

# The Little Burgundy Book

Six-minute reflections  
on Stewardship  
In light of the Gospel of Matthew

*This book is dedicated to  
Bishop Ken Untener  
(1937-2004)  
who was inspired to create  
the Little Books. His life and faith  
continue to be their driving force.*

This *Little Burgundy Book* is based on the writings of Bishop Ken Untener, and put together by Catherine Haven, editor of the *Little Books*, with the assistance of Sr. Nancy Ayotte, IHM.

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# How to Use the Little Burgundy Book

This *Little Burgundy Book* follows the same format as the *Little Books* we've used for the Advent/Christmas, Lenten and Easter seasons.

The theme of this book is stewardship.

Stewardship is not a peripheral part of the Gospels, with references to it found here and there. It is an underlying theme of Scripture. Actually, "stewardship" is a one-word summary of the Christian way of life.

Although this book is undated and can be used at any time of the year or for personal reflection, the Sunday pages lead up to four weeks before Ecumenical Stewardship Sunday (the second Sunday in November).

For the next four weeks, each of us is asked to spend six minutes a day with this *Little Book* and enjoy one of our oldest traditions of prayer called *lectio divina* – sacred reading.

The left-hand pages will have informational items relating to stewardship. The right-hand pages will give prayerful reflection, drawing upon Scriptural passages from the Gospel of St. Matthew.

When you read the right-hand page, be sure to take your time with the Scripture passage. Don't scan the text, familiar though it may be. The Lord is present in these words. They are always fresh, new, "live."

Be open to whatever word or phrase catches you, for it is the Lord who speaks to you through these words.



'The parable of the great banquet teaches us not only that God is generous, but also that we should not be complacent. God invites us to come and receive his gifts, and sometimes we take those invitations for granted.'

– Bishop Ken Untener



## What is stewardship?

The word “stewardship” is the English translation of a Greek term formed from two words: “manage” and “house.” A steward is someone who *manages* someone else’s *house* (that is, all the owner’s possessions).

The word “steward” (or “stewardship”) is found 87 times in the New Testament. For example, Paul speaks of himself as a “steward” of the Gospel. He has received the “good news” from the Lord, and it has been given to him so that he can share it with others. In two passages of Luke’s Gospel, it is even on the lips of Jesus.

New Testament writers use the words “steward” and “stewardship” to make the point that all people are God’s stewards, because everything that exists belongs to God.

Laws about ownership can help to keep good order in society. But legal “ownership” can be deceptive. A person only “owns” something in the sense that other human beings can’t claim it for themselves. For example, to take another person’s car is auto theft.

But in relation to God, no one ultimately owns anything. God is the owner of everything that exists. God created it, and it is God who continually keeps it in existence.

That is a fundamental element of stewardship: everything belongs to God.

'All shall give as they are able,  
according to the blessings  
which the Lord your God has given you.'

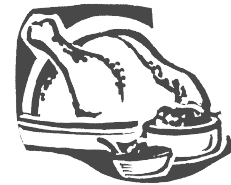
– Deuteronomy 16:17

## Thanksgiving to God

In the early days of the United States, colonists would celebrate “thanksgiving” after a military victory, at the end of a drought, or at any event where showing gratitude and praise to God seemed appropriate. “Thanksgiving” was even held upon the enactment of the Constitution.

In 1789, President George Washington proclaimed November 26 a “day of public thanksgiving and prayer to be observed acknowledging with grateful hearts the many and signal favours of Almighty God.”

In 1863, President Abraham Lincoln declared a national day of thanksgiving be held in November. In 1941, the United States Congress named the fourth Thursday of November as the national holiday of Thanksgiving.



A major supporter of establishing a Thanksgiving Day in the United States was Sarah Josepha Hale (1788-1879), a magazine editor best known for her poem, “Mary Had a Little Lamb.”

\* \* \*

The United States isn't the only country that sets aside a special day to thank God for all its blessings. Canadians, for example, celebrate Thanksgiving each year on the second Monday in October.

Tradition credits English explorer Martin Frobisher with establishing the custom in Canada. In 1578, in what is today Newfoundland, it's said he held a formal ceremony of thanksgiving for having survived his journey to find a route to the Orient.

**After Jesus was baptized, he came up from the water and behold, the heavens opened for him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming upon him. And a voice came from the heavens, saying, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.” (Mt 3:16-17)**

There are some people in this world who can go to the Grand Prix in Monaco or the Winter Olympics at the drop of a hat. Some can buy whatever they want, whenever they want. They can pretty much do whatever they want to do.

As for the rest of us, we can do what we can do.

