

INTERNATIONAL CATHOLIC STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL

CATHOLIC STEWARDSHIP

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A STEWARDSHIP PRAYER for October

On October 11, 1962, Saint Pope John XXIII prayed the following prayer to open the Second Vatican Council. Thereafter, the bishops at the Council continued to pray this prayer together before every session.

We stand before you, Holy Spirit,
conscious of our sinfulness,
but aware that we gather in your name.

Come to us, remain with us, and enlighten
our hearts.

Give us light and strength to know your will,
to make it our own,
and to live it in our lives.

Guide us by your wisdom, support us
by your power,
for you are God, sharing the glory of
Father and Son.

You desire justice for all:
enable us to uphold the rights of others;
do not allow us to be misled by ignorance;
or corrupted by fear or favor.

Unite us to yourself in the bond of love
and keep us faithful to all that is true.

As we gather in your name
may we temper justice with love,
so that all our decisions may be pleasing
to you,
and earn the reward promised to
good and faithful servants.

You live and reign with the Father and
the Son,
God, forever and ever.

Amen.

Being Good Stewards of Our Priests

Catholic priests are precious commodities, gifts to our communion of faith. But little do we know of their joys, or the struggles they often face in maintaining integrity and sanctity in their priesthood. We may imagine they get up every day and respond to a never-ending line of spiritual needs. But we cannot imagine how their lives are filled with intense pastoral encounters each day. With the many demands on their time and energy, priests deserve our support. Here are 15 ideas, in no particular order, to help us start thinking more intentionally about how we can better affirm and steward the spiritual and emotional well-being of our priests:



We may imagine they get up every day and respond to a never-ending line of spiritual needs. But we cannot imagine how their lives are filled with intense pastoral encounters each day.

1. Pray for priests, especially for your pastor and others with whom you are most closely connected. Let them know you are praying for them from time to time.
2. Respect a priest's need to take his scheduled day off each week and know what that day is. Don't contact him unless he asks. Follow the appropriate protocols for contacting a priest in case of an emergency.
3. Many priests get numerous gifts of sweets and baked goods during the holidays or as gifts of appreciation (A priest shared that one Christmas he received 37 different gifts of sweets and baked goods)! Consider other options to help keep our priests healthy and fit as they serve us in so many different capacities.

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4. Respect a priest's privacy regarding personal health issues.
5. Expect and encourage priests to take their full allotment of vacation time each year as well as an annual retreat to help them, both physically, mentally and spiritually.
6. Recognize that the ministry of priesthood requires a great deal of emotional energy (e.g., responding to deaths, conflicts in the parish and multiple demands from parishioners). Be especially sensitive to the times of the liturgical year that demand more of a priest's time such as the Advent and Lenten seasons.
7. Respect a priest's responsibility to keep many issues and information confidential. He may know of private information about parishioners or others, but he can not share it with you.
8. Discuss any conflicts or disagreements you may have with your pastor directly and confidentially. Give him the benefit of the doubt and seek reconciliation, not a "win." Encourage others to do the same.

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9. Support the pastor in setting expectations by parishioners for his time and scheduling priorities. Many pastors are so busy that an appointment with him may take weeks if it is not an emergency. Consider asking a staff person to assist you if that is possible.
10. If you are a lay leader in the parish, work with the pastor to identify which parish programs and activities truly require his presence and which might be equally guided by lay leadership. Some people expect the priest to be at every parish event and that is just not possible.
11. Assume that a priest strives for holiness and integrity each and every day. Discuss theological differences in a respectful manner, recognizing that Catholics can come to somewhat different understandings on some issues depending on their background, life situation, and the Holy Spirit's guidance in their lives.
12. Understand that "social" events with parishioners, although fun for everyone, are not always truly social events for a priest who can be pulled into a pastoral role at any time.
13. Don't have expectations that the priest is able to be your personal friend. Many priests need to set boundaries in today's climate. When they may have hundreds or thousands of souls to be the spiritual leader of, it is difficult for them to have many personal relationships outside of family and close friends.
14. Extend a simple "thank you" to a priest, and especially your pastor, when the occasion arises. An appreciation card or note is often needed, and will be welcome at any time and not just special occasions.
15. The best support you can offer and gift you can give to a priest is to practice your faith, offer to help him where needed and share your gifts of time and talent so he can direct you to a ministry or apostolate where you can serve him, the parish and the people of God.



