

The Vineyard



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Don't Forget this New Year's Resolution...

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The time for making new Year's resolutions is here. As we begin 2016, we may resolve to lose weight, to exercise, to eat healthier. We may resolve to read more, to spend more time with family and friends, to take up a hobby or finish a project.

One definition of the word "resolution" is, "A firmness of mind or purpose". This is how many of us approach a new year - with a firm commitment to make changes, to do something differently than we have in the past. We make resolutions we think will improve our physical, emotional and social lives. It can be easy to forget the most important "life" of all; our spiritual life.

This time of resolutions and new beginnings is the perfect moment to renew a "firmness of purpose" as faithful stewards. This year,

why not include a resolution to spend 5 extra minutes in prayer each day or to attend Mass every week? We can make a resolution - a firm commitment - to share our time in prayer, our talents and service and our financial resources in support of our parish and its ministries.

Resolutions are traditionally made in the hope that this new dedication to action will make us healthier and happier. What action can we take to make our relationship with God healthier and happier? A strong bond with God doesn't just happen; we need to work at it one step at a time.

As we begin this new year, I invite you to join me in adding a spiritual resolution (or two) to your "to do" list for 2016, and, I wish you all a happy and healthy New Year!

Sincerely,

Barb Vite

Director of Parish Stewardship



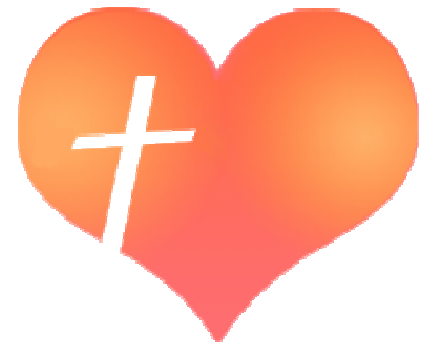
Care Enough to Send the Very Best!

The word "love" is probably heard, seen and spoken more in the month of February than in any other month. Greeting card, candy and jewelry sellers all remind us how important it is to focus on the ones we love; "Show her how much you care!"... "A diamond is forever!" ... "Sweets for the sweet!"... "Care enough to send the very best".

While we are bombarded with slogan after slogan, it is important that we remember the ultimate Valentine's Day sentiment: "And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love." **Corinthians 13:13**

Love is the driving force in the life of a faithful steward. Love for God, demonstrated by the way a steward cares for and shares the gifts entrusted to him or her. Love for each other, shown by the care of family members and friends. Love for the greater community, lived in a steward's commitment to justice.

As we embrace the trappings for Valentine's Day, let's remember to care enough about our Lord to send the very best by taking time each day to pray. Let's take the time to turn our thoughts to the Source of all love.



An Energetic Lent



One of the most serious challenges we face in our faith today is apathy. Every year during Lent we hear about prayer, fasting and almsgiving. Every year we give up something here and give a few extra coins there while counting the days to Easter dinner and spring break vacations. Lent leaves us pretty much the same way it found us.

The life-giving power at the heart of our tradition is often lost amid the clamor of 21st century life.

As faithful stewards we are called to trust that each one of us is a precious child of God – a God who loves us as we are, and empowers us to become more. Mindful of who we are, and of who we would like to be, we can respond authentically, engaging in our Lenten disciplines with renewed energy.

Almsgiving

- Donate some canned goods to your local food pantry
- Visit someone who may be lonely
- Donate clothing you no longer wear
- Reflect on your regular contribution to support your parish. Can you do more?
- Donate diapers, baby food or clothing to a women’s shelter
- Make a contribution to the Catholic Stewardship Appeal
- Volunteer as a Catechist

Let our almsgiving expand to include acts of charity and kindness. May our Lent be a time of exhilarating renewal!

Fasting

- Talk to your family about eating one simple meal a week and donating the money you save to a local meal program
- Fast from indifference; get involved as a volunteer
- Fast from isolation; give up Facebook to come together as a family at least once a week to talk and share
- Fast from resentment; offer an apology for harsh words spoken in anger
- Fast from pride; reach out to mend a broken relationship

Let our fasting free us to give up the things that prevent us from deepening our relationship with God.

Prayer

- Spend 15 minutes in personal prayer every day
- Read inspirational material each week
- Participate in the Sacrament of Penance
- Attend the special liturgies on Ash Wednesday, Holy Thursday, and Good Friday
- Commit to making the Lord’s Day a priority by attending Mass every week
- Pray together as a family

Let us invite Him into our minds and our hearts through simple, direct and heartfelt prayer.

Lenten Stewardship Prayer

Lord Jesus,

At this time of year our thoughts are turned to the ultimate sacrifice You made for us on the cross.

Inspire us to make whatever personal sacrifice is needed to bring us closer to You.

May our practice of sacrificial stewardship during this Lenten season lead us to the victory of the Resurrection.

Amen

Challenge Apathy!

