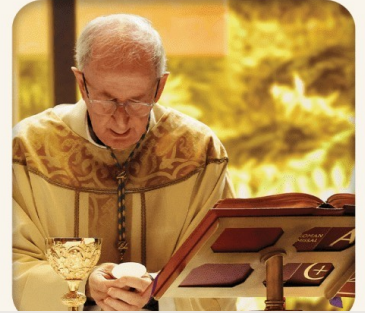


February 15, 2026

Blessed are they who seek Him with all their heart.

Readings:

- Sirach 15:15-20
- 1 Corinthians 2:6-10
- Matthew 5:17-37



Stewardship: A Choice for the Heart

This week's readings call us to examine the true condition of our hearts. Stewardship is not simply an annual commitment or an external obligation – it is a daily decision to live for God. In the Book of Sirach, we are reminded of the dignity of our freedom: "If you choose, you can keep the commandments... Before man are life and death, good and evil, whichever he chooses shall be given him." God does not force our love or obedience. He invites it. Stewardship begins with this fundamental choice – to choose life, to choose God, to choose to live according to His commands.

In the Gospel, Jesus makes it clear that merely outward observance is not enough. "Unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees..." He deepens the law, teaching that avoiding murder is not sufficient – we must root out anger; avoiding false oaths is not enough – we must be people of truth. The Lord desires not box-checking religion, but transformed hearts.

Stewardship flows from this interior conversion. When our hearts belong fully to God, we begin to see everything – our time, talents, and treasure – as gifts entrusted to us for His glory and the good of others.

Saint Paul reminds us in Corinthians of the promise:

Eye has not seen, and ear has not heard... what God has prepared for those who love Him."

God longs to bless us with His grace. But we must choose Him – not occasionally, but daily.

May we ask ourselves this week: Has stewardship become a way of life for me? The choice is before us. Let us choose the Lord with all our heart.

Reflection Questions

- Jesus calls us to move beyond external observance to true conversion of heart. In what ways might I be "checking the boxes" in my faith life instead of allowing God to transform my heart?
- Sirach reminds us that we are free to choose life or death, good or evil. What concrete choices in my daily routine reflect that I am choosing God first in my time, talents, and resources?
- If stewardship is meant to be a way of life rather than a once-a-year act, what is one practical step I can take this week to live more intentionally as a steward of the gifts God has entrusted to me?



How Can I Participate in CRUX?

"My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness."
- 2 Corinthians 12:9-10

This Lent, our parish invites you to grow together as we learn to surrender more deeply to Christ through Ascension's Lenten program, Crux with Fr. Columba Jordan, CFR. Crux centers on surrender—learning to trust Christ more fully and allowing Him to meet us in our weakness. **In small groups, you'll gather weekly for prayer, discussion, and a video reflection with Fr. Columba.** Rooted in a holistic understanding of body and soul, Crux guides us through Lent by integrating both physical and spiritual disciplines. As Ash Wednesday approaches this week, we encourage you to begin prayerfully discerning what your daily practices will be for the season. Throughout Lent, we'll commit to **Four Daily Practices**:

1. **Daily Exercise** - A small, intentional way to care for the body God has given us—offered as discipline, not performance. Ideas: stretching, walking, an exercise class, or pickleball.
2. **Daily Fast** - Choosing restraint in what we consume, allowing physical hunger to turn our hearts toward prayer. Ideas: fasting from dessert, alcohol, coffee, condiments, or eating in the car.
3. **Daily Examen** - Pausing each evening to review the day, recognize blessings and challenges, and grow in awareness and gratitude.
4. **Spiritual Reading** - Setting aside time each day to read and reflect on Scripture or other sacred texts. Fr. Columba recommends reading through the Gospel of Mark. Other suggestions: *The Return of the Prodigal Son* by Henri Nouwen; *The Practice of the Presence of God* by Brother Lawrence; or *Voices of the Saints* by Bert Ghezzi.

Join us this Lent as we walk together toward deeper trust, greater surrender, and renewed life in Christ.

Go deeper the Ascension App

Watch Fr. Columba's daily videos with a Premium Subscription, along with exclusive reflection questions and all the daily Bible readings in one place. Now available for a special price of \$4.99 for 90 days.

DAILY



FOR INDIVIDUALS: Go deeper with Fr. Columba's daily Lenten reflections in the ASCENSION APP

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