

## INTERNATIONAL CATHOLIC STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL

# PARISH STEWARDSHIP

Education and Services Committee e-Bulletin • November 2011



### A STEWARDSHIP PRAYER

#### *for Thanksgiving*

Heavenly Father,

We give you thanks  
for the inspiration of your  
Holy Spirit  
as we reflect on the Gospel call  
to exercise Christ's stewardship  
on our journey of faith.

We ask you to guide us  
in our discernment,  
and show us how to be faithful  
in the plans we make,  
the actions we take,  
and the love we share  
on our pilgrim way.

Give us the courage  
to find wisdom in our sacrifices,  
joy in our generosity,  
and hope in the compassion  
we show,  
especially to those most in need  
of your comfort and care.

And create in us a more open heart  
and a greater awareness of our need  
to grow, to change, to be transformed,  
so that we may be better stewards  
of your gifts  
for the good of all.

We pray this in Jesus' name.

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. 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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**In the heart of the Christian steward, the memory of God's presence is a comfort and a gift all its own.**

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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 Albert the Great

Saint Albert the Great was a 13th-century German Dominican priest, considered one of the most extraordinary men of his age alongside Peter Lombard, Roger Bacon and Saint Thomas Aquinas. His stewardship of the intellectual life, his students and our life of faith is profound.

Born in 1200, near Ulm, Albert was the eldest son of a powerful and wealthy German family. He was educated in the liberal arts at the University of Padua, Italy, and against his family's wishes, joined the Dominican Order in 1223.

He earned his doctorate at the University of Paris and taught theology with much success in a number of medieval German universities, including Cologne.

For a time Albert was the pope's personal theologian, and in 1260 was appointed bishop of Regensburg, Germany, against his will. He remained for only three years before returning his time and energy to teaching and writing in Cologne. He enhanced his reputation for humility by refusing to ride horses. Instead, he walked back and forth across his huge diocese, keeping with the rules of the Dominican order.

Albert's influence on scholars is substantial. His fame is due in part to being the forerunner, spiritual guide and teacher of Saint Thomas Aquinas. But he also composed an encyclopedia containing treatises on almost every branch of learning known at the time. His work fills thirty-eight volumes and covers subjects ranging from astronomy and chemistry to geography and philosophy. His knowledge of science was considerable, and for the age remarkably accurate. He also displayed an insight into nature and a knowledge of theology that surprised his contemporaries, who named him "Magnus" ("the Great") to recognize his genius. Albert even inspired a mystical school of theology among fellow Dominicans such as Meister Eckhart.

Albert participated in the Second Council of Lyons, France, in 1274, the fourteenth of the Catholic Church's 21 great councils (Vatican II was the twenty-first). On his way to the council, he was shocked to learn of Aquinas' death at age 49, and he publicly defended his former student against attacks on the Catholicity of his writings.

After suffering from what is now thought to be Alzheimer's disease, Albert died in Cologne on November 15, 1280. He was declared a Doctor of the Church in 1931, one of only 33 individuals bestowed that honor. His tomb is in the crypt of the Dominican church in Cologne, and his relics are in the Cologne Cathedral. His feast day is November 15.

# Save the Date!

January 31 – February 2, 2012



### ICSC / OSV Winter Parish Institute

Oblate Renewal Center  
San Antonio, Texas



## STEWARDSHIP EXPRESSIONS | NOVEMBER 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*

### NOVEMBER OBSERVANCES

#### National Native American Heritage Month

Long before North America was populated by those from across the Atlantic, indigenous Americans flourished with vibrant cultures and were the original stewards of the land. From generation to generation, they handed down invaluable cultural knowledge and rich traditions which continue to thrive in Native American communities across our country today. During National Native American Heritage Month, we can celebrate the lives of Native Americans and learn about their traditions and virtues that honored the sacredness of family, community, and respect for the environment.

#### Child Safety and Protection Month

This month is used by child-care workers, doctors and teachers to remind parents to review the safety plans for their children. According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, nearly 300 children under four years old die every month in the U.S. because of accidents – most of which can be prevented. Parents are urged to use this month as a reminder to check out everything from the home, to children's toys and wearing apparel, even to internet safety education.

### WEEKLY OBSERVANCES

#### November 8 - 14 - World Kindness Week

Kindness toward others should be extended everyday, but the World Kindness Movement has selected one week in November to encourage people worldwide to weave a kinder approach into daily life. The purpose of World Kindness Week is to urge people to look beyond themselves, beyond the boundaries of their country, culture, race, and religion; and realize they are citizens of the world. The week culminates into World Kindness Day, November 13, when we are especially encouraged to be kinder, more considerate, friendlier and more generous.

### SELECTED DAILY OBSERVANCES

**November 1 – Solemnity of All Saints** is a principal feast of the Church and a holy day of obligation to honor all the saints both publicly celebrated in the Church's history as well as the multitude of saints whose names are known only to God. In order to honor the memory to these unnamed saints, and to recall their example, the Church dedicates a special feast day so that all living Christians would celebrate at a special Mass the lives and witness of those "who have died and gone before us into the presence of the Lord".

**November 1 -Family Literacy Day** is celebrated all over the United States with activities and events that showcase the importance of family literacy programs. Family literacy programs bring parents and children together in the classroom to learn and support each other in efforts to further their education and improve their life skills. A good day – like every day – to read a book with your child.

**November 2 – Commemoration of All the Faithful Departed (All Souls Day)** encourages the offering of prayers and celebration of Mass for all those who have departed this life. In the early days of the Church, the names of the faithful departed were posted in Church so that the community would remember them in prayer. Remember your loved ones in prayer today.

