



2011

Annual Conference

Orlando, Florida
October 23-26, 2011

INTERNATIONAL CATHOLIC STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL

PARISH STEWARDSHIP

Education and Services Committee e-Bulletin • August 2011



A Stewardship Prayer for August

Lord God,

As we prepare for the transitions of August;
of routines becoming regular,
signs of schools beginning to emerge,
and traffic patterns getting heavier,
help us to appreciate the sacred rhythms
in our lives.

Give us the wisdom to make our hearts
be still, much as the August wind is still,
so that we may listen to the gentle words
you speak to us.

Help us understand that you alone
are the source of every good gift,
of the vast array of our universe,
and the mystery of each human life.

And help us see that we are called
to be good stewards of all that you
have entrusted to us;
tending them faithfully
and responsibly so they may ultimately
be returned to you with increase.

In this month of August
while a measure of summer's stillness remains,
speak to our hearts,
guide us in your Son's ways,
and through your Spirit, give us the strength
to proclaim your justice and peace
in our everyday words and deeds.

We ask this through Christ, Our Lord.

Amen.

Stewardship: Beholding the Sacred in our Lives

Stop for a moment. Take a look around you. What do you see that you can describe as sacred? You may first see obvious things such as a bible, a favorite rosary that was blessed, the inside of a church. What about the sacred you encounter every day of your life that may not immediately strike you as being sacred? What about nature, the rhythm of your day, the fruits of your labors, the person who is standing next to you?

The ancient and traditional notion of the sacred was tied up with the notion of blessing, but not as we generally understand the concept. In ancient Hebrew times something was blessed and made holy when one acknowledged to God that he had provided it as his most purposeful and personal gift. Thus, one praised and blessed God for this gift. When the rain was not just some natural phenomenon, but God's watering of the earth to make it fruitful, then it became holy for the steward of the harvest.

But if one took things and people for granted and simply thought of them as random objects or events that occurred in the course of time with no personal affection or concern associated with them, then they were considered profane, unblessed.

Stewardship gives us a lifetime of ongoing insight into the awe-inspiring gifts that God has given to us, the people, the things, the events in our lives. What is sacred is what we have come to discover as God's gift. We have a lifetime of blessing not when we receive new things, but when we notice that they have been there all the time. Good stewards constantly thank God for these gifts and bless themselves for receiving them. Now, look around again and thank God for the precious bounty he has laid before you.

A STEWARDSHIP SAINT FOR AUGUST



Saint Lydia of Philippi

Lydia is the first recorded person in Europe to become a follower of Jesus Christ. She was Saint Paul's first baptized convert at Philippi.

What we know of Lydia is found in the Acts of the Apostles. She was from Thyatira, an industrial center located in what is now western Turkey. She was a wealthy businesswoman; a manufacturer and seller of purple dyes and fabrics for which the city of Thyatira was noted. Lydia was part of a high value industry. Purple goods were luxury items, used by emperors, high government officials, and priests of the pagan religions.

At the time of the narrative in Acts, Lydia and her household had moved to the city of Philippi, a Roman colony on the Rome-to-Asia trade route. This is where she had her first encounter with Paul on his second missionary journey about the year 50.

While visiting Philippi for the first time, Paul and his party came upon Lydia and a group of women gathered by the river that ran through the city center. He sat down and shared the gospel with them. Lydia listened intently, took the gospel message to heart, and she and her family were then baptized in the river.

Lydia insisted on providing hospitality to Paul and his companions, so they made their home with her while in Philippi. She continued to help them even after they were jailed and released.

As a successful businesswoman, her home would have been spacious enough to welcome guests and to become a place for community gatherings and liturgies.

Paul cherished the members of the Christian community at Philippi and called them his "joy and crown." Undoubtedly, Lydia's generous hospitality and leadership in the founding of this early Christian community contributed to Paul's affection.

Saint Lydia's feast day is August 3.

