

# Parish Stewardship Update

## September 2002

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## New Grace In Action Newsletter

### Excellent Stewardship Education Tool

SEPTEMBER 2002

# GRACE IN ACTION

LIVING CATHOLIC STEWARDSHIP

### NEW Parables

## Don't cave in to doubt or fear

There lived a man terrified of close spaces. Too ashamed to admit his claustrophobia, he accepted an invitation to go spelunking, even though the idea of dark, dank, subterranean space spooked him. His adventure began as he shimmied through a small entrance to a cave. The light on his helmet penetrated the velvety darkness 95 feet below the surface of the earth. Following a guide, he squiggled past stalactites and stalagmites through a tight tunnel. The man started down an unnerving passage of damp dirt and cold stone. He pushed himself along with his toes, pulled himself along with his elbows. Then his helmet caught on a rock, and he found himself wedged in the passage's tightest space. He held his helmet up and shined the light directly ahead. The passage seemed to go on endlessly into the bowels of the earth. He felt trapped. Panicky. Alone. Afraid. All worldly desire fell away; and he longed only to see light, feel warm sun, breathe fresh air.

*"Christian stewardship requires us to step out of our comfort zones."*

He then heard the voice of the guide, like an underground angel. "You only have about six feet to go." But the man didn't believe him. From his vantage point, the passage appeared without end. "Trust me," the guide said, popping up just a body's length ahead. The guide grasped the man's wrists and helped him worm his way to an unseen break in the passage that dropped into a spacious cavern. A wide pathway allowed the man to stand tall and make his way out of the cave. The experience left him both humbled and emboldened by his daring. Above all, he was edified by how, in dire need, his worldly needs had been reduced to simple essentials.

Christian stewardship requires us to step out of our comfort zones. Sometimes we feel stuck, shouldering the weight of the world. The view is daunting. Blessed are they who remember that trust is limited only because earthly vision is limited. We can't always see what's in store for us. We assume the narrow, harrowing passageway won't end, when God knows we have only six feet to go.

### CELEBRATE

## September

Mon. 2 • Labor Day  
"Labor is a powerful medicine." — St. John Chrysostom

Fri. 13 • St. John Chrysostom  
Sat. 14 • Feast of the Holy Cross  
Fri. 27 • St. Vincent de Paul

### FAITH Fact

## The Sign of the Cross

For early Christians, the Sign of the Cross involved tracing small crosses on the forehead, the lips and the heart, as we sometimes do in Mass before the reading of the Gospel. In the third century, Tertullian noted that Christians made the Sign of the Cross regularly before entering or leaving their homes, eating, bathing, even before lighting lamps.

The Sign of the Cross is made on Catholics at baptism, at last rites and countless times in between. When you reverently bless yourself with the Sign of the Cross, you express belief in the Triune God from whom all blessings flow. As Christian stewards, we can sanctify modern life with this ancient gesture.

### CORNERSTONE

*"The rich man is not one who is in possession of much, but one who gives much."*

— St. John Chrysostom, 4th century

This newsletter is designed for parishes to make available to their parishioners as a bulletin insert, a monthly mailing, or a monthly handout to staff & ministry participants.

This is brand new and the format is a single-page two-sided newsletter.

It is available from:  
Our Sunday Visitor, Inc.  
200 Noll Plaza  
Huntington, IN 46750.

Phone 1-800-348-2440  
Fax 1-260-359-9117  
E-mail [giaction@osv.com](mailto:giaction@osv.com)  
and the website is  
[www.graceinaction.org](http://www.graceinaction.org).

## Good Stewardship ...

As we swing into the school year, much attention becomes focused on the supplies, books, and clothes of the children in our families, churches, and neighborhoods. Are we prepared to become positive influences for those children? It doesn't matter whether the children are in our family, from our church, or live in our neighborhood, for us to share the attitude of Christ with them through our actions.

A smile, a wave, a simple gesture of hospitality can often break through the nervous and anxious feelings of a child returning to school. If we have our faith to rely on, we can joyfully give our enthusiasm to the children with whom we come in contact. The beginning of the school year is simply a reminder to do what we should be doing all year.

As a father, I am always appreciative of the positive comments people make about my children's behavior. I don't always notice when the children are doing the "right" things, but almost always notice when they are doing things I don't want them to do. It is a welcome comment from an unknown benefactor that reminds me how well behaved the children have been in the grocery store, or at Mass. We all need to build the sense of gratitude and thankfulness in our children, and in their parents.

It seems so easy to find fault in others. This week the challenge offered to you is to find the positive examples in your lives and in the lives

*In The Spirit Of Giving...* of the children around you and thank that person for the good they are doing to help raise the good stewards of the next generation.

It never hurts to pay a compliment, it only builds your own ability to recognize others giftedness as well as your own.

Remember this week to say thank you to:

- A teacher
- A priest
- A parent
- A grandparent
- A neighbor
- A child

And in saying thank you, thank God for all the goodness that surrounds you.

# Thank You!

The annual **International Catholic Stewardship Council Conference** is coming to **Toronto October 27 – 30, 2002**. The registration fee is \$500 when registering through the Diocese of Rockford Office of Stewardship Development. If you would like further information regarding the conference schedule, speakers, location, or registration, please feel free to contact Bob Pfundstein at (815)964-6711. We would love to have you join us if you can.

## What is Your Response?

The world is full of scholars who speak about extending the frontiers of knowledge but who never use the knowledge that has already been acquired; who love to knock at the door of truth but would drop dead if that door ever opened to them. For truth implies responsibility. Every gift of God in the natural as well as in the supernatural order demands a response on the part of the soul.

*Bishop Fulton Sheen*