

# INTERNATIONAL CATHOLIC STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL CATHOLIC STEWARDSHIP

November 2021 • e-Bulletin

## A STEWARDSHIP PRAYER for Thanksgiving

Gracious and loving God,

As the autumn season continues its transformation; and the days become shorter, the earth cooler; as we anticipate joining family and friends in joyful celebration on Thanksgiving Day, we pause to give You thanks and praise for the abundant blessings You have bestowed upon us:

For life and health, safety and comfort, food and nourishment, we are sincerely grateful. Through your Spirit, open our hearts so that we may be even better stewards of these rich and unmerited gifts.

Show us how to be a blessing for the poor, sick, lonely and all who suffer.

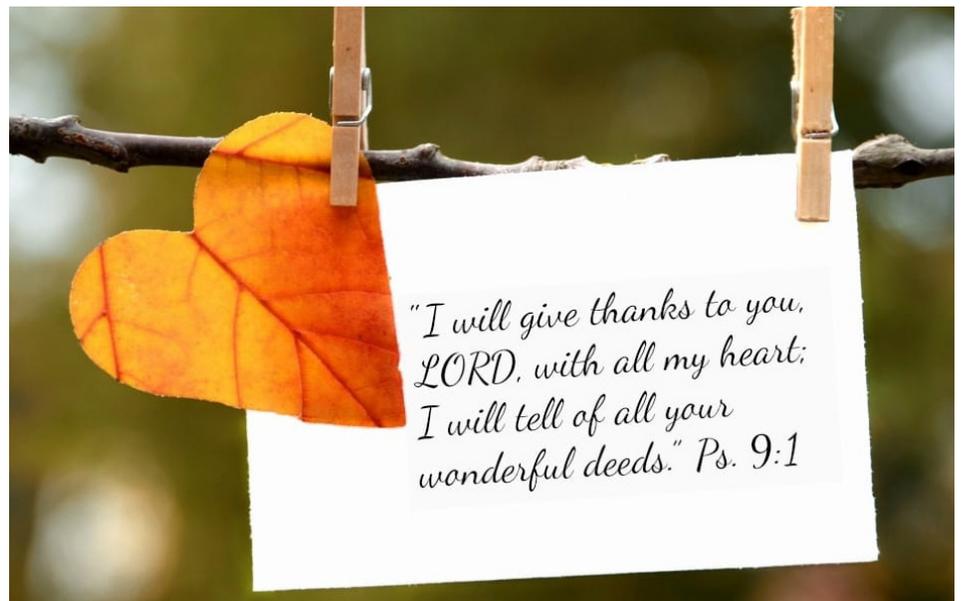
And help us nurture the gift of faith, revealed to us by your Son, Jesus Christ, our greatest gift, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, God forever and ever.

Amen.



## In Everything Stewards Give Thanks

Every November, the United States celebrates a great national holiday: Thanksgiving. Canada celebrates a similar feast in October. Although the origins of the U.S. festivity are somewhat historically murky, it's evident that some of the earliest immigrants to America celebrated this day as an expression of gratitude to God for bringing a healthy harvest which would ensure their colony's survival through the winter. It was the most primal kind of thankfulness: you have spared our lives, O Lord, and we are grateful.



### The faith of the Christian steward proclaims gratitude to God as its wellspring and cornerstone.

Over the years, Thanksgiving in the U.S. has become a national expression of gratitude, but sometimes it veers into the neighborhood of cliché, and often it strays away from the source of our gifts. Television hosts will remind us we should be thankful for all the "stuff" we have, including some non-tangible items like freedom, but to whom are we grateful? In some circles, it's unfashionable to mention that it is God, the source of life and goodness, to whom we owe our deep, humble sense of appreciation.

The faith of the Christian steward, on the other hand, proclaims gratitude to God as its wellspring and cornerstone. The Christian steward is aware of thankfulness to God twelve months of the year, not just in November, and the steward knows, as St. Ignatius of Loyola taught us, that we "find God in all things." Therefore, we find reason to thank God in all things – for health of

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mind and body, for our families, our livelihoods, our successes and the gifts of education, intelligence and freedom that make our lives full and rewarding.

We also thank God for the embarrassing moments of our lives, for the disappointments, the sorrows, even the mistakes, because we know that God was present in each of those



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moments, ready to teach us and to guide us. The Christian steward can go deep in prayer and thank God for lessons learned in times of trouble as well as times of bounty. Gratitude, for the Christian steward, is not just rendered in times of plenty, but in times of sadness and deprivation. The God of all is present in all situations.

Perhaps the challenge for stewards during November is to be a source of reminder to those around them that thanksgiving is a fundamental lifetime habit, rendered to the God of mercy and plenty.

## STEWARDSHIP SAINT *for November*

### St. Martin of Tours

St. Martin of Tours was born around 316 in a territory that is now part of Hungary. His father, an officer in the Roman army, conscripted Martin into military service at the age of fifteen.