One of the most serious challenges we face in our faith today is apathy. Year after year we hear about prayer, fasting and almsgiving during Lent. Year after year we give up something here and save a few extra coins there while counting the days to Easter vacation and spring break. Lent leaves us pretty much the way it found us. The life-giving power at the heart of our traditions is lost amid the clamor of 21st century life. This year, we can answer the challenge to find ways, some traditional and some innovative, in which we can renew our hearts, our spirits and our lives in the Lord.

Connection...

Statistics show that approximately 7 BILLION text messages are sent every month in America. Just the thought of being out of touch with friends and family is enough to make some people nervous. Staying connected is the way we relate, the way we survive. How important is it, then, to tend to our connection to God? It is up to us to keep that relationship active and strong. Lent is the perfect time to spend some serious time reaching out to God in prayer and service. Given attention and encouragement, our personal relationships with the Lord will blossom! It is then that we will be inspired to truly live as faithful stewards. The power of our faith in action, when we are truly connected to God and each other, can change the world!

Introspection...

We live in a culture that encourages assessment and planning. We have personal trainers and exercise programs to increase our physical fitness. We seek out financial planners to maximize our assets for the long term. We attend seminars and workshops to hone our job skills and increase our employment potential. Hundreds of websites, countless books, magazines, TV and radio programs are devoted to making the most of what we have now, and making sure we have more in the future.

Lent is also a time for assessment and planning; perhaps the most important personal development we will ever do. This holy season is our faith workshop, our devotional seminar; helping us to make the most of our current relationship with God and preparing us to grow in faith in the future. Let's give it our all!

Transformation...

Our Lenten season can be a time of cultivation, a time of growth, a time of transformation. As we move toward the glory of Easter, are we ready to fully embrace the newness of the resurrection? Will we take this opportunity to start fresh in our relationship with the Lord? Responding to our call to live as faithful stewards, opening our hearts to the work of God in our lives, we can do nothing less!



Are Your Threads Tangled?

A sign in a cotton factory read "If your threads get tangled, call for your foreman." One day a new worker, unsure about how to handle the seemingly countless bobbins spinning before her, lost control, ending with her threads knotted in a jumbled mess. The more she tried to disentangle them, the worse the situation grew. Finally, in desperation, she sent for the foreman. He asked, "Why didn't you send for me earlier?" She replied, "I was doing my best." "No", he replied. "Your best would have been to send for me."

Prayer is a powerful yet comforting gift from God. During this Lenten season, pray often. Strengthen your personal relationship with Him by seeking His comfort, forgiveness and guidance.

"Our help is in the name of the Lord, Who made heaven and earth." Psalm 124:8

Save the Date...

Beyond Donut Sunday ***Building a Truly Welcoming Parish Community***

First impressions are lasting impressions, therefore it is logical that welcoming and hospitality are at the top of the “best practices” list in a successful stewardship parish. There is more to hospitality, however, than holding the occasional “donut Sunday”.

This seminar presentation will address best practices and creative ways to welcome newcomers and develop an atmosphere of hospitality that embraces all parishioners, creating the fertile soil a stewardship culture needs to thrive. Topics will include: forming a welcoming committee, developing a hospitality process and designing new parishioner materials. We will also discuss strategies including new family/parishioner mentoring, creative events and the importance of “internal” hospitality. There will also be time for participants to share their ideas and strategies with each other.

Pastors, stewardship commission members, evangelization committee members, pastoral council members and other parish leaders interested in creating a true welcoming community are encouraged to attend.

Dates and Locations

Tuesday, March 8th	St. Patrick Parish, Elkhorn
Thursday, March 10th	Archbishop Cousins Catholic Center
Thursday, March 17th	St. Katharine Drexel Parish, Beaver Dam

Each session will run from 6:30 to 8:00 PM

Watch for registration information coming soon!

Join the International Catholic Stewardship Council

Now is the time to include membership in the International Catholic Stewardship Council in your parish budget for the 2016-17 fiscal year. The International Catholic Stewardship Council (ICSC) is a professional organization recognized internationally as a source of education, networking and information to advance the ministry of stewardship as a way of life in the Roman Catholic Church in parishes and dioceses worldwide. Founded in 1962, ICSC has over 1,200 members representing over 800 dioceses and archdioceses, parish communities, Catholic organizations and professional firms.

Parish membership includes:

- Monthly parish e-bulletins offering weekly reflections, prayers, bulletin inserts and more.
- Members-only web site access to over 800 parish stewardship resources.
- Discounts for conferences, institutes and publications.
- Networking and mentoring opportunities.
- Access to past conference presentations...and more.

In order to successfully advance the stewardship initiatives of the Synod, it will be important that Pastors and parish leaders have the formation and practical knowledge necessary to lead stewardship plans in their parishes. Becoming an ICSC member parish is a powerful way for parish leaders to gain new insight into a holistic vision of stewardship, and to learn about practical ways to move a parish community toward that vision.

For more information on ICSC membership, contact Barb Vite at viteb@archmil.org or visit the ICSC website, www.catholicstewardship.com

