

# INTERNATIONAL CATHOLIC STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL

# CATHOLIC STEWARDSHIP

January 2026 • e-Bulletin

## A STEWARDSHIP PRAYER *for the New Year*

Good and gracious God,  
a new year of grace is upon us,  
giving us impressions of  
crisp beginnings  
new goals, a fresh sense of hope.

Though we cling to our own  
expectations  
for the year ahead,  
we know you alone  
are the sovereign of our future,  
Lord of our lives, and the source  
of whatever good we may do.

We thank you, O Lord,  
for the gift of the days and weeks  
you have entrusted to us.  
Teach us to be good stewards  
of our time ahead,  
that we go about our days  
keeping you  
at the center of our lives.

In the midst of our daily pursuits  
and activities,  
focus our eyes on the needs of others;  
help us respond with compassion  
to the poor;  
and open our hearts  
to a suffering world.

We ask for a year of peace,  
a year that brings an end  
to hatred and strife,  
and a year where we find  
a deeper joy  
that can only be found in you.

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

Amen.

## “Making All Things New”: Stewardship and New Year’s Resolutions

Stewardship is a commitment of mind and heart to the Lord; a way of life that needs constant renewal and transformation. This time of year has always been one of looking forward to a new year, reflecting on the changes we need to make in our lives and resolving to follow through on those changes. Perhaps those who seek to make resolutions to be better stewards might find inspiration in the following quick samples:

**Stewardship of Prayer:** Resolve to strengthen your relationship with the Lord. Notice how often you pray and what hinders you from praying. Commit to short, daily prayer times.



**Stewardship of Family:** Resolve to set aside more time to stay connected with your family. Eat dinner together, schedule regular dates with your spouse, plan family outings, and go to Mass together.

**Stewardship of Health:** Resolve to get those medical and dental checkups. Adopt healthier eating habits. Add exercise and other physical activity to your daily routine.

**Stewardship of Possessions:** Resolve to possess a little more “lightly” this year. Consider ways you can reduce the amount of all that stuff you own. Distinguish between those items that are necessary and those that are considered luxurious and unnecessary.

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**Stewardship of the Parish Family:** Resolve to serve your faith community in some way this year such as at liturgy, in the parish's outreach or education and formation efforts.

**Stewardship of Money:** Resolve to render sacred your annual budget. Reprioritize your financial goals to ensure that the Lord comes first in your spending. Take positive steps to improve your financial health.



**Stewardship of Work:** Resolve to be faithful to your daily, work-related tasks and offer them up to the Lord. Cultivate your skills. Deepen your knowledge. Be mindful of how you are building the Kingdom of God.

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**Stewardship of Neighbor:** Resolve to be a person of hospitality; to make time and space for others who enter your life. Be more aware of those times when a neighbor, co-worker, fellow parishioner or stranger, needs a moment of kindness, a little attention or an affirming gesture on your part.



**Stewardship of Mind:** Resolve to keep your mind active. Commit to being more informed on the issues of the day. Read your bible. Familiarize yourself with the Church's social teachings.

**Stewardship of the Poor:** Resolve to live with more compassion and in solidarity with those less fortunate. Remember the poor in prayer, and commit to helping relieve in some way the plight of those who are impoverished or marginalized.



# 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.

**September 20-23**  
Hyatt Regency,  
New Orleans

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## REGISTER TODAY!





Thomas Aquinas, a Dominican friar and a Doctor of the Church, is one of the greatest and most influential theologians in the entire history of the church.

Born near the small town of Aquino in 1225, Thomas was educated at the Benedictine monastery at Monte Cassino and at the University of Naples, where he first became acquainted with the writings of the Greek philosopher Aristotle and the Muslim philosopher Averroës of Còrdoba.

He entered the Order of Preachers at age 19 over the strong opposition of his family. His brothers were sent to kidnap him and they held him in a castle for a year. Upon regaining his freedom, he traveled to the University of Paris for further studies, and then to Cologne, where he studied under Saint Albert the Great, during which time he was ordained a priest. Saint Albert the Great predicted that one day Thomas “would be heard all over the world.”

