

Stewardship begins with a glimpse of something new, a glimpse of God's grandeur, according to the Bishops. Quoting St. Paul, they teach what a Christian is to do: *Serve one another through love... bear one another's burdens, and so you will fulfill the law of Christ* (Galatians 5:13, 6:2). Then they go on to say these pivotal words: "The life of a Christian steward, lived in imitation of the life of Christ, is challenging, even difficult in many ways; but both here and hereafter it is charged with intense joy." Do we all wish to be disciples of Jesus? If so, then our way of acting must be different than the world's way of acting.



### Getting the Glimpse

For too long in too many places, not only in Southern Illinois, the fundamental question of the parish is: "Will we be next to close?" The question is far too close to: "Will I be the next to die?" Christian stewards do not envision a future of death and decay, but a Church that thrives, communities that are alive and holy and welcoming and growing.

Could our initial glimpse of God's grandeur come to us when we focus less on the question of death and more on the possibility of life?

How would the Church be in Southern Illinois if our primary questions had to do with hospitality, prayer, formation, and service rather than the fears of struggle and survival?

With firm faith and deep hope, I believe we can shift our gaze from the fear of death to

greater questions. Who needs to know the love of Christ today? Who hungers for the food and company we enjoy? How do we best welcome and form young people for following Christ? What is God asking of me today? Will I listen carefully to the call of God and the cry of the poor? How might we grow in our understanding of the Church's life-giving Tradition? Could I be a better disciple if I knew why the Church taught what it did or even what the Church actually teaches? These questions are all about life, about living after the example of Jesus. Notice that not one is about funding the parish school or keeping the lights on or the doors open for the sake of a building, but each is about using the gifts God has given us to build up the Church that is always mystical but practical, always conserving a tradition and reading the signs of the times. Schools and buildings and projects are part of a living Church. They are ministries of parishes and the diocese. But each fits into a beautiful vision of a Church alive, filled with grace, and drawing others to the way of Jesus.



### Moving Forward

#### 1. Understanding the Disciple's Response

Before **All Saints Day, November 1, 2026**, I intend for every parish to have sent leaders to one of several workshops on Stewardship offered by the Diocesan staff in various areas of the Diocese. These half-day retreats will be designed to help us all turn our thoughts away from mere survival toward the exquisite and