

TOGETHER

a monthly bulletin insert from the archdiocese



ARCHDIOCESE
of DUBUQUE

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MESSAGES FROM ARCHBISHOP JACKELS



14 February 2022

ARCHBISHOP JACKELS COMMENTS ON SYNOD SURVEY

Happy Valentine's Day!

Let me say this about that, specifically about our synodal exercise on pastoral planning: There are no foregone conclusions with regard to which parishes will remain open, or which, if any at all, will close.

We're using the synod on synodality to engage all of us in prayer, talking, listening, and coming to agreement on criteria for a vital parish community of authentic Catholics.

The results of our survey will help identify markers for parish vitality, how to revitalize parishes if necessary, and to provide them with pastoral leaders.

It mightn't necessarily or only be geography, numbers, financial health, condition of buildings, or even the regular availability of a priest that decides a parish's future.

But a key determinant will be, in both large and small parishes, whether or not there's anything going on among the members, or in the church between Sundays:

For example, serving the poor, learning the Gospel and teaching it to others, and gathering on weekdays in church to say prayers, and on Sunday for worship.

As it has been said before, all are invited, even encouraged to fill out the survey. If something you want to say isn't represented on the survey, then write it in.

And if your write-in is above my pay grade to address (there's a limit to my lights and my authority), it'll be sent up the synodal path to the Pope.

Please participate in our synodal exercise, and fill out the survey. If we don't speak up (or write in), we don't really have a right to complain. Thank you.

Survey on parish vitality and viability:
www.dbqarch.org/survey

Michael O. Jackels
Archbishop of Dubuque



This is the eighth and final entry in a document by Archbishop Michael Jackels titled, "A Follower of Jesus In His Holy Catholic Church" which was published online in April of 2021.

CONCLUSION

So, who is Jesus? He is the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, the only begotten Son of God, become man, giving flesh to Divine Love and Mercy.

What did Jesus teach? A lot, but the most important teaching is to love God by means of prayer, worship and doing God's will, and to love our neighbor, who is anyone in need.

What did Jesus do? He loved us, and gave himself up for us, to save us from Hell for Heaven.

What is the way of life Jesus asks of his followers? We can use the fingers on our hands to summarize and memorize the beliefs and way of life for followers of Jesus in his Catholic Church:

Our pinky, our weakest finger, represents the need for us to acknowledge that we're too weak to pay the debt due our sins, and so we cry out: "I need a savior!"

Our ring finger, where married couples might sport a ring, represents the wedding of divinity and humanity in the person of Jesus, who comes to save.

Our middle finger, rising highest of all fingers (normally), represents our belief that Jesus

was raised up high on the cross to save us, and raised up out of the grave to open Heaven for us.

Our index finger, used to summon people, c'mere, represents the invitation for us to repent of sins, put our faith in Jesus, be baptized, and then live a saved life as a member of the Catholic Church.

Our thumb, used to gesture "you're outta there," represents the need for us to change to a new way of living, including being chaste, living simply, and serving and sharing with people in need.

In brief: If we admit our need for a savior, and believe that Jesus is God made man, who suffered death to redeem us, and rose from the grave to open heaven to us, then we are promised happiness here and in the hereafter.

On the other hand, our fingers can be used to summarize and memorize the important practices of our new way of life...

When we acknowledge that we're weak, like our pinky, we know we need God's help, and so we pray each day for God's help, and in thanksgiving for God's help.

Our ring finger reminds us that, just as Jesus became one with us, he wants us to become one with him, by worthily receiving Holy Communion at Sunday Mass.

Our middle finger reminds us, that as Jesus was raised on the Cross for the forgiveness of sin, we should regularly confess our venial and mortal sins to a priest.

The index finger is used by a teacher to point to a lesson to learn. Just so, it reminds us of the need to feed our faith by reading and studying the Bible and the Catechism.

The thumb is used by a hitchhiker to ask: Going my way? Just so, it reminds us of the great commission we received from Jesus to ask people to go our Catholic way, to share our beliefs with others, accompanied by the witness of our example of giving and forgiving. This is the "butter at room temperature" that readily spreadlies.

In brief: pray every day; go to Sunday Mass; go to Confession regularly; study the Bible and the Catechism; and witness by forgiving others and giving to the poor.

Now put those two hands together, matching the fingers of one hand to those of the other, like a mirror, and you have a way to understand the message of the Good News of

Jesus. And with those same two hands joined together, pray:

- to persevere in the practice of your holy Catholic Faith;
- to be a good witness, that others will be attracted to follow Jesus because of your lived example;
- to answer God's call to Heaven, to holiness, and to mission.

From what we know about who Jesus is, what he did, what he taught, and the way of life he shows to his followers, what's not to love?

Know the Lord. Love the Lord. Serve the Lord out of love. And therein find your happiness and fulfillment in this world and in the next. Then help others who are still seeking to do the same. Amen. Alleluia.