While Martin was still a soldier, there occurred the famous incident memorialized by many artists. One day while at the gates of the city of Amiens he saw a scantily clad beggar. Martin cut his own military cloak in half and shared it with the beggar. That night Martin dreamed that Jesus was wearing that same half-cloak he had given away. Martin had for some time considered becoming a Christian. He was promptly baptized and made the decision to dedicate his life to Christ.



Martin was well-known for his evangelizing, personal holiness, healing ministry and compassion toward the poor.

Martin became a follower of St. Hilary of Poitiers (January 13) who gave him land where the first monastery in Gaul (present-day France) was established. It is the first monastery known to be established north of the Alps. Christianity was largely confined to urban areas, and Martin saw monasteries as rural spiritual centers from which evangelization in the countryside could take place. He was zealous in bringing people to Christ.

In 371, a time when bishops were chosen by the faithful, Martin was tricked into coming to Tours to be elected bishop. He was well-known for his evangelizing, personal holiness, healing ministry and compassion toward the poor. It was also well-known that Martin would never agree to be a bishop. A man from the city came to Martin and begged him to visit his sick wife. When the kindhearted Martin got to Tours crowds of people came out of hiding and surrounded him. Unable to escape, he was swept into the city and, overwhelmed by the will of the crowds, became their bishop.

Martin maintained his lifestyle as a monk and exercised stewardship of the diocese on foot, horseback and by boat. His profound personal witness met with great success in an area that was largely pagan. Martin died on November 8, 397, and his feast is November 11, the day he was buried in Tours. He is a patron saint of France.



# 2021 Virtual Conference



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Psalm 51:14

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& December 1-2, 2021

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# Be a Good Steward of the Thanksgiving Day Weekend

Your Thanksgiving Day weekend can be more than just enjoying great meals, turning on the television to watch football games or renewing your annual Christmas shopping after a year's pandemic-related hiatus. How about expressing your stewardship of this weekend in a more meaningful way? Here are some suggestions for making your Thanksgiving weekend an opportunity for expressing your gratitude to the Lord in creative ways:



- Go to Mass on Thanksgiving Day 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 you for 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.
- Make contact with those who are sick or disabled. Although it may not be prudent to attempt to visit them during these uncertain times, try to identify someone who could use a phone call or even an errand run for them.
- 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 where health and safety protocols permit, or bring canned foods or clothing to St. Vincent de Paul centers.
- Take a walk. Find a place to enjoy God's gift of creation. Head out the door for a refreshing walk. Invite family, friends, a colleague or neighbor to join you and share the experience as well.
- Most important! Take advantage of the Thanksgiving holiday weekend 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.



## Psalms of Praise and Thanksgiving

The Thanksgiving holiday is an excellent time to rediscover the psalms of praise and thanksgiving.

When you find a quiet moment, sit and relax with your Bible. Think of a time when awe and gratitude overwhelmed you. Maybe it was a sunrise, or children playing in a park, an inspirational hymn at Mass, a family gathering, or a walk in the woods. Remember how you appreciated that special moment. Then, open your Bible to one of the psalms of thanksgiving and recite it to yourself. Take Psalm 118 for instance:

*Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love endures forever.*

Listen to the words. Close your eyes. Let the psalm speak to you.

Other psalms of praise and thanksgiving you might consider include Psalms 92, 95, 98, 100, 103, 104, 105, 107, 111, 117, 145, and 147.

Whatever psalm you choose for that quiet moment, thank God for that special time of awe as well as all the good things in your life, and praise God for his glorious deeds.

# Celebrating the Stewards of Their Faith: Solemnity of All Saints



On November 1, the Solemnity of All Saints celebrates the triumph of Christ's Gospel in the lives of every person who now enjoys the friendship of God in heaven. This feast embraces not only those who have been officially recognized by the Church as saints, it also includes those who had a reputation for holiness but whose causes for canonization have not yet been completed, as well as those women and men whose lives of sanctity were known only to their family, friends and associates, or to members of their parish, diocese or religious community.

The twenty-second great council of the Catholic Church, the Second Vatican Council, offers an explanation for this solemnity in its Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (Lumen gentium, "Light of nations"):

*In the lives of those companions of ours who are more perfectly*

*transformed into the image of Christ (see 2 Corinthians 3:18) God shows, vividly, to humanity his presence and his face. He speaks to us through them and offers us a sign of his Kingdom, to which we are powerfully attracted, so great a cloud of witnesses are we given (see Hebrews 12:1) and such an affirmation of the truth of the Gospel ... Our communion with the saints joins us to Christ, from whom as from its fountain and head flow all grace and life of the people of God itself" (n. 50).*

The beginnings of this feast can be traced back to the 4th century where the Church in the East had a collective celebration of all the Christian martyrs on the Friday after Easter Sunday. Chaldean-rite Catholics still celebrate the feast on that day. Origins of the feast for the Church in the West are not precisely known.

The Solemnity of All Saints should remind us of our communion with all the saints who have gone before us as well as the universal call to exercise perfect stewardship of our faith through the love of Christ and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

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The first mention of November 1 as the day for observing the feast came from England in the 8th century. A 9th century liturgical calendar from England lists All Saints as a major feast on November 1. Arguably, Rome adopted this day to celebrate the Solemnity of All Saints when Pope Gregory IV (828-844) transferred the feast from May to November 1 because Rome could not accommodate the number of pilgrims who came for the feast in late spring.

