

STEWARDSHIP HOMILY

Msgr Ted Wojcicki

September 23-24, 2017

Stewardship Prayer



A Stewardship Prayer

My parish is composed of
people like me.
I help make it what it is.
It will be friendly, if I am.
It will be holy, if I am.
Its pews will be filled, if I help fill them.
It will do great work, if I work.
It will be prayerful, if I pray.
It will make generous gifts to many causes
if I am a generous giver.
It will bring others into its worship,
if I invite and bring them.
It will be a parish of loyalty and love,
of fearlessness and faith,
of compassion, charity, and mercy,
if I, who make it what it is,
am filled with these same things.
Therefore, with the help of God,
I now dedicate myself to the task
of being all the things that
I want my parish to be. Amen.

*This prayer can
be found inside
the back cover
of your Missal.*

Let us begin with the **Stewardship Prayer**. It is in the back of your Missalette.

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August 21, 2017. 1:16 PM. We will always remember **where** we were at that moment experiencing the Totality of the solar eclipse – and **who** we were with. The corona of the sun – in all its magnificence and glory. Not only seeing it but **experiencing** the wonders of creation – viewing the stars at midday, the 360 degree sunset, Bailey's beads. I was with hundreds of our grade school children on our parking lot. Holding the hands of two Kindergartners overcome with emotion at the moments of totality. The beauties of creation point us to the Creator. There was applause and cheers and gasping – and even tears. We were united in **awe and wonder** at the glory of God.

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What a contrast were these magnificent moments to a world and a society so full of darkness and fear and hopelessness and violence and broken promises. The physical and spiritual beauty of the solar eclipse has been for all of us also a **moment of hope** – and an inspiration to live for what matters. **We are reminded** that as the sun is larger than the moon, so the light of God is bigger than us. **We are reminded** that if we face the sun, our shadows will always fall behind us – both physically and metaphorically. **We are reminded** by the eclipse to spend more time and effort to give praise and thanks to the Creator for this beauty. Giving praise to God makes possible seeking the high road of life – the **lasting values** of truth, beauty, goodness, love, holiness – and **lasting happiness**. Who among us would not want to feel forever as we did when we experienced the pure beauty of creation at the moment of totality?

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The Gift of Time...



It is actually possible to experience the beauty and peace of God in our hearts and souls regularly if we **focus on the face of God**. Each day the Lord gives us the gift of twenty-four hours, 1,440 minutes, 86,400 seconds. Today the Lord has given to you – and to me – this great gift. We **each** have the opportunity to invite the Lord to be with us as we make the best use of this gift of time – in gratitude for all He has given us. We **cannot** bank this time. Today's minutes cannot be used tomorrow. Nor do we even know if we will have any more time after today. It is said of the solar eclipse that it was a **once in a lifetime experience**. Every minute, every second, of **every** day is **also a once in a lifetime** opportunity - to make the best use of it for the good of our hearts and souls, the good of our families, the good of our parish, and the glory of God. Let us not fail to make the best use of each minute – of each talent – as the sands of time flow through the hourglass. Developing a habit of wise use of these moments **is** good stewardship of time. In this fashion we develop habits to become the best versions of ourselves, to become the **individuals** the Lord is calling us to be, to become the **parish** the Lord is calling us to be.

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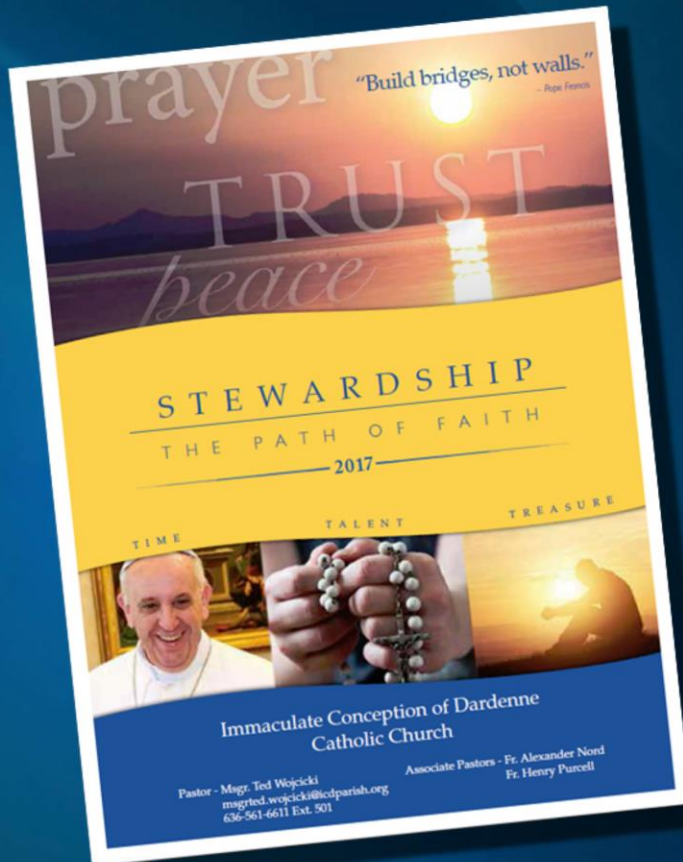


