

Good Steward Newsletter – June 2011



You Are Invited to Participate In an Online Conversation about Stewardship

I started writing about stewardship in 1988 when I went to work for the Archdiocese of Louisville. I was invited to write a weekly column called *The Good Steward*. I'm still writing *The Good Steward* 23 years later—not as a weekly newspaper column but as a monthly e-newsletter.

At first, I was afraid I'd run out of things to say about stewardship. After all, there are only so many times you can talk about “time, talent and treasure” before wearing out your readers' welcome. Fortunately, I had a mentor who taught me that if you really believe that stewardship is a form of practical spirituality—a way of living the Gospel in daily life—you can never run out of things to say about it.

My mentor was the late Archbishop Thomas J. Murphy of Seattle. Archbishop Murphy was the founding chairman of the U. S. bishops' ad hoc committee on stewardship. He was also the driving force behind the American bishops' pastoral letter, *Stewardship: A Disciple's Response*.

Archbishop Murphy encouraged me to keep writing about stewardship. I have tried to follow his advice (and his example) for the past 23 years. I write about stewardship not as a program or a means of developing human and financial resources for the Church but as a way of living the Gospel. God willing, I will continue this ministry as long as I can put words together in some kind of coherent fashion!

Archbishop Murphy was a firm believer that we should use all available media to communicate the stewardship message. He was fond of using poetry, movies and all kinds of stories to illustrate stewardship themes and, so, spread the Gospel. Were he alive today, I have no doubt that the Archbishop would take advantage of every form of contemporary social communications to spread the word about stewardship as a way of life.

In this same spirit, I would like to invite everyone who reads *The Good Steward*, and everyone who cares about living the Gospel in today's world, to join me in an online conversation about stewardship as a way of life.

This new online conversation is available at:

<http://omearaferguson.com/goodsteward>

The concept is simple. I begin by posting a brief selection from one of my stewardship writings. Then I offer some personal comments on the stewardship themes discussed in the posted material. Finally, I invite you—and all interested persons—to offer your own comments on the issues being discussed. I hope that the end result will be a lively and informative discussion of

some aspect of the theology and practice of Christian stewardship. My goal is to post a new selection each week, and to maintain an open and continuous flow of ideas through your comments and mine.

When you logon to <http://omearaferguson.com/goodsteward> you'll see that I'm beginning with selections from my book, *Stewardship in America: A Countercultural Way of Life*, which was published by St. Catherine of Siena Press in 2006, as our starting point. This book is a series of reflections on two very important stewardship documents: 1) Blessed John Paul II's apostolic exhortation, *Ecclesia in America* (The Church in America), and the U.S. bishops' pastoral letter, *Stewardship: A Disciple's Response*. As my book attempts to show, these two documents, which were both published in the 1990s, set the stage for the stewardship movement in the United States and beyond. Both contain a wealth of material to reflect on and discuss in our online conversations about stewardship.

I hope that this new venture, which is being sponsored by O'Meara, Ferguson, Whelan, and Conway, Inc. as part of its mission *to provide Catholic organizations with advice and counsel on the best possible use of their temporal resources as they work to further their missions*, will encourage the ongoing reflection and discussion of stewardship as a way of life. Where appropriate, I hope it will also serve the Church by offering practical insights into management the Church's temporal affairs

Archbishop Murphy would have delighted in the conversation. He saw stewardship as something that is "far more radical" than programs or strategies or techniques. He believed that stewardship is an expression of Christian discipleship that demands conversion and a lifelong commitment to following Jesus "without counting the cost."

My prayer is that this online conversation which we are beginning now – some thirteen years after Archbishop Murphy's untimely death – will continue the discussion about stewardship that he encouraged us to begin.

That in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. (1 Peter 4:11)

Para que en todas las cosas Dios sea glorificado por medio de Jesucristo, a quien pertenecen la gloria y el dominio por los siglos de los siglos. Amén. (1 Pedro 4:11)