Welcoming Strangers: A Mark of Christian Stewardship

Companies that specialize in household moving tell us summer is their busiest time. Kids are out of school and families make changes. If you're planning an August move, at least in the Northern Hemisphere, there's a backlog for transporting your goods.

The 2010 U.S. Census data revealed that 37.5 million Americans moved that year. Many of them were moving to take advantage of better housing or to find new jobs. Undoubtedly, each of them experienced a certain amount of upheaval and rootlessness.

Worldwide, the United Nations reports over 43 million people are refugees or people displaced within their own countries due to political conflict, persecution, and calamitous natural disasters. And imagine – over half of these are children. These staggering numbers present a challenge and an opportunity for the Catholic steward.

A number of Catholic Charities agencies are actively involved in the resettlement of refugees. In our own country, many citizens have been uprooted from their homes due to recession and foreclosure. Most dioceses and parishes are actively involved in helping the homeless or the newly relocated. It only takes a phone call to discover how you can help with material assistance, food, or mentoring.

Many parishes experience a steady stream of new members, especially in the fall. Sometimes new parishioners slip through the cracks. Does your parish have a welcoming committee? Could you sponsor a welcoming event? If your parish doesn't offer a program to welcome new families, maybe you could get one started.

Recently, a news report featured a young man who had fled with his family to the Syrian-Turkish border to escape the Syrian government's repression. The man held his newborn son up to the camera. One could imagine a similar scene in the Gospel of Matthew where Joseph took Mary and fled with the infant Jesus into Egypt.

The movement of peoples is a story as old as history. At some time in our lives, most of us will probably feel as if we are strangers. How we respond to this feeling in others will be a mark of our Christian stewardship.





STEWARDSHIP EXPRESSIONS | AUGUST 2011

Inspired by the stewardship ministry of Suzanne Erpenbach, Knoxville, Tennessee

We begin a new month with fresh opportunities to integrate stewardship practices into life – at home, work, school, on-the-road, with friends and neighbors ... everywhere. Let us strive to rethink, recommit and rededicate our daily living with focus and determination to reflect caring discipleship and service throughout the year –Suzanne Erpenbach

AUGUST OBSERVANCES

National Immunization Awareness Month is observed in August when children prepare to enter or go back to school. It provides the community an opportunity to learn about the value of proper immunization and update their immunization records. Immunizations have eliminated many life-threatening diseases. Catholic Relief Services provides immunizations to the poor worldwide and Congress continues to appropriate funds for vaccines overseas.

WEEKLY OBSERVANCES

August 7-13 — National Farmers' Market Week - Since 2000, the United States Department of Agriculture has celebrated National Farmers' Market Week, encouraging consumers to visit their local markets to purchase fresh farm products in their healthiest possible state. Farmers' markets are said to promote child health and reduce childhood obesity by increasing children's access to affordable and convenient fruits and vegetables. Moreover, farmers' markets increasingly support anti-hunger initiatives through donations of unsold food to feeding programs for those in need. They also play a key role in developing regional foodsheds, which benefits the environment.

August 7 – 15 Knights of Columbus Family Week - This world-renowned Catholic men's organization promotes a week of public activities dedicated to the family which its Web site maintains "stands at the core of the Knights of Columbus' beliefs and ideals as a Catholic, family, fraternal service organization."

SELECTED DAILY OBSERVANCES

August 15 – The Assumption of the Virgin Mary - Belief in the Assumption of Mary's body into heaven, like that of the Ascension of Jesus, goes back at least as far as the sixth century, when a liturgical feast was established to celebrate that mystery. Mary's assumption into heaven is a sign of hope for all good Christian stewards who desire to die in Christ.

August 16 - World Youth Day is recognized as a positive, life-changing experience for youth because of the intense faith experience offered as well as the Christ-centered values it promotes. It has received much praise from world leaders for encouraging young people to make a better world. This year's event will be held from August 16 to 21 in Madrid, Spain.

