



Second Sunday Ordinary Time January 15, 2017 A

◆ 'Stewardship of Treasure' Sunday ◆ 5 Reasons for Supporting your Parish Financially

In this four-page report on 'Stewardship of Treasure' Sunday, you will find:

- Remarks on the spirituality of money
- Eight levels of giving to the offertory collection for 2015-2016
- Financial report and comments on it
- Information on electronic giving and credit card giving

First of all, **THANK YOU** to all of you who week after week, month after month, and year after year, faithfully share with your parish family a portion of your financial resources. Your faithful and generous giving enables us to pay a fair wage to our full-time and part-time parish staff who maintain our facilities and oversee the daily administration of the parish and many of our ministries. For more on all this, see our Fiscal Reports on pages 5 and 6.

The way we make and use our money is a spirituality issue.

An old and wise maxim concerning the spiritual life states: "The spiritual life is *all* life" and not just those times when we pray and come to Church. If the spiritual life is *all* of life, then the way we deal with our relationships and with life's hurts and losses, as well as the way we handle our money, either help or hurt our relationship with God. When we see financial resources as a gift from God and we prayerfully seek to be wise and generous stewards of this gift, we impact in a positive way our relationship with God. On the other hand, when we leave God out of this area of our life or choose to be greedy with our financial resources, we hurt our relationship with God.

Some years ago, I read that there are over 2,300 verses in the Bible about money, possessions and the right management of them, and only 500 verses that relate to prayer and faith. Isn't that amazing! I wonder why the Bible talks so much about money way more

than I do! Might it be because God is very aware of how preoccupation with money (especially when we have a sufficient amount of it to pay our bills) can be a big distraction to our relationship with God.

Practical suggestions to prayerfully consider

1. Giving something to the offertory collection basket is always way better than giving nothing.

Giving nothing to the offertory collection is a vote—intended or unintended—to close the parish. While I feel I am pretty sensitive and often helpful to families who are going through a difficult time financially, I firmly believe it is an act of faith in God to *give something* to the offertory collection no matter how poor we are. Remember how Jesus praised the poor widow for her contribution of a few pennies saying that she gave more than all the rest considering her financial situation.

2. If currently your practice is to give "loose change" to the offertory collection, consider moving to the next level.

The next step up from being a "loose change" giver is to become a "percentage giver." After prayerful reflection, most of us would agree that God's work carried out week after week in every parish deserves more than our loose change, especially when we are in a position to give more than loose change.

When it comes to this aspect of our spiritual life, most 'percentage givers' to the offertory collection would say that 'doing the math' was a significant and important step. When we have the courage to 'do the math,' we may discover that we are more generous than we thought or we may discover that we are not as generous as we thought.

If you are in a position to increase your level of giving, please consider doing so. Beginning this weekend, I am increasing my weekly donation by \$3.00. This may not sound a whole lot, but if *many* people decide to increase their level of giving, the aggregate amount could be very significant.

3. *Work towards or beyond the biblical ideal of tithe.*

In the Old Testament, there are several references to tithing. God asked Israel to give a tithe, i.e., 10%, of the harvest to the Temple. In the Book of Sirach, God's Word says to us: "*With each contribution, show a cheerful countenance, and pay your tithes with a spirit of joy. Give to the Lord as he has given to you, generously, according to your means*" (35:8-9).

Giving 10% (5% to Church and 5% to charity) is something that most Christians move towards *gradually*. If you are currently not giving 10% of your income but could without too much sacrifice, you might ask yourself what holds you back from taking this step. For me, it seemed like a really big step, so the *gradual steps* helped me a lot as it didn't seem so painful after all. What might hold you back from taking the step to give a full tithe to Church and charity?

Five reasons to be serious and generous with our financial resources

1. *God expects us to do so.* Every day in my morning prayer, I thank God for the material and spiritual blessings in my life. But I also know that the best way to show my gratitude is by generously sharing both of these blessings with the Church family and wider community I belong to. God did not bless me so that I could be greedy; he blessed me so that I can bless others.

2. *We could have been born in a slum here or elsewhere.* Every day, millions of our brothers and sisters in our global family deal with gross poverty. By an accident of birth, we were fortunate enough not to have been one of them. Reflecting on this reality should be reason enough for all of us to be very generous with the financial blessings that we enjoy.

3. *Consistent financial giving is God's cure for greedy tendencies.* If grief is God's cure for dealing with a loss, and forgiveness is God's cure for healing a hurt, consistent financial giving is God's cure for the greedy tendencies in us. It's amazing how easily greed can take hold of us—whether we are poor or rich. Some poor and rich people are very generous, and other poor and rich people are very greedy.

4. *Generous financial giving makes us a little more like our good and generous God.* If forgiving life's hurts makes me more like a forgiving God, generous

giving of our financial resources makes us more like our good and generous God.

5. *Experience the joy of giving.* There is real joy in giving. I am sure many of you have experienced it. Thank you for taking time to read this column on an important part of our spiritual life. For information on *Direct Giving*, which is the way more and more Catholics are giving, see page 7.

I conclude with a favorite Scripture passage on financial giving: "*Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth.... Rather store up treasures in heaven*" (Matt 6:19-20). It has also been said: "*We cannot take our money with us, but we can send it ahead of us by supporting the mission of the Church. In doing so, we store up treasures in heaven.*"

Have a blessed week,

