



INTERNATIONAL CATHOLIC STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL

# CATHOLIC STEWARDSHIP

April 2024 • e-Bulletin

## A STEWARDSHIP PRAYER for April

Oh Blessed Lord!  
Oh Risen Lord!

We look through the crosses  
we have carried this past year  
and give you thanks  
for the awe-inspiring hope  
that Easter brings.

We give you thanks  
for calling us your friends  
and allowing us to share  
in the sacrifice of your  
of your body and blood,  
which is poured out for many.

Oh merciful Lord,  
redeemer and teacher,  
by the power of the Holy Spirit  
give us the patience and insight  
to listen to you during this time  
of continued uncertainty.

Give us the wisdom to  
find creative ways  
to put the Eucharist into action;  
and give us the courage to bring  
your Easter message of hope  
to a world that desperately needs  
your love.

To you be glory and honor  
forever and ever.

Amen



## Stewardship and Our Baptismal Promises

The practice of *renewing* baptismal promises at Easter is essential for those who take the stewardship of their faith seriously. It focuses the steward's attention on answering Christ's call to follow after him, proclaiming his Gospel in word and deed, putting the Eucharist into action, building up the communion of faith, and sharing Christ's peace with a broken world.



The baptismal focus of holy water is most compelling at the Easter Vigil where the sprinkling is directly connected to the renewal of promises.

Renewing our baptismal promises and the baptismal focus of holy water is most compelling at the Easter Vigil where the sprinkling is directly connected to the renewal of promises. The use of holy water compels us to reflect on our baptism, calls us back to our central identity as Catholic Christians, and strengthens us anew "as servants of Christ and **stewards** of the mysteries of God" (1 Cor. 4:10).

The baptismal water of Easter performs a twofold purpose. It baptizes the catechumens and it refreshes our covenant with God in Christ through the renewal of our baptismal promises. It "seals" our resolve to follow Jesus more closely.

Many who say they are Catholic desire to live their lives as if Jesus was still in the tomb. But he is not. Christ has risen and is present among us, calling us each day to follow after him and radiate his example onto the world. Living our baptismal promises inspires us to be good stewards of God's plan as individuals and as a Eucharistic community in the 21st century.

## STEWARDSHIP SAINT *for April*



### Saint Catherine of Siena, Doctor of the Church

Saint Catherine of Siena, whose feast day is April 29, was the first layperson, and alongside Saint Teresa of Avila, one of the first two women named a Doctor of the Church. She was born Caterina di Giacomo di Benincasa in Siena in 1347, the twenty-fourth of 25 children. She decided early on not to be married, and after several years of prayer and fasting, began an active life of service. She started by nursing the sick at a local hospital. Notable during that time was her aid to victims of the 1374 pandemic.

As a young woman, Catherine believed she had a call to preach the Gospel. She organized a group of people to accompany her on mission trips where she urged her audiences to seek a deeper conversion to Christ in their lives through prayer and repentance. She became so extraordinarily successful that she had to recruit priests to serve as confessors to these large gatherings.

A devoted advocate of the Church, Catherine publicly promoted the offices of papacy, bishop and the clergy as Christ's ambassadors, but she was also a severe critic of the abuses she saw among many members of the clergy and church hierarchy. She believed they should embrace poverty and assume a more humble spirit instead of "living in worldly luxury and ambitiousness and pretentious vanity." "In fact," she maintained, "many laypersons put them to shame by their good and holy lives."

Catherine, though, knew that there could be no lasting reform of the Church without strong papal leadership. In 1376 she met with Pope Gregory XI in Avignon, France, where the papacy had been banished since 1309, and urged him to return to Rome. In one letter, she insisted that he must be "courageous" and not a "coward." Catherine's letter strengthened the pope's resolve and he returned to Rome in 1377.

After Gregory's death the following year and the election of Pope Urban VI, the Great Schism ensued. For the next 39 years, there would be at least two and sometimes three claimants to the papacy. Catherine sent frequent letters to Urban in the hope of moderating his severity towards his opponents. She also wrote to various other church authorities, encouraging them to recognize Urban as the legitimate successor to the Chair of Saint Peter.