August 19 – World Humanitarian Day was established by the United Nations to raise public awareness of those who bring assistance and relief to millions around the globe, and to honor those who have lost their lives in humanitarian service. In the past decade, more than 700 relief workers have perished while providing life-saving assistance to others. Still, the humanitarian community has not been deterred from its mission to respond rapidly to emergencies.

August 26 – Women's Equality Day commemorates the ratification of the 19th amendment to the U.S. Constitution on August 26, 1920, granting women the right to vote. This constitutional amendment had first been introduced in 1878, and was the culmination of years of struggle, including the imprisonment of many public advocates for equal rights, both women and men.



ICSC 2011 ANNUAL CONFERENCE

October 23-26 • Orlando, Florida



The ICSC annual conference offers the most comprehensive and relevant programs on the theology, spirituality and practical aspects of Christian stewardship.

Network! The ICSC annual conference is widely recognized as the most valuable opportunity for those involved in Christian stewardship to connect with others who share their commitment to teaching stewardship as a way of life. Many say meeting others with similar experiences is the main reason they attend the ICSC Conference!

Learn! The ICSC annual conference is filled with sessions and forums that provide practical information you can take home and use immediately. You will be exposed not only to topics that offer fundamentals but also new ideas, innovations and strategies!

Grow in your Catholic faith! The ICSC annual conference is a great opportunity to get away from your busy schedule to pray, reflect on your own life of faith, listen to inspiring reflections and participate in invigorating liturgies!

Stewards of

God's Grace

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or call ICSC toll free at 1.800.352.3452



A STEWARDSHIP MOMENT

Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time Weekend of August 6/7, 2011

Today's Gospel reveals what miraculous things can happen when one embraces a single-minded faith in Jesus Christ. Peter gets out of a wind-tossed boat when the Lord calls him. His faith is tested by his obedience to Jesus who is calling him out onto the water. In the midst of the waves and the wind, Peter gets out of the boat and walks toward Jesus. Good stewards heed Christ's call to them. Sometimes that call directs them to take on seemingly impossible challenges. This week, reflect on how the Lord could be calling you out of the safety of your own "boat" to take on the impossible.

Twentieth Sunday in Ordinary Time Weekend of August 13/14, 2011

In today's first reading, the Lord speaks through the prophet Isaiah during a time of political dissolution and moral decline. The prophet had warned of God's judgment against people for the feelings of self-importance they found in their possessions, and condemned them for various forms of economic injustice such as exploiting the poor and immigrants. Good stewards know that Isaiah's message is as compelling today as it was in the time of the kingdom of Judah: Do the right thing. Offer justice and compassion toward others. Be honest in all your dealings. And remember to observe the day of the Lord.

Twenty-First Sunday in Ordinary Time Weekend of August 20/21, 2011

Saint Paul reminds us in today's second reading that the ultimate origin of everything is God. Since everything comes from God, we are God's own. We can never put God in our debt. There is absolutely no negotiating with God. Every breath we take is a gift. Every good deed we perform is grace.

Good stewards realize they are created and called to make the beauty, greatness, compassion and justice of God and his gifts known throughout the world. The stewardship question for us is whether we are willing to embrace this call, acknowledge our dependence on God and give our lives over to him completely for this purpose.

Twenty-Second Sunday in Ordinary Time Weekend of August 27/28, 2011

In today's Gospel reading, Jesus brings up the topic of the cross to his followers. They would not realize the cross was part of God's plan and was to be their legacy until after the Resurrection. Today's followers of Christ recognize they are stewards of his entire legacy, including his cross; that through their mutual sacrifices God's glory is revealed. They don't live their life in Christ only when it is convenient for them. They make a decision to take up their cross and carry it, no matter what the cost. What crosses do we bear in order to reveal God's glory?

INTERNATIONAL CATHOLIC
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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.

www.catholicstewardship.org • parishstewardship@catholicstewardship.org