Stewardship and Public Life: *Bringing the Good News to all Creation in 2024*

With the 2024 presidential election upon us, it is more important than ever for mature Catholics to be mindful of their responsibilities to exercise good stewardship over their neighborhoods, communities and society by participation in the public life of our country.

**How should stewards
exercise their
responsibilities as citizens?
One way of course, is to
inform themselves of the
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and to vote.**

Jesus said that we, his disciples, are the light of the world. We must not hide that light under a bushel basket (see Matthew 5:16) or in the privacy of our homes or in a church building. We must let it shine so that all men and women can see it. Stewards understand that living out their faith in public life is part of their responsibility

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to go into the world and proclaim the Gospel to all creation (Mark 16:15); and that their relationship with Jesus Christ and their desire to please him should inform all of their moral decisions, including how they participate in public life and how they vote.

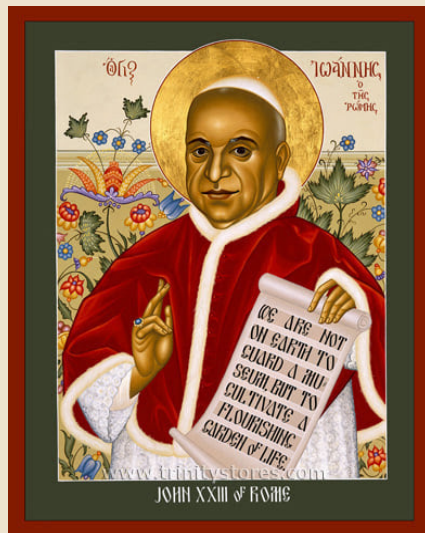
How should stewards exercise their responsibilities as citizens? One way of course, is to inform themselves of the political issues of the day and to vote. Voting is literally the least one can do to promote Gospel values in our communities, state and nation.



Stewards are not found wanting in this vital area of their stewardship. The teachings of the church help us understand our responsibility to make informed choices about issues that concern our society and world, especially as it relates to peace and justice and the most vulnerable of our sisters and brothers.

Stewards commit to prayer, reflection and discussion among others in their community of faith about how to bring the Gospel to public life. They believe in continued conscience formation and conversion, take the teachings of the Church seriously, and keep themselves informed on the political issues of the day. Stewards also strive to make prudent choices, vote and encourage others to vote. These are just a few of the ways stewards can help bring the Good News to all creation.

STEWARDSHIP SAINT *for October*



Saint John XXIII

Saint John XXIII is arguably the most beloved pope in the history of the Catholic Church. He touched people around the world in a way no other pope had ever done, earning him the affectionate title of “Good Pope John.”

He was born Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli, the third of 13 children, to poor tenant farmers in a village near Bergamo, Italy, about 25 miles northeast of Milan. As a child, he was very devout and showed much academic promise. He completed his priestly formation at the diocesan seminary at Bergamo and was

ordained in 1904. The bishop of Bergamo appointed Roncalli to be his secretary and to teach Church history at the seminary.

During World War I, Roncalli was first conscripted into service as a hospital orderly, then a chaplain. Over the next 20 years Father Roncalli would be called to several Vatican posts. In 1921 he was appointed the national director of the Propagation of the Faith and soon thereafter he became a Vatican diplomat, serving in Bulgaria, Turkey, Greece and then France during World War II. As an archbishop, Roncalli established friendly relations with the Orthodox churches and worked to prevent the deportation of Jews during the German occupation of Greece. After the war years, he served as the Vatican’s first permanent observer at UNESCO (the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural organization).

Expecting that he would hold office only temporarily, Cardinal Roncalli was elected pope on October 28, 1958, just shy of his 77th birthday. He surprised everyone, however, when he began breaking papal traditions. He preached at his own coronation, insisting that he was not a prince but simply “a priest, a father and a good shepherd.” He made it a habit of visiting local parishes, prisons, hospitals, convalescent homes, schools, universities and charitable organizations.

On January 25, 1959, he announced that he would convene what would become the 21st ecumenical council of the Church, referring to it as a “new Pentecost.” He opened the Second Vatican Council on October 11, 1962, insisting that it had not been convened to refute errors, but to update the Church and to “let some fresh air in.” He set the Catholic Church on a whole new pastoral plane, emphasizing the role of the laity, the collegiality of bishops, the authentic faith and goodness of non-Catholic Christians, and the dignity of all human beings. His address to open the council was full of hope for the future of the Church. The encyclicals of Pope John XXIII emphasized world peace, the unity of the Church, social justice and human rights.