Thomas returned to Paris to teach and write and then was sent to other places including Rome where he began writing his most famous work, the *Summa Theologiae* (Latin for “Synthesis of Theology”). His deep

## Saint Thomas Aquinas, Doctor of the Church

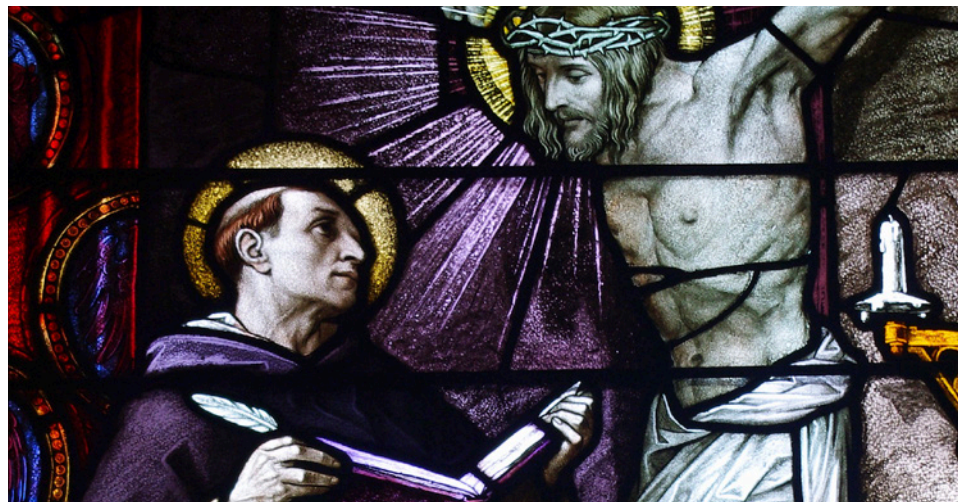
immersion in Sacred Scripture fostered his desire to lead a life in complete fidelity to the gospel and to cherish the guidance of the great Fathers of the Church, especially Saint Augustine and Saint Gregory the Great.

His entire ministry as a teacher and preacher was of giving to others what he had himself contemplated, which was for him the highest of all activities when done out of charity (*Summa Theologiae* 2-2.188.6). It was this same generosity of mind and heart that inspired him, against the opposition of many theologians

On the feast of St. Nicholas, December 6, 1273 he experienced a beatific vision. He suddenly stopped all of his writing and is said to have made this famous statement:

*“All I have written seems to me like straw compared with what I have seen and what has been revealed to me.”*

Invited to the Second Council of Lyons in 1274 he decided to visit his relatives en route between Naples and Rome. He became acutely debilitated when he reached them, perhaps as the result of a major stroke. He asked to be taken to a



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and church leaders of the time, to use extensively the works of any authors-whether Christian, Jewish, Muslim or pagan-who might lead him to the truth.

Notwithstanding Thomas’s great intellectual acumen, he was universally admired for his modesty and humility and for his prayer life and spiritual insights. He once wrote: “The ultimate human knowledge of God is to know that we do not know God and insofar as we know, what God is transcends all that we understand of God.”

nearby monastery where he died on March 7, 1274 at age 49.

Thomas was canonized in 1323, less than fifty years after his death. He was declared a Doctor of the Church in 1567. Pope Leo XIII, in his encyclical *Aeterni Patris* (1879), commended Thomas’s thought to all students of theology. The following year Thomas was named patron saint of Catholic universities. He is also patron saint of students and booksellers, among others. His feast is January 28.

# Epiphany: To Find Our Meaning in Christ

On the weekend of January 3 and 4, 2026 we celebrate the Solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord.

Epiphany! What a wonderful word. Even its secular definition is thrilling: “a sudden realization about the nature or meaning of something.” It brings all sorts of images to mind: a light bulb suddenly turning on, shedding brilliant illumination; a revelation that brings a gasp; an idea so vivid we pause and give thanks; a truth so powerful we fall to our knees.

The feast of the Epiphany is all of those things and more. We celebrate the mysterious appearance at Jesus’ birthplace of three men from the East. They had set off on a most quixotic journey, seeking what they would find at the end of a star’s dazzling rays. What, we wonder, did they make of the epiphany with which their journey ended? Did they spend the rest of their lives trying to discern what their discovery of the baby meant, or did the Christ Child gift them with “a sudden realization” of His nature?



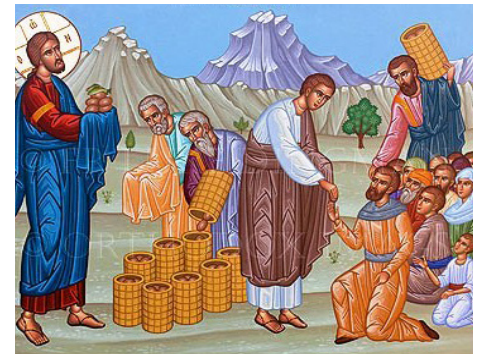
Epiphany! What a wonderful word. Even its secular definition is thrilling: “a sudden realization about the nature or meaning of something.”

What more could they – or we – want of a life’s journey, than to find, in our epiphany, the Christ waiting for us?