Although a prodigious producer of letters, Catherine dictated her thoughts to others because she did not learn to write until near the end of her life. During the years 1377 to 1378, Catherine dictated *The Dialogue*, her reflections on the spiritual life. Many spiritual writers insist that this major work of mystical theology stands beside other great spiritual classics such as those of two other Doctors of the Church, Teresa of Avila and John of the Cross.

Pope Urban invited Catherine to Rome in 1380 to help lend support to his papacy, but on the way she suffered a stroke. She died on April 29, 1380. She was 33 years old.



### 2024 Earth Day Theme Planet vs. Plastics

Plastic is choking the earth. The reason, partly, is that we are not doing a very good job of recycling plastic containers. Less than 14 percent of plastic packaging is recycled. Earth Day 2024 will be celebrated on Monday, April 22. This year's theme is "Planet vs. Plastics." One way we can invest in our planet is by recycling plastic.

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One way we can be better stewards of the earth is to fight plastic pollution.

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In his ground-breaking encyclical *Laudato Si* ("Praise be to You"), Pope Francis urged humankind to exercise better stewardship of the earth. Subtitled "On Care of Our Common Home," the pontiff's letter called for a radical "ecological conversion" on the part of people the world over, and especially disciples of Jesus Christ, to honor and save our earth from degradation. One way we can be better stewards of the earth is to fight plastic pollution.

Cheap, capable of being made into any conceivable shape, strong and durable, plastic is the wonder product of the modern world. However, the victim of this technological success appears to be much of life on earth. Almost 80% of the plastic produced

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since the 1950s has been thrown away, either into landfill sites or into the general environment.

Ending plastic pollution was the focus of Earth Day 2018, the annual event celebrated on April 22 world-wide to raise awareness of ecological dangers and demonstrate support for protection of the global environment. But the call to end plastic pollution does not seem to have been heeded.



Items like plastic packaging, bags and bottles are thrown away every day, and end up in trash sites as well as in forests, creeks, rivers, seas, and oceans around the world. While some of these items are recycled, the growth of plastic consumption and its improper disposal currently outpace efforts to recycle and produce post-consumer plastic materials.



**Check your refrigerator.  
How much stuff in there is  
stored in plastic?**

But plastic is more than just litter. A petroleum product, plastic is non-biodegradable. And in reality, most plastic does not ever disappear, but becomes long-lasting “plastic dust”. When items like plastic bags break down, they readily soak up (and release) toxins that then contaminate soil and water, as well as harming animals that ingest plastic fragments. The increasing presence of plastic in our oceans poisons and ensnares marine life. Check your refrigerator. How much stuff in there is stored in plastic? Hazardous chemicals, some of which can disrupt human hormones, leach from some plastics that are used for food and beverage storage.

Plastic is the basic material of our consumer world. Without it we wouldn't enjoy the same standard of living or convenience. But if we take the Holy Father's urgent pleas seriously, we should take seriously the issue of plastic contaminating and damaging our environment. For Christian stewards, it is a moral responsibility to confront this pollution. And become better stewards of the earth. Celebrate Earth Day 2024 by helping to curb plastic pollution.

## Suggestions for Stopping Plastic Pollution

A springtime walk on a lovely April day brings you into contact with the ubiquitous presence of plastic in our lives. From the crushed soda bottle lying at the side of the road to the plastic bags floating through the air like kites, plastic pollution is everywhere. It is not possible to be plastic free. But there are steps we can take to reduce consumption of plastic. Here are a few suggestions you can incorporate into your life immediately:

- Keep reusable canvas bags in your car for shopping trips and commit to refusing plastic shopping and grocery bags.
- Many stores have containers to recycle plastic bags, even newspaper wraps. Utilize them.
- Carry a small set of simple utensils and a reusable straw so that you never have to use throwaway plastic utensils.
- Encourage your school or college to look into utensils made with biodegradable components. Many Catholic schools have gone this route.
- Many cities are considering levying a fee for using plastic bags at stores. Urge your local government to consider this proposal to encourage reusable bags. Ireland reduced its plastic bag use by 95% almost overnight by placing a tax on plastic bags!
- Visit [www.earthday.org](http://www.earthday.org) for more ideas and inspiration!