He was diagnosed with stomach cancer in the fall of 1962 and passed away on June 3, 1963 with the whole world mourning his loss. He was beatified on September 3, 2000 and canonized along with John Paul II on April 17, 2014. His feast day is October 11.

Celebrating Hispanic Heritage Month



From September 15 to October 15, Catholic parishes and dioceses across the country are participating in *Hispanic Heritage Month*, celebrating the rich tapestry of cultures, traditions, and faith that Hispanic communities are bringing to the Catholic Church. During this month, we not only celebrate the contributions of Hispanic Catholics, but also reflect on the challenges they face. Language barriers, economic disparities and cultural differences often create obstacles to full participation in the life of the Church.

According to the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), Hispanic Catholics now represent nearly 50% of all Catholics in the United States, and their growth is accelerating. In June 2023 the U.S. bishops issued a nationwide pastoral plan for Hispanic ministry, declaring it a much-needed response to an urgent pastoral priority. The bishops characterize Hispanic Catholics “as a blessing from God, and a missionary and prophetic presence that will revitalize the Catholic Church in the United States” (*Missionary Disciples Going Forth with Joy: National Pastoral Plan for Hispanic/Latino*

Ministry, (Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 2023)). By establishing a new pastoral plan for Hispanic ministry, the bishops recognize that the ministerial infrastructure of the past 40 years is no longer adequate to address the ongoing pastoral needs of this fastest growing sector of the Catholic Church in the United States.

Studies reveal that vast numbers of Hispanic Catholics are leaving the Catholic Church, many turning to non-Catholic faith communities, because the Catholic ministerial infrastructure in the U.S. is contracting, not expanding, and failing to keep up with their pastoral needs (see “*Ministry with Young Hispanic Catholics: Towards a Recipe for Growth and Success: A Summary Report of Initial Findings from the National Study of Catholic Organizations Serving Hispanic Youth*, Boston College, 2023).” The U.S. bishops also realize that they can no longer count on Hispanic Catholics to remain in the pews without pastoral leaders engaging them in a more meaningful way. The bishops have called on parishes and dioceses to respond immediately to this new reality.

In their pastoral plan, the bishops use terms like “strongly recommend” to urge parish leaders to be more proactive in implementing new and creative ways to reach out and minister to Hispanic Catholics. For example, the pastoral letter emphasizes that, however and wherever possible, the Eucharistic liturgy should be offered in the Spanish language.

The bishops also recommend that wherever there is Spanish language fluency, parishes should form and commission bilingual catechists and use bilingual catechetical materials, even when the instruction is given primarily in English, so that children can be equipped to review

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their religious education materials in Spanish with their non-English speaking parents who will be better able to reinforce at home what their children are learning.

Hispanic Heritage Month gives us an opportunity to prayerfully consider exploring new ways to enhance Hispanic ministries in our parishes. The bishops ask us to volunteer our time, share our resources, and advocate for more inclusive practices that support our Spanish-speaking brothers and sisters, as they in turn, contribute to the broader mission of evangelization and service within our Church.

Stewardship of Prayer: The Rosary

In the midst of our busy lives, October strikes a peaceful note. Summer travel is over, and we're back into a routine. Crisp football weather and vibrant autumn colors abound, and the snow shovels remain out of sight. The holiday rush lies weeks in the future, with the simple pleasures of Halloween the only red-letter date on our calendars.

If October provides a bit of a lull in a hectic world, how appropriate that October is designated the month of the Rosary. The popularity of the Rosary has waxed and waned in recent years, but perhaps nothing testifies to the Rosary's strength and durability more than the example of James Foley, the American journalist beheaded by the terror group ISIL in 2014. A Marquette University graduate, Foley had earlier been captured and held captive in Libya. Released from that first captivity, he told his alma mater that prayer had

seen him through the ordeal. "I began to pray the Rosary. It was what my mother and grandmother would have prayed."

