



INTERNATIONAL CATHOLIC STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL
CATHOLIC STEWARDSHIP

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A STEWARDSHIP PRAYER
for June

Lord Jesus Christ,

You came to bring peace and offer reconciliation.
You sent your Spirit to heal the separation between people
and to reveal how it is possible for women and men
to overcome their differences and celebrate their unity
through your body and blood.
You revealed your Father as the Father of all people;
a Father who cares for every single individual
and embraces them with love and mercy.

It is that love and mercy, made manifest by your cross,
that shines your light on us all, creates new life,
offers a new way of living, and brings a Gospel message
that is a sign of hope.

Give us the courage to live your Gospel fully
even when it brings risk,
to share your word vibrantly even if it leads to scorn,
and to respond to others generously even when we feel like holding back.
Show us the way to live as good stewards of your presence among us, and in doing so,
may we shine your light on a darkened world.

Amen.

Hospitality at Mass: A Key to Good Stewardship



For many individuals and families alike, summer means travel. And summer travel may mean new visitors to our parish for weekend liturgies. How we greet and provide hospitality for our guests says a lot about our practice of good stewardship.

Providing hospitality to strangers is a hallmark of Christian stewardship. In the Gospel of Matthew good stewards were commended for their hospitality: "I was a stranger and you welcomed me" (Matt. 25:35). Saint Benedict directed his followers to receive guests and travelers as if they were Christ. Extending hospitality is especially important when it comes to welcoming visitors who may be attending Mass at our parish for the first time.

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There is a lot of anecdotal evidence suggesting that the ability of a first-time visitor to have a meaningful experience of Christ in the liturgy is directly impacted by the warmth of the welcome extended by the local worshipping community. When people say hello, the worship experience is enhanced. A warm welcome is part of evangelization, work necessary in a church's mission to help people discover or renew their faith in Christ.

How do we treat the unknown person who walks by us in church, or who sits next to us at Mass? Do we ignore them? Talk around them? Look at them and say nothing? Do we take the initiative to greet them, smile, extend a warm handshake?

Remember, we are Christ's ambassadors (2 Corinthians 5:20). Our actions and reactions toward visitors at Mass communicate who we are and who we represent. Let us take time to welcome visitors to our parish this summer. Welcoming gestures, however small, will not only have a positive impact on visitors, they will make us more hospitable ambassadors of Christ.

Do You Welcome Visitors to Your Parish?

Welcoming newcomers to your parish is not just the job of the pastoral staff, ushers, ministers of hospitality or greeters. It is everyone's responsibility. Here are ten things you can do to provide better hospitality in your parish.

1. **Cultivate the virtue of hospitality at Mass.** Many Mass attendees tend to gather into little cliques and ignore those who are not members of their particular clique. They are not really inhospitable, just heedless of the need for hospitality. Make hospitality a new habit when you go to Mass.
2. **Come early, leave late.** Instead of rushing to Mass to be there on time, and then rushing out at its conclusion, make time to come a little early and linger just a bit later. Make room in your busy life to greet and spend time with others at Mass.
3. **Go in peace to greet someone!** Seek out someone you've met before. Shake their hand, introduce yourself, and take a few moments to welcome them to your parish home, God's house.
4. **Welcome everyone.** Not only do visitors need your warm welcome, regular Mass attendees also need a friendly greeting. Develop a good handshake and be enthusiastic about your parish. You are greeting others in the name of Christ.
5. **Help newcomers connect.** While you are getting to know visitors, introduce them to other parishioners as the opportunity presents itself. Feel free to invite visitors to sit next to you.
6. **Say goodbye with genuine warmth.** After Mass, bid farewell to visitors, inviting them to return. Introduce them to the pastor if the opportunity arises.
7. **Avoid parish business.** Avoid conducting parish business with others just before or after Mass. Focus on hospitality and greeting visitors.
8. **Give visitors information about the parish.** Ensure that a visitor has a bulletin and other information about the parish before they leave. If there is a social gathering after Mass, invite them.
9. **Be part of a greeting ministry team.** Parishes are always in need of greeters to serve regularly, and provide ongoing formation to new greeters. Help out, be a greeter. If your parish doesn't have greeters, now is a good time to start!
10. **Greet those who already minister in the area of hospitality.** It isn't necessary to neglect the people who are already ministers of hospitality in order to make visitors feel at home. A simple wave and a smile go a long way.

STEWARDSHIP SAINTS for June



Great Stewards of the Church: Saints Peter and Paul

This month we highlight two of the great stewards of our faith, Saints Peter and Paul, commemorated on June 29. The two apostles are celebrated together as the founders of the early Church of Rome.

St. Peter held a preeminent status among Jesus' disciples. He was very close to Jesus and is the apostle Jesus designated as the "rock" upon which his Church would be built. Even St. Paul acknowledged St. Peter as the pillar of the Church in Jerusalem. The Gospel of St. Luke describes Jesus commissioning St. Peter as the head of the disciples. In the first of his letters contained in the New Testament, St. Peter penned the stewardship reflection placed so prominently in the United States Bishops' pastoral letter on Christian stewardship: "As each one has received a gift, use it to serve one another as good stewards of God's varied grace" (1 Pt. 4:10).

The two apostles are celebrated together as the founders of the early Church of Rome.

Thinkers throughout the ages acknowledge St. Paul as a genius and his success as a missionary was unmatched. He was a highly educated Jew and interpreted his conversion experience on the road to Damascus as Christ's personal call to preach the Good News to the Gentiles. He established Christian communities around the eastern Mediterranean, is noted for three great missionary journeys and wrote letters to various communities. St. Paul believed that exercising good stewardship over the gift of the Risen Christ was fundamental to eternal life.

How Saints Peter and Paul actually exercised stewardship over the Church in Rome is lost to history, but our faith tradition affirms that they jointly founded the Church of Rome, exercised a special authority over it and established its apostolic succession, a succession of bishops and popes that continues to this day.