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- Maximizing Major Gift Fundraising in a Catholic School Environment
- 10 Tips for Boosting Your School's Fundraising Efforts
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# Sharing the Lord's Work Through Your Diocesan Appeal

Many diocesan annual appeals are now in full swing, and it is important to remember that our generosity toward the ministries of our local bishop offer us a special opportunity to answer the Lord's call in ways we could never think of doing on our own. Responding to our bishops' requests for supporting these diocesan ministries renews our personal commitment to more fully participate as good stewards in Christ's mission for the Church. We are, indeed, the Body of Christ, and through our support of diocesan-funded ministries, programs and services, we are able to impact the lives of hundreds, perhaps thousands of people in our diocese and beyond day-by-day.

**Selected areas where your gifts may be at work in your own diocesan community:**

## **PRIESTLY VOCATIONS**

Vocation discernment retreats  
Financial support for seminarians  
Vocations literature and prayer cards

## **CLERGY**

Convocation for Priests and  
Permanent Deacons  
Pastoral Care of Priests  
Pastoral Care of Permanent Deacons  
Ongoing education for clergy

## **STEWARDSHIP EDUCATION**

Parish stewardship commissions  
and committees  
Parish stewardship formation  
Stewardship communications  
Stewardship resources

## **EVANGELIZATION, CATECHESIS AND SCHOOLS**

Catechetical Programming and  
Formation  
Catholic Schools  
Evangelization  
Men's Ministry  
Women's Ministry  
Hispanic Ministries  
Health, Athletics, Physical Education  
and Safety



Marriage and Family Life  
Natural Family Planning programs  
Pro-Life activities  
RCIA  
Youth Ministries  
Young Adults and Campus Ministries

## **PARISH AND SPECIAL PASTORAL SERVICES**

Christian Service and Health  
Care Ministries  
Ministry to the Hearing Impaired  
Disabilities Concerns  
Hospital Chaplaincy Programs  
Ministry to the Sick and Caregivers  
Parish Nurse Program  
Ecumenical / Interfaith programs  
Pastoral Planning & Leadership  
Services  
Lay leadership training  
Parish clustering, merging, and  
closing transitions



Parish Pastoral Councils and  
Commissions  
Parish planning  
Worship  
Formation for  
Choirs, cantors, and  
choir directors  
Liturgical ministers  
Liturgical consultation for church  
buildings/renovations  
Liturgical resources and research  
Music Ministries  
Rite of Election



## A STEWARDSHIP MOMENT

**Second Sunday of Easter**  
**Weekend of April 6/7, 2024**

When the risen Christ encounters his disciples in the locked room he adds a new Beatitude to the ones we've heard proclaimed before: "Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed." Stewards of the mysteries of God's love do not need proof of the risen Christ. They know it because their lives have been transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit who has breathed new life into them and through the Sacrament of the Eucharist which strengthens and sustains them. As stewards of this great gift it is appropriate to reflect on how we in turn add new life into our parish communities.

**Third Sunday of Easter**  
**Weekend of April 13/14, 2024**

An underlying lesson from all three readings this weekend is that the Risen Christ has wiped away our sins, not only for individuals, but throughout the world and its history. The terrible power of sin has now been reversed and our coming to perfection through the love of God is part of the Easter experience. As stewards of God's love we are called to participate in Christ's redemptive activity. The stewardship questions for us are many: How do we resist injustice at home or in the workplace? How do we confront violence in our language and attitudes? How do we bring Christ to others?

**Fourth Sunday of Easter**  
**Weekend of April 20/21, 2024**

In today's Gospel reading we hear Jesus referring to himself as "the good shepherd." His sheep know him, trust him, listen to him and follow him; having faith that no harm will come to them as long as they stay close to him. We reaffirmed our faith in Christ when we renewed our baptismal promises at Easter. As stewards of our relationship with Jesus Christ, are we, like the sheep, willing to listen to Jesus, trust him, follow him no matter the cost to our comfort?

**Fifth Sunday of Easter**  
**Weekend of April 27/28, 2024**

Jesus offers a quintessential stewardship statement in today's Gospel reading: "Whoever remains in me and I in him will bear much fruit, because without me you can do nothing." Jesus Christ offers us the fullness of eternal life. Do our lives reveal that this is what we want? Do we believe that by hearing the Word of the Lord and responding we not only produce "good fruit," but abide in the very life of God?