Mount prescribe the lifestyle of a Christian disciple."

Each of these "blesseds" is a statement about an important aspect of how we exercise stewardship of our lives. Each of them offers us an ideal of how to live and how we find God living within us. Learn the Beatitudes, memorize them, make them part of your daily prayer life, and ask the Lord for the wisdom and strength to follow this stewardship way of life, a path that follows in the footsteps of Jesus.



64th Annual Stewardship Conference

Stewardship:

Shining the Light of Christ for All to See (Mt 5:16)

JOIN US in vibrant **New Orleans, Louisiana** for the **2026 Annual Conference** as, together, we further our mission to renew and broaden our vision as stewards of the Church.

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A STEWARDSHIP MOMENT

Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time **Weekend of January 31 and February 1, 2026**

In today's Gospel, Jesus begins his Sermon on the Mount with a series of blessings, the Beatitudes. The Beatitudes are a summary of the fundamental attitude of a Christian steward. This speech sets the themes and tone for Christ's public ministry. He calls for a radical change in how we respond to the human condition. Good stewards understand that conversion is a lifelong process and trying to live the Beatitudes is fundamental to this process. Make it a point to reflect on this Gospel reading during the week. Identify the blessing you relate to the most. Which one is the most challenging for you?

Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time **Weekend of February 7/8, 2026**

In this weekend's readings and psalm, the prevailing theme is that of light: We are the light of the world; our light breaks forth like the dawn; our light shines in the darkness; our light reflects generosity and justice. Good stewards know they are the lamp, and Christ is the flame that, through them, illuminates the earth. They know that they carry Christ's light in their hearts, and let it shine through their words and deeds. What are we doing to shine Christ's light on the hungry, the homeless and others most in need of God's mercy? How do we exercise good stewardship over the light of Christ that burns within each of us?

Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time **Weekend of February 14/15, 2026**

In today's Gospel, part of his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus does not speak of replacing the law of the Old Testament. He goes beyond it. He obliges his followers to work at being holier than even the strictest of Pharisees. But the work is not accomplished by following a religious "law," it requires growing in love for other human beings. Followers of Jesus know they are required to be good stewards of others. In what way will you exercise good stewardship over other people this week?

First Sunday of Lent **Weekend of February 21/22, 2026**

In today's Gospel reading we listen to the confrontation between Jesus and the devil, who thought he might tempt Jesus to forget who he was and commit a grievous sin when he was most vulnerable. Jesus had just spent 40 days and nights out in the desert, alone, away from civilization. He was hungry, thirsty, and tired. If there ever was a time to tempt Jesus, that was it. Temptations to sin come at us every day, from many directions and in many different forms. When the temptation to sin tries to overcome us, how do we react? Do we consciously remind ourselves that we are followers of Christ? Is there a time this week when you have needed to confront a temptation to sin? What lessons did you take away from the experience?