I am gifted by God with freedom. Great gifts and wonderful things are within my reach.

No matter who I am, how old I am, how young I am, how sick I am, how healthy I am, how rich I am, how poor I am, I can do what I can do with the gifts that God has given me.

The Spirit who came to Jesus upon his baptism is the exact same Spirit who has come upon me at my baptism – not a *likeness* of the Spirit, the exact same Spirit.

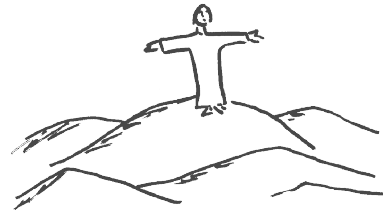
The voice from heaven that said, “This is my beloved Son with whom I am well pleased” – that same voice says the same thing of me: “This is my beloved child with whom I am well pleased.”

I am gifted by God. I have the liberty of the children of God. I am part of God’s royal family.

And I can do what I can do with the gifts that God has given me.



*Spend some quiet time  
with the Lord*



## Wonders of the World

A 130-foot tall statue dedicated to Christ the Redeemer overlooks Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

It is located on top of Corcovado Mountain, which the Portuguese had originally named “Pinnacle of Temptation.” In the 1850s, a Vincentian priest arrived at Rio de Janeiro. Struck by the mountain’s beauty, he suggested a religious monument be constructed there in honor of Princess Isabella of Spain . . . who dismissed the idea.

Even after the Brazilian government passed a law separating Church and state (making construction of such a monument illegal), Brazilian Catholics refused to give up the idea of erecting a statue in thanksgiving for all they had received from God.

By 1921, the Archdiocese of Rio de Janeiro had received permission to build a statue of Christ, which would be visible to everyone throughout Rio. To finance the project, the archdiocese held “Monument Week,” seeking donations. Although many of the people were poor, the Catholics of Rio gave generously to help cover all costs.

Construction finally began in 1926, and on October 12, 1931, the statue was inaugurated. Its cost: \$250,000.

\* \* \*

In 2007, the statue of Christ the Redeemer in Rio de Janeiro was named one of the new Seven Wonders of the World.



**Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil. He fasted for forty days and forty nights, and afterwards he was hungry. The tempter approached and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, command that these stones become loaves of bread.” . . . Then the devil took Jesus to the holy city, and made him stand on the parapet of the Temple, and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down . . .” (Mt 4:1-11)**

The devil is a sly one. Leaping off the Temple was a set-up, staged – not the stuff of real life.

Faith is not something you demonstrate by constructing an artificial situation. True faith is shown by acts of trust in God in real-life situations.

Faith requires great trust. It is a leap because there is not always a bridge of clear logic that I can walk across. I have to let myself go into the arms of God.

I make a leap of faith when I forgive someone who doesn't deserve it, trusting that this is the true way to live.

I make a leap of faith when my life, for whatever reason, seems to be a mess but I still carry on, trusting that the Lord is walking with me.

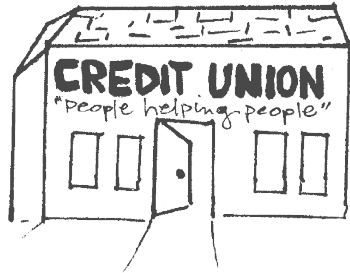
I make a leap of faith when I come to Eucharist and, with Jesus, give myself to the Father. “Not my will but yours be done.”

I make a leap of faith when I take the real things in my life – food, material things, money, time – and give them to God and trust that God will take care of me.

Stewardship is a leap of faith in real-life situations.



*Spend some quiet time  
with the Lord*



Not for profit,  
not for charity,  
but for service.

– Credit union motto

## Credit union movement

The concept of credit unions (“people helping people”) goes back to mid-19th century Europe when a group of farmers put together their money to purchase supplies at a lower price.

Credit unions originally pooled their money to provide loans at lower interest rates to other members who needed to borrow money.

The first credit union in the United States was St. Mary’s Cooperative Credit Association. It was begun by parishioners of St. Mary Catholic Church in Manchester, New Hampshire, in April 1909.

Because St. Mary’s Credit Union was open to anyone in the community, it especially aided Catholic immigrants and the working poor in starting businesses and purchasing homes. During the Great Depression of the 1930s, St. Mary’s Credit Union survived when many banks failed.

During the prosperous 1920s, Americans had more money to spend on items such as automobiles and washing machines. Because banks weren’t providing consumer credit, people turned to their local credit union which became a source of inexpensive credit.

International Credit Union Day is celebrated in mid-October.