Indeed, millions of Catholic women still sleep with the Rosary under their pillow or by their bedside. Next to the crucifix, it's probably the most common Catholic sacramental in our homes. Yet, sometimes, we neglect to pray the Rosary. Why? Perhaps it was those childhood Rosaries, with our minds wandering to the playground as we waited for the droning of repetitive prayers to end. But if it's just meaningless recitation, it's not what the Rosary is meant to be. Perhaps it's more of an adult prayer than we realize.

The Rosary presents a unique combination of recitation and meditation. The simple cadence it presents helps our minds give way to mystery. Does anything slow down



our frantic lives like the slow recitation and meditation of this ancient prayer? Tradition tells us the Rosary was given to St. Dominic by Our Lady herself in the 12th Century. The Rosary has remained a popular devotion over the centuries, a favorite of popes and peasants alike. The Rosary, Pope Leo XIII declared, "is composed of two parts, distinct but inseparable — the meditation on the mysteries and the recitation of the prayers. It is thus a kind of prayer that requires not only some raising of the soul to God, but also a particular and explicit attention" (*Incunda semper*). October is the ideal time of year to once again savor the mysteries of the Rosary.

Autumn: A Time of Recommitment to our Parish



The autumn brings with it, for countless Christian stewards, the clarion call of renewed commitment to a life of stewardship. Our families are the domestic Church, but we know that as Catholics, next to our own family, the parish is the place where our Church lives and grows and evangelizes.

For many Christian stewards, the fall brings stewardship fairs, witness talks, pledge forms and ministry pleas at our parishes. We hear reports on the financial and social status of our parish. We listen as our friends and fellow parishioners explain what a life of stewardship has meant to their happiness and growth in discipleship. We learn how our parish is making a difference through charity and social justice work. We see how many people contribute to the faith formation of the young, and to the outreach to those who are suffering or to

those who have left the Faith. Sometimes, we man the ministry booth at the fair, or help make the posters, or agree to chair a committee. Other times, we sit reflectively and ponder what we have to give and how best to do so sacrificially.

At different points in our life, we are able to do more, and sometimes less. Our time and resources ebb and flow. But one thing remains constant: the parish is our home, it is vital to the life of the larger Church, and we belong there. It is where we grow in Christ through community and faithfulness. We belong, not just as Sunday morning observers, but as active and conscious participants in the liturgy and life of the parish. We owe our parish a prayerful discernment on how best we can give. Now is the time to answer the call to commitment. If this is Stewardship time at your parish, don't miss the opportunity to serve and give sacrificially as you feel called.



A STEWARDSHIP MOMENT

Twenty-seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time Weekend of October 5-6, 2024

In today's Gospel Jesus teaches us about the sacredness of marriage; a covenant that is a gift from God. Our relationships with our spouses, family, friends, coworkers, and those in our community of faith are all gifts from God. Jesus reminds us today that it is the hardened heart that damages or breaks up relationships. Good stewards understand the holiness of relationships and pray for the love, patience, understanding and kindness necessary to sustain those relationships. Take time out to prayerfully reflect on your relationships this week. Is your stewardship of these relationships as God intended? What relationships need to be healed and reconciled?

Twenty-eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time Weekend of October 12-13, 2024

Jesus offers a hard lesson regarding wealth and possessions in today's Gospel. The rich man whom he encountered could not part with his possessions as a condition to becoming a disciple of Jesus. Would our response be the same as the rich man? Do we place our trust in our money and possessions instead of trusting in God's generosity? Do we seek security in our possessions? Good stewards realize that their possessions must not possess them, lest those possessions block their relationship with the Lord.

Twenty-ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time Weekend of October 19-20, 2024

In today's Gospel Jesus teaches his disciples that whoever wishes to be great among them must be a servant, just as he came to be a servant. Today is World Mission Sunday— a reminder of our call to be good stewards of the Gospel and to support those who make evangelization their servant ministry throughout the world. Not to be a servant of the Gospel would be poor stewardship. But how do we serve the Gospel? How do we support others who serve those who have never heard the Gospel or who have chosen to reject the Gospel of Jesus Christ?

Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time Weekend of October 26-27, 2024

After healing the blind man in today's Gospel Jesus told him to go, to be on his way. But the man decided to follow Jesus. Being a disciple of Jesus is a choice. The stewardship way of life likewise involves a choice, in fact many choices. We choose to be grateful, we choose to live generously, and we choose to trust that God will always provide for our needs. These are three choices central to the stewardship way of life. What choices will we make this week that give witness to our decision to follow Christ?