The twelve days of Christmas have led us to this place, where Gentiles from afar have discovered Christ, thereby revealing that He came for everyone, for each one of us throughout history, and not just for the Jewish people to whom he was born. The feast of Epiphany brings us to the last week of our liturgical celebration of Christmas.

But for the Christian steward, Epiphany is not an end but a beginning. This feast reminds us that the New Year beckons us to openness about the epiphanies to which God leads us if we but keep an open, prayerful heart, a heart full of deep, awed gratitude.

Let us pray never to become too jaded, too full of certainty, too wrapped up in the routine of life to be asleep at the time of epiphany. If we could resolve to keep only one New Year’s Resolution, let it be this: to pay attention to the epiphanies God places before us.



## Stewardship: Responding to the Call of Jesus Christ

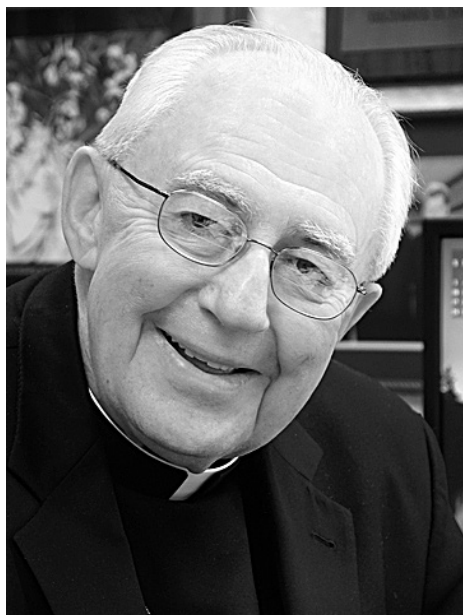
by Leisa Anslinger

“Once one chooses to become a disciple of Jesus Christ, stewardship is not an option.” This quote from Bishop John McRaith, which opens the tenth anniversary edition of the U.S. bishops’ pastoral letter, *Stewardship: A Disciple’s Response*, captures the profound call to be formed and to form others as good and faithful stewards. Christian stewardship, as practiced in the Catholic tradition, is a particularly meaningful way to live our lives as disciples. This year is the 34th anniversary of the publication of the pastoral letter, and we who are stewardship leaders still have much to learn from it.

Thirty-four years is a long time. And yet, in the context of the life of the Church, it is the blink of an eye. In the past 34 years, the pastoral letter has guided leaders in their formation as stewards and in their efforts to bring a spirituality of stewardship to their dioceses and parishes. The letter grounds us in the theology of stewardship, and at the same time, offers essential wisdom and guidance for all who hope to form people in this meaningful way of life. In this new year, it is good for us to read and reflect on the letter, again or for the first time, taking into consideration the

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*“Once one chooses to become a disciple of Jesus Christ, stewardship is not an option.” ~Bishop John McRaith,*

implications for all who are dedicated to forming people as disciples who embrace living and growing as stewards. We will focus on these implications in the coming months.

Some years ago, I had the blessing of an extended email exchange with Bishop Sylvester Ryan about stewardship and the bishops’ pastoral letter. He wrote in one email,

*I think it is critical for us to emphasize that the title of the pastoral letter is Stewardship: A Disciple’s Response. The spirituality of the pastoral letter is that we become disciples learning at the feet of Jesus and responding to Jesus who sends us forth to proclaim the Kingdom!*

This is our beginning point for reflection: How does stewardship influence the way in which you live as a disciple of Jesus Christ? How do you form your community to respond to Christ’s call to proclaim the Kingdom and to grow as good stewards?

## *Stewardship: A Disciple’s Response – Reflections from Bishop Sylvester Ryan*

Bishop Sylvester Ryan has deep roots in the Catholic stewardship movement. And when he speaks of the bishops’ pastoral letter, *Stewardship: A Disciple’s Response*, he describes it as “poetry” and adds: “The pastoral letter never gets old.” Why?

“It’s one of the most powerful expressions of a disciple’s journey as it relates to stewardship,” said the tall, silver-haired bishop emeritus of the Diocese of Monterey, California. And to be on a disciple’s journey is a life-changing and all-consuming thing.

“A disciple is one willing to surrender himself for the sake of others,” Bishop Ryan said. “Jesus is the example of discipleship, the example of one who dies to self. Stewards are always in the process of emptying ourselves.”

Bishop Ryan was in attendance at the bishops’ meeting where the pastoral was approved, and later served as the chairman of the stewardship sub-committee for the bishops’ conference for eight years. He has warm memories of the man who inspired the document, Archbishop Thomas Murphy of Seattle.