In England and Ireland the feast of All Saints was formerly known as "All Hallows." This explains the name for the secular celebration of Halloween, on the "eve" of the feast itself, "Hallowe'en, meaning "Hallow evening."

The Solemnity of All Saints should remind us of our communion with all the saints who have gone before us as well as the universal call to exercise perfect stewardship of our faith through the love of Christ and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Let us pray to conduct our lives as Jesus would have it. For he said, "You, therefore, must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matthew 5:48).



## Exercising Good Stewardship at the Grocery Store

What is your experience of a trip to the grocery store? Is the grocery store a place where you just run to grab what you need, or is it a place where you pause and take time to exercise good stewardship? We've all been there. A long day at work, rush hour traffic, and then the thought: "What am I preparing the family for dinner?" We detour to the supermarket, make a mad dash, grab whatever looks easy and filling. Then, we rush out, preoccupied with what's happening elsewhere in our lives.

But the experience of shopping at the grocery store can be one where good stewards know the rewards of exercising their stewardship of God's many gifts. Think about a stewardship resolution for the month of November, with its emphasis on food and gratitude. Resolve to go to the grocery store with a steward's grateful heart.

- Visit the grocery when you are not rushed.
- Lift a prayer of gratitude before you go to the grocery store, gratitude

that you are able to meet your loved ones' needs in this way. Those who work with refugee populations tell us the thing that amazes the new arrivals most is the opulence and abundance of a First World supermarket. Pray for those who do not have the choices you have today.

- Be aware of your fellow shoppers, the elderly individual slowly taking up the center of the aisle or the mom struggling to control her unruly children. Say a prayer for the people you encounter. Have patience and smile generously.
- Observe the vibrant colors in the produce department, and think of those workers near and far who have labored in the fields and the warehouses, all with the intention of supporting their own families. Say a prayer for them that they may receive wages that are fair, and that they not work in conditions you would not tolerate for a loved one working in similar circumstances.

- Each week, plan to make a sacrifice out of your family's food budget, and buy something for your parish's food drive or a local pantry. Perhaps it means you purchase a less expensive version of your favorite beverage, do without the best ice cream or plan one vegetarian, low-cost meal. Use the savings to share with the hungry.
- Be present to the cashier who rings up your order. Think of the difficulty of a job spent standing all day, greeting customers both cheerful and surly. Thank her with a smile.
- Keep an ongoing grocery list during the week. Plot out your meals, plan your excursion. Experts tell us one trip a week to the grocery is not only economical, but a much better use of time.
- Recite a thanksgiving prayer from the heart at dinner. Be grateful to the God who has given you so much to meet your needs and to share.



## A STEWARDSHIP MOMENT

### **For the weekend of November 6/7, 2021 Thirty-second Sunday in Ordinary Times**

Jesus points out to his disciples the poor widow who has just dropped two simple copper coins into the temple treasury. He then delivers a teaching on stewardship. Despite her poverty, the poor widow in today's Gospel does not refuse God her generosity. Out of her desperately impoverished life she contributes to an earthly institution to give God glory and praise. It is not the monetary value of the gift that was important, but the love, trust and gratitude expressed through the gift. The Gospel asks us similarly compelling stewardship questions: What do we value? In what or whom do we place our trust? How do our own contributions to our community of faith reflect our generosity toward God?

### **For the weekend of November 13/14, 2021 Thirty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time**

How would you spend your day if you knew it was the last day you would spend on earth? Undoubtedly, it would not be a normal day. The point of today's Gospel reading is that the end-time is always imminent. The good steward remains prayerfully alert, ready to give an accounting; and living each day in the awareness of the coming judgment and salvation.

How do we exercise stewardship over our daily lives? Are we prepared to give an accounting? How will we allow Christ to work in and through us to prepare for the reconciliation of the heavens and the earth?

### **For the weekend of November 20/21, 2021 Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe**

The exchange between Jesus and Pilate in today's Gospel is, arguably, the most important exchange in all of literature. Pilate asks Jesus: "What have you done?" Jesus replies that he testifies to the truth. In the second reading we are reminded of the essence of that truth: Christ, ruler of all, loves us, liberates us from the bonds of sin, makes us a new kingdom. As we approach the Advent season, this week would be a good time to reflect on the question: What have we done in our daily lives, in our actions, words, private prayer, and in our interaction with others, to testify that Jesus is Lord?

### **First Sunday of Advent Weekend of November 27/28, 2021**

On this first Sunday of Advent, the Gospel reading depicts Jesus warning his followers about the end-time. He urges them to pray, be vigilant, spiritually awake, avoid self-indulgence, spiritual malaise, and a preoccupation with anxiety. Jesus advises against a lifestyle of earthly pleasures and worry. These will not matter when the Lord asks for an account of our stewardship. Stewards realize their lives are not just about the here and now. They know themselves to be reflections of God's active presence in the world and witnesses of the Lord's promises. As we begin this season of hope, let us reflect on the practical effect of having every waking moment in our lives dedicated to the Lord.