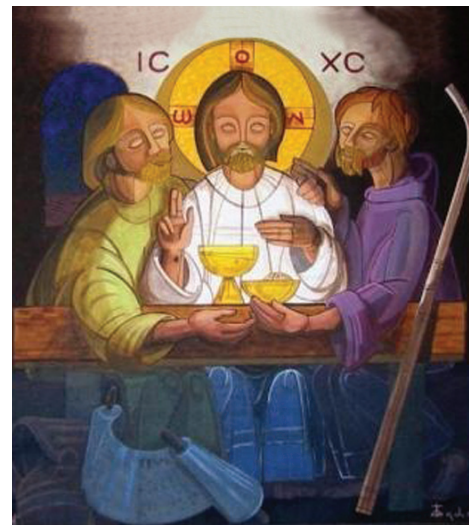
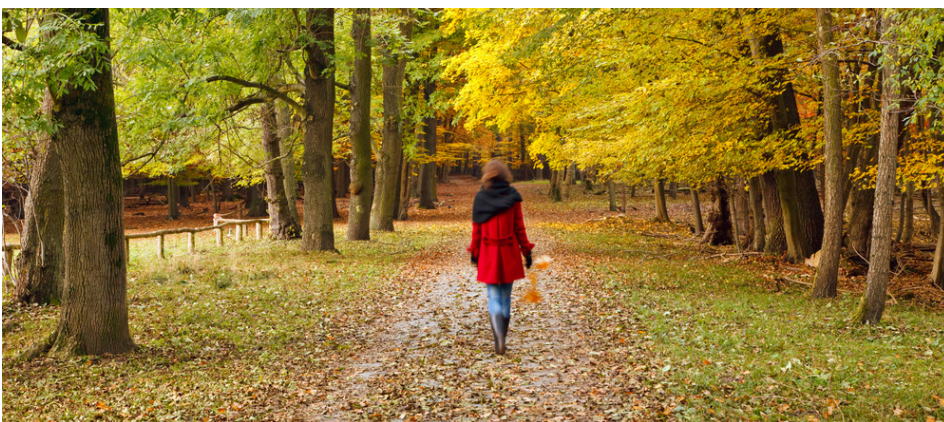
**November 24 – Thanksgiving Day** is a uniquely special holiday for most Americans, where we celebrate family unity. Good stewards approach this holiday with a deep sense of prayer, gratitude and joy. They are reminded that their lives and daily activities are a constant act of thanksgiving, all of which give glory to God, especially through the celebration of the Eucharist.

**November 27 – The First Sunday of Advent** begins the season of Advent. Through it, we prepare ourselves to await the coming of God himself, in the person of Jesus Christ, who became a human being to bring humanity back into communion with the Triune God.

# 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.
- **Practice ecumenism!** Many parishes make Thanksgiving an opportune time to join in ecumenical services with other Christian worshipping communities, or inter-faith activities and programs with non-Christian centers of worship. Find one nearby and experience something new and enriching.
- **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.
- **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.
- **Volunteer your time** at a soup kitchen to help prepare and serve Thanksgiving dinners to others.
- **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.



## With Hearts on Fire

*Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the scriptures?*

~ Luke 24:32



*of Teaching Stewardship*

ICSC 2012  
Annual Conference

Chicago, Illinois  
September 16~19, 2012



## A STEWARDSHIP MOMENT

### Thirty-Second Sunday in Ordinary Time Weekend of November 5/6, 2011

Jesus' parable of the ten virgins, some prepared, others unprepared, is directed at those who profess to be believers in Christ and await his return. His teaching is not directed to unbelievers. The stewardship issue turns on spiritual preparedness for the Lord's return. Good stewards prepare for Christ's return daily, in their life of prayer, worship, and acts of compassion and generosity. A stewardship reflection for the week: Are we preparing ourselves for the Lord? Are we open to the Holy Spirit's work within us? Are we ready?

### Thirty-Third Sunday in Ordinary Time November 12/13, 2011

In today's Gospel, Jesus delivers the parable of the talents; using the example of money rather than abilities or skills. It's a story about investments, risks and returns. Stewards understand that God has given them an abundance of spiritual gifts. They know God doesn't want them to simply receive these blessings and bury them in fear, but to multiply them; to use these gifts to serve Him and others; to spread Christ's Good News; to go and make disciples of others. Good stewards invest what God has given them in the service of others and are prepared to render an account when the Lord returns.

### Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ The King November 19/20, 2011

In today's Gospel, Saint Matthew offers a compelling vision of the end-time, when the people of all the nations are brought before the Lord to give an account of their lives and actions. Interestingly, the sheep, the righteous ones, are rewarded for having acted with love and compassion without having recognized the face of Christ in others. Good stewards recognize those in need of their care as gifts from God. They know that they are the instruments of Christ's active, loving presence in the world. How will we treat others this week: our family members, neighbors, customers, strangers? What accounting will we make to the Lord for their care?

### First Sunday of Advent November 26/27, 2011

The season of Advent is upon us, and in today's Gospel Jesus delivers a simple message through the pen of Saint Mark: "Be watchful! Be alert!" Christian stewards understand what Jesus meant when he said, "It's like a man going away: He leaves his house and puts his servants in charge, each with his assigned task." Good stewards realize that to each one a task is assigned by God. They have been set in a particular place and station in life, and have been gifted with unique relationships. How do we respond to the tasks or honor our relationships in a way that keeps us alert for the return of Christ?

#### INTERNATIONAL CATHOLIC STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL

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We encourage you to check out the ICSC Forum at [www.catholicstewardship.org](http://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.