The masthead of the *St. Louis Review* states that the mission of the Archdiocese of St. Louis is “Helping Us Get to Heaven”. By the grace of God we **can** attain that mission, by living each moment of each day for **eternal** values, by following the way of life taught to us by Jesus Christ. We are reminded to spend time in prayer, not to waste a minute on things that do not matter. I must say that my own focus on living in this manner has sharpened a bit in the last year after a diagnosis with cancer – and even more recently in taking a tumble while jogging. Acknowledging our **physical limitations** helps us even more acknowledge our need for dependence on God in **all ways**. **Depending on Him** through a life of prayer helps us be better and more appreciative stewards of the abundant time and talents He has given us.

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One of the resources our parish provides to assist us all as we discern the best way to place our time and talents at the service of our parish family is our **Time and Talent brochure** which describes the seventy-eight ministries and organizations of ICD. As our parish has now grown to over 4,500 families and over 15,000 parishioners, the involvement of **all** parishioners is vital in order to have a vibrant parish. No one person needs to serve in **every** ministry. But **each** of us is called to **do something**. As all contribute, so all benefit.

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Significant **capital improvements** were made to our building and grounds in the past year. These were described in our Annual Stewardship Report mailed to you earlier this month – and from the pulpit by members of our Finance Council last week. May I take this opportunity today to **thank you for your stewardship of treasure** which has made these improvements possible.

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These beautiful facilities provide a place for our many **spiritual opportunities**: Masses, Adoration, Confessions, devotions, and all the Sacraments. Last year we had 144 baptisms, 229 First Communions, 210 Confirmations, 37 weddings and 79 funerals. Besides the regularly scheduled 72 Masses per month we also provided some extraordinary opportunities for spiritual growth such as the Julie Carrick Women's Day of Reflection and Concert, Frank Runyeon's 3 ½ Stories for Christmas, Bill Wegner's four evenings of ministry during Lent, and That Man Is You male spirituality program.

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I myself do pray daily that I might become the “strong, loving, and wise” Pastor I am called to be. To this end I recently read a book, *The Better Pastor* by Patrick Lencioni. One of the suggestions was that the Pastor pray a special Holy Hour on occasion, to which he invites parishioners to be present with him. In this setting the **Pastor can pray for the intentions of the parishioners** and the **parishioners can pray for the Pastor**. I have done this the past three weeks and plan to continue on an occasional basis in the future, starting tomorrow at 4:00 PM. I invite you to join me for this time of prayer when it is possible and also to ask the Lord how he is calling you to grow in your spiritual life. We all need a daily prayer routine. As the glory of creation inspired us when we experienced the total eclipse, so the glory of God can inspire us to an enlightened stewardship of time and talent and treasure when we experience the **face of Jesus Christ** in prayer. Silence is the enemy of the devil. Be wise. Be holy. Take some time for silence.

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On June 23 our ICD parish family enjoyed a **spectacular celebration** including music, refreshments, games, fellowship, burning of the mortgage – and fireworks. We rightfully celebrated the **final debt payment** for \$16M of construction in the past two decades. Even more we thanked God for all the **wonderful memories** during these years: spiritual, social, recreational, educational, and service. We celebrated the **parish family** that we have become. We celebrated our dreams. Now it is time to dream on. I asked the parishioners to reflect on several questions: What is your dream of what our parish could be? What is the Lord calling our parish to become? What will you do personally in the coming year to help fulfill that dream? **Now is the time** for each of us to pray about what we will commit to do in the coming year in terms of stewardship of time and talent and treasure so that our parish can truly **fulfill these dreams** in every way. May I thank you for all your past selfless stewardship of time and talent which has made ICD such a vibrant parish family.

