



## Thirty-Second Sunday in Ordinary Time November 11, 2012 B

### Financial Giving An Important Part of the Spiritual Life

*“The spiritual life is all of life”* is one of the most important maxims in the spiritual life. This truth is a great corrective to those who tend to think and believe that the spiritual life only involves our prayer time, whether privately or in church. When we say that the spiritual life is *ALL* of life, it includes the way we use our time and talent, our relationship with other people, our work, our handling of life’s hurts and losses, *and* the way we *make, manage* and *use* our money.

The way we manage any aspect of our lives can impact our spirituality positively or negatively. For example, when I am able, with the grace of God, to forgive a hurt, I become a little *more like* my forgiving God. When I refuse to forgive a hurt, I am choosing to remain hardhearted, not like my forgiving God. When I am generous with my time, talent and money, I become a *little more like* my generous God. When I work at being a good employer or employee, I become a *little more like* my good God. So you can see what I mean when I say “the spiritual life is all of life.”

*When the Crusades were being fought during the 12th century, the crusaders employed mercenaries to fight on their behalf. Because it was a religious war, the crusaders insisted that the mercenaries be baptized before fighting. As they were being baptized, the mercenaries would hold their swords out of the water to symbolize the one thing in their life that Jesus Christ did not control. They had the freedom to use the swords in any way they wished.*

*Today many people handle their money in a similar fashion, though they may not be as obvious about it. They hold their wallet or purse “out of the water,” in effect saying, “God, You can be the Lord of my entire life except for my money. I am perfectly capable of handling that myself.”*

This anecdote communicates in a powerful way the temptation to hold one or more aspects of our lives *outside* of our relationship with Jesus.

#### The spirituality of money—three important things to remember

**Step One:** *Being open to talking to God about money issues.* Growth in spiritual life is having the openness

and courage to bring God into the financial dimension of our lives. As you might guess, many, many people do not invite God into this part of their lives. You probably can remember a time when you yourselves kept your financial affairs shut off from God. Some spouses are so secretive about money that they keep their own spouse in the dark about their financial situation.

**Step Two:** *Moving from being a loose change giver to being an intentional giver.* When it comes to the Sunday collection, many Catholics are loose change givers. At collection time, they pull a dollar or two out of their pockets and throw it in the collection basket. We might say they only give some of their leftovers to God.

We move beyond being a loose change giver when we become an *intentional giver*. An intentional giver is one who has taken the time to do the math about their monthly or yearly income and have decided to give a particular percentage of it to church and charity. It may be one percent, two percent or more. To move from being a loose change giver to an intentional giver is a second big spiritual growth step when it comes to dealing with our finances.

**Step Three:** *Taking the leap to tithing ten percent or more of our income to church and charity.* Until fairly recently, Catholics tended to look upon tithing as a Protestant thing. Tithing is in fact a biblical thing rooted in the scriptures. Protestants practice tithing more than us. In the book of Sirach, we read these words:

*Appear not before the Lord empty-handed, for all that you offer is in fulfillment of the precepts. The just one’s offering enriches the altar and rises as a sweet odor before the Most High. The just one’s sacrifice is most pleasing, nor will it ever be forgotten. In a generous spirit pay homage to the Lord, be not sparing of freewill gifts. With each contribution show a cheerful countenance, and **pay your tithes** in a spirit of joy. Give to the Most High as he has given to you, generously, according to your means. (35:4-9).*

Other references to tithing can be found in Genesis 28:22, Deuteronomy 14:22, Malachi 3:10.

Most if not all Protestant pastors ask their people to tithe 10% to their church, while Catholic pastors suggest 5% to church and 5% to charity. Most people, including myself, moved *gradually* to giving 10% to church and charity. Some give 10% or more to the church; others give more to charity than to church.

If currently you do not tithe 5% to church and 5% to charity even though you are in a position to do so, what do you think keeps you from taking that step? If currently you do not give 5% to church and 5% to charity, how much money do you think you need to be making annually before you would begin to tithe? \$125,000? \$250,000? \$500,000? My guess is that many people who make a million dollars or more a year do not tithe, while some who make \$50,000 or less a year do.

I deeply believe that the way we spend our *time* and *money* says a whole lot about the quality of our spiritual lives. This should make many of you happy who are very generous with your time, talent and treasure. Thank you a thousand times!

**A word to those who don't support the church financially but could.** If we do not financially support our parish family although we are in a position to do so, or only give "loose change" when we could be much more generous, we should experience what is called *healthy guilt*—the guilt we feel for failing to do what we ought to do. My guess is that God does not look kindly on us if others with a much smaller income than us are more generous than we are. Needless to say, I am well aware that in this economy, some people are helping other family members who are hurting financially. God knows our priorities and practices in this area of our lives. It is to him that we must answer.

#### **Comments on the Fiscal Report**

Like most, if not all parishes in Florida, we give you our Fiscal Report at this time of the year so that our dedicated winter parishioners can read it. While some of you may prefer a more detailed statement, our report is pretty standard for parishes in the U.S. Some facts:

1. The parish employs 14 full-time and 14 part-time staff.
2. On the operating revenue side, fundraising income comes from Casino Night and Parish Festival.
3. *Facilities upkeep and utilities.* \$114,000 of this line item was for chiller repairs and upkeep. This past year we did a lot of repairs that will not be repeated on an annual basis.
4. *Support for other Catholic Schools.* This refers to tuition assistance we give to some MCC students and Our Lady of Lourdes. Three years ago, Our Lady of Lourdes School was going to close. Their pastor, Fr. Bergin, is working very hard to keep the school open and strong. This year we gave our neighbor \$10,000.

**Parish Finance Committee.** The committee, which meets on a regular basis, consists of Catherine Key, CPA, Jose Vento, CPA, Mary Carney, Bonnie Armstrong, Mary Russo (Parish bookkeeper) and myself.

#### **Please Make a Will and Consider Remembering Your Parish in Your Will**

Most of you own more than you realize. But no matter the size of your estate, if you want to provide for your surviving relatives, friends and others, you need to have a Will.

If you die without making a Will, you lose the ability to control the disposition of your assets. The Law of the State will tell your family where your money and property goes. Furthermore, potential savings on income tax and estate tax, which can be arranged when preparing your Will or estate plan, will be lost if there is no Will.

So as a matter of prudence and good care for your family, you ought to have a Will. And when you do that, after you have provided for your loved ones, I invite you to consider designating a gift for the good works of Ascension Catholic Community.

Naming our parish as a charitable beneficiary is simple. Your bequest can be a specific amount of money, property or stock. Just tell your lawyer or your pastor what you want to do. You can also name our parish, as a contingency beneficiary if someone named in your Will is no longer living. To make a gift, simply include the following words in your Will:

*I give, devise, and bequeath to Ascension Catholic Church, of Melbourne, Florida (here you write the amount being given) to be used for the needs of the church.*

I appreciate very much and say Masses for parishioners who remember the parish or school in their Will.

Have a blessed week