“He came to the conference and said, ‘we bishops need to develop a spirituality of giving which offers a biblical concept of stewardship.’” He describes Archbishop Murphy as “one of the most charismatic men I’ve ever

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*To be on a disciple’s journey is a life-changing and all-consuming thing.*

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met. He had a great simplicity. He never had to be the center of attention.”

Bishop Ryan said the pastoral letter on stewardship influenced him greatly. “It gave me a way of looking at life that made sense, that provided purpose. Each of us has gifts that are indispensable, even when they are limited.”

Bishop Ryan’s own discipleship journey began in high school, where he recalls a “scary” librarian, who, if she didn’t see a book in your hand, would thrust one upon you. One day, seeing him idle, she forced into his hands a biography of St. Damien of Molokai, the priest who lived in Hawaii among those afflicted with leprosy and later died of that disease. The book changed his life. “The thing that touched me was the moment he put his foot into a hot bucket and didn’t feel it. The next Sunday, he began his homily, ‘We lepers ...’”

That sense of accompaniment, of being present to people on their discipleship journeys, has never left Bishop Ryan and has inspired his own vocation. Although officially retired, he has spoken about stewardship. He especially likes to weave stewardship into his confirmation homilies, a topic he said is “so vital to that sacrament.” And he loves to remind people that “once one chooses to be a disciple of Jesus Christ, stewardship is not an option.”

Before his retirement, he and Bishop Robert Morneau of Green Bay, Wisconsin, one of the authors of the pastoral, would travel to seminaries to teach young men in formation about stewardship. Bishop Ryan said he would “love” to see that emphasis again. “Stewardship is powerful in changing parish life,” he said.





### **Solemnity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of God January 1, 2026**

The encounter between God and Moses in today's first reading is awe-inspiring. God bestows three blessings upon Moses and directs him to extend those blessings to others: The Lord blesses you and keeps you. The Lord lets his face shine upon you and be gracious to you. The Lord looks upon you kindly and gives you peace. Good stewards realize these blessings are showered upon them in a unique and special way each time they receive the Eucharist, and exercising good stewardship of the Lord's blessings in this sacrament begins by receiving these gifts with profound gratitude. Perhaps it would be a good idea this week to memorize these marvelous blessings and repeat them to yourself frequently. Make them part of your morning prayer each day.

### **Solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord Weekend of January 3/4, 2026**

In today's second reading we hear the teachings of Saint Paul to the members of the Church at Ephesus. He proclaims that he, and they, are stewards of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and therefore stewards of God's loving, unifying and inclusive grace. He also proclaims that the Holy Spirit is at work within each of them, if only they would be open to the Spirit. Today, our world races by with intolerance, violence, desperate poverty, fear and division. At the beginning of this New Year, perhaps it is appropriate to reflect on Saint Paul's words and ask ourselves how we can be good stewards of the gospel today. How will we allow the Holy Spirit to work within us? How can we be better stewards of Christ's justice and peace?

### **Feast of the Baptism of the Lord Weekend of January 10/11, 2026**

Saint Matthew's story of the baptism of Jesus is an appropriate scripture reading to reflect on our own baptism. Jesus' baptism has been understood as a symbol

of his death. Baptism is the sacrament by which we die to an old life of sin and enter a new life of grace. We "put on Christ." To be a good steward of one's baptism means to accept that one has new life in the risen Lord and is willing to be guided by the life of Jesus. As this year begins to unfold, reflect on the meaning of your own baptism, and how you might make an even deeper commitment to a new life in Christ Jesus.

### **Second Sunday in Ordinary Time Weekend of January 17/18, 2026**

As the prophet Isaiah proclaims in the first reading, the Lord continues to remind us that we are his servants. Imagine the Lord speaking these words to you personally: "You are my servant. Through you I show my glory. I formed you as my servant from your mother's womb. I will make you a light so that you may shine the light of my salvation everywhere you go, and reveal my glory to everyone you encounter. I will give you the strength to do this. I will give you confidence. Heed my words, for I have spoken to you." What would your response be to the Lord? Would it be different from the response you give the Lord now?

### **Third Sunday in Ordinary Time Weekend of January 24/25, 2026**

In today's gospel we hear Jesus calling Peter, Andrew, James and John to follow him. Following Jesus was a difficult journey for these first disciples. It is difficult for us today. Jesus wants to teach us his way of thinking, acting and encountering the world. But it is not easy for us to embrace his teaching. Good stewards of Jesus' teachings realize they are on a spiritual journey, and must learn from their experiences of being open or resistant to the gospel. They realize the need to be liberated from those actions that keep them from enjoying a closer friendship with Jesus. What is it in our lives that we need to reform? What keeps us from revealing God's glory to others?