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Earlier I mentioned a new prayer initiative on my part. Each year I mention my own **personal approach to stewardship of treasure**. One parishioner just the other day told me he appreciates my sharing this as it challenges him to pray about what the Lord is calling him to donate. I must say that priests are blessed with ample salary. (You should also know that we priests do pay federal and state income taxes and Social Security tax at self-employed percentage. And – we pay for our own car. I am blessed that my 2003 car has over 301,000 –mostly safe – miles.) Our take-home pay is the high side of \$20,000/year. I donate a bit more than 6% of that directly back to ICD and another 5% to the ACA. My pledge to Beyond Sunday capital campaign is for five years and 8%/year in addition to ACA and parish. I am blessed to be in a position to do so and still have the ability to support other charities. The amount **you** should give and pledge is the amount **God** wants you to give. What is asked is not equal gifts but equal sacrifice. I am aware that some of you have considerably more disposable income than I do – and that some have virtually no disposable income. **Give proportional to your means.** Pray about what you should give; **God will answer your prayer.** Some say you should “give until it feels good.” Remember, God is not outdone in generosity.

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In the extraordinary celestial events of August 21 we experienced the **wonders of creation** – and gave praise to the Creator. The moon is an instrument of glory of Creation. During the eclipse at **midday**, the moon allowed us to enjoy the corona as it totally faced the sun. Fourteen days later during a full moon, we again enjoy the beautiful light of the sun as reflected from the surface of the moon **at night**. So too when we come face to face with God in prayer and meditation, our own minds and souls are enlightened and we can reflect the love and grace of God to others. The Blessed Virgin Mary said, “My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord.” The Blessed Virgin Mary reflects the glory of God. May we support and challenge one another to each be selfless stewards of our time and talent and treasure according to God’s plan for each one of us.

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Immaculate Conception † Dardenne Prairie, Missouri

Complete this Commitment Weekend Intention card and re-insert it into the envelope.
(Please Print)

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____

Envelope Number (If known): _____ Email: _____

☐ I/We Are Interested In The **Electronic Giving Program**, Please Send Information.

☐ I/We Have Not Been Receiving Envelopes, Please Send Them.

☐ I/We Currently Give Electronically and Wish to **Increase** Our Contribution to \$ _____ per _____ (Wk/Mo)

For assistance in changing your regular offertory donation to Immaculate Conception please call Faith Direct at 1-866-507-8757.

My New Weekly Contribution Will Be: (please check the appropriate box)

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other
\$5	\$7	\$10	\$15	\$20	\$25	\$30	\$35	\$40	\$50	\$60	\$70	\$80	\$90	\$100			

Please check the appropriate box. Thank you for your support.

Now to the **practical aspects** of your annual Stewardship Renewal. The Stewardship of Time and Talent booklets will be distributed **next** weekend. At that time we will invite you to pray about how the Lord is calling you to **become involved** in the ministries and organizations here at ICD – or to **renew your covenant commitment**. My thanks to the many hundreds of you who are already involved in these ministries. The **Intention Cards for the Stewardship of Treasure** are in your pews **today** in an envelope with a pencil. Please pick up an envelope now and open it.

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Memorare



Remember, O most gracious Virgin Mary, that never was it known that anyone who fled to thy protection, implored thy help, or sought thy intercession was left unaided. Inspired with this confidence, I fly to thee, O Virgin of virgins, my Mother; to thee do I come; before thee I stand, sinful and sorrowful. O Mother of the Word Incarnate, despise not my petitions, but in thy mercy hear and answer me. Amen.

Now let us take a moment to kneel and pray the **Memorare** together before you complete the Intention Cards. It is in your missalette on page 231.

This past week our 2017 Stewardship Brochure was sent by snail mail to each home with a cover letter from me mentioning that we would be doing this Stewardship of Treasure renewal this weekend. Please say a silent prayer and complete this card. Pray, participate, be generous. Then return it in the basket which will be passed around church in a few minutes. God made an everlasting covenant to love us. Make your covenant to him in return. God bless you all. You continue to make me proud to be Pastor of the ICD parish family.

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***“There’s no reason
to be the richest man
in the cemetery.”***

Colonel Sanders



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***"The Happiest People
On Earth
Are Those Who Tithe"***

Franklin Templeton



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