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The Bible is an indispensable tool for learning more about Jesus, what he taught, what he did, and the way of life he asks of his followers. The English translation of the Bible that Catholics use at Holy Mass is called the New American Bible. This is accessible on-line, but a Catholic should really own the book, the Bible, and read it too.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church is another resource for learning our holy Catholic Faith. This is likewise accessible on-line, but buy the book in case of an internet crash.



This is the first entry of a teaching document written by Archbishop Michael Jackles titled, "How to be the Church of the Poor, for the Poor, Stewardship as a Way of Life" which was originally published in August of 2021.

How to be the Church of the Poor, for the Poor, Stewardship as a Way of Life

Stewardship in a nutshell

1. God owns everything.
2. Everything is on loan from God for me to manage.
3. I am wowed by the honor, bowed by the duty.
4. What God entrusts to my stewardship is not just for me.

5. I live to give life and gladness to others.

Introduction

Stewardship comes from the Greek word *oikonomia*, where we get the word economy: managing another's stuff; in this case, managing God's stuff.

In Catholic circles, it's often said that stewardship isn't just about money, that it's also and firstly about things sharing time and talents, and caring for the world of creation.

True, stewardship applies to all that we have, can do, and are. But it is also, and without apology, about money; the same principles govern our use of... whatever.

What is the *whatever*? Read your Bible. Most stewardship references in the Bible talk about our care for creation, and our use of money.

A lot is said about the charge given to women and men to care for, cultivate, and bring forth from creation what's needed to sustain life and to bring good cheer to folks.

And there are about 800 references in the New Testament alone about a believer's use of money (not so much about time and talent, just saying).

1) God owns everything

The first principle of stewardship is that God owns everything. God made it. God keeps it in being. God has a purpose for it all. Creation reflects the splendor of God.

God says to Job: Everything under Heaven belongs to me (Job 41:11). King David sings in worship: The earth is the LORD's and the fullness thereof (Psalm 24).

Nebuchadnezzar, the greatest king of Babylon, serves as an object lesson on the significance of acknowledging the ownership of God.

Daniel records how King Nebuchadnezzar took credit for all the lands, wealth, and power he amassed: I myself... by the might of my power... for the glory of my majesty (Daniel 4:30).

No sooner were the words out of his mouth, that the King went cuckoo for cocoa puffs, as they say, going to live in the wild with animals, and feeding on grass like them.

And so did he remain *until* he acknowledged that it is God who gives what God wills, to whom God wills (Daniel 4:34).

Like King Nebuchadnezzar when he came to his senses, we affirm that everything came into being only through the invisible God (Hebrews 11:3).

2) Everything is on loan from God for me to manage

The second principle of stewardship is that everything is on loan from God for me to manage.

It's not uncommon to hear people criticize Pope Francis for his comments on owning private property and the universal destination

of goods, calling him a wild-eyed, Latin American liberal.

But what the Pope says on those topics isn't his personal opinion. Rather, it's Catholic social teaching, taught by all the Popes in the modern era, and enshrined in the Catholic Catechism.

References to this teaching go all the way back to Pope Leo XIII, in his Encyclical Letter *Rerum Novarum*, published in 1891 – far from wild-eyed and liberal, he, the Vatican, and the times in which he lived.

In fact, Pope Leo XIII wrote that encyclical in part to counter protests made by wild-eyed communists and socialists who opposed ownership of private property.

The Catholic Church teaches we have the right to hold private property, provided we recognize God's sovereignty (we don't want to end up like King Nebuchadnezzar), and as long as we view private property as a tool of stewardship.

Private ownership facilitates our care for the land and our responsible use of natural resources, for our benefit, and to be shared with others in the world, and ensuring that it's still around for future use.

In fact, the more people there are who exercise ownership, the greater chance there is that good stewardship and a just sharing of resources will result.

Adam and Eve are examples of stewardship. They received creation from God, with the mandate to be fruitful and multiply, to fill the earth and subdue it (Genesis 1:28).

The Old Testament patriarch Joseph is another example of stewardship: Potiphar put him in charge of his household, entrusting everything he owned to Joseph's management (Genesis 39:4).

3) I am wowed by the honor, bowed by the duty

The third principle of stewardship is that I am wowed by the honor, bowed by the duty.

In Catholic presentations on stewardship, you often hear that it involves being grateful to God for God's gifts. But maybe we shouldn't say that. Why?

Because what we receive from God is a gift only in the sense that it wasn't ours before the giving, and because we've no claim in justice on it.

Also because, if it's truly a gift, then we can do what we like with it. But stewardship requires we give an accounting to God for how we've used what God entrusted to us.

Remember, all is on loan from God. And the dominion given to Eve, Adam, and their descendants, translates as care for creation, not doing whatever we like with it.

This document will continue next month with another entry. The entire series can be found online at www.dbqarch.org/stewardship-catechism.