

## Questions about Giving

*"Each of you, as a good manager of God's gifts, shall use for the good of others the special gifts you have received from God."*

- 1 Peter 4:10

### **What is Christian stewardship?**

Stewardship is using, with integrity and faithfulness, the gifts which God has given. As Christians, we are to pray daily, attend worship regularly, give sacrificially and serve faithfully.

### **Why do we give?**

To declare that Jesus is Lord of our lives! It is by trusting Christ fully with our lives that we discover the joy and wonder of God's love, and, no matter what we say or do, we do not really trust until we trust Him with our finances. In other words, we give so that we might truly open our hearts to the power and love of the Lord.

Often the Bible promises that right living leads to God's increased presence in our lives. Proverbs 11:25 pledges: "He who waters will himself be watered." This does not mean that we give in order to receive. Rather, we affirm the truth of Jesus' teaching, that "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Matthew 5:21). We give, knowing that as we put the Master first in our lives, we become open to the transforming power and presence of the living God.

### **What is a tithe?**

The Scriptures teach that we are to give God our "tithes and offerings." The "tithe" or "tenth" is our basic obligation to God. It is 10% of our income returned to God from all he has given us. The Bible emphasizes (Malachi 3:8-10) that this is our minimum responsibility to God who gives us everything. The "offering" represents special gifts made to church and community causes over and above the tithe. Depending upon the blessings we have received, many will want to give beyond the tithe.

### **Is the tithe figured before or after taxes?**

The Bible states that the tithe comes from the "first fruits of the harvest" (Exodus 22:29, Romans 11:16).

### **Does the tithe include money given to outside ministries and charities?**

No. These gifts are "offerings" and are made over and above our tithe. While there are many worthy causes expressing Christian values and deserving of support, there is only one institution on earth which exists explicitly to lift up the Name of the One who is the source of all those values: your church. Unless the gospel of Christ is proclaimed in consistent and powerful ways, through a community of believers, all of the other "good causes" will eventually crumble.

### **Does the Catholic Church require its members to tithe?**

Only to the degree that it supports, encourages, and preaches obedience to God's Word. There is no *obligation* to tithe as it is ultimately a response from the committed heart. "Where your treasure is there will be found your heart also" (Matthew 6:21). Like love, a genuine commitment can't be legislated. The tithe can seem an impossible goal for many. In that case, we are to decide to tithe, and then let God show us how! The journey starts as we become percentage givers. We commit to God a

set percentage of our income, making that commitment a top priority in our spending, and growing from there.

### **How do we find a starting place for percentage giving?**

We choose a percentage we can live with, but which involves sacrifice. A helpful question to ask is: if the IRS audited my finances, could the auditor tell by looking at my expenditures that Jesus is my Lord? A five percent pledge represents only five pennies out of each dollar God gives. After starting on this spiritual ladder we are then to grow as Christ leads us on, with a goal of becoming at least tithers. A helpful guide is the Two Percent Principle: increasing our giving by two percent of our income each year.

### **Why Pledge?**

For two reasons. First, the act of making an individual financial commitment to Christ is a key element in developing spiritual maturity. Pledging means promising Christ to make Him a priority in our lives, and then keeping the promise.

Second, it is the only way the church can be run with approximate fiscal responsibility. If our church leaders do not have a good idea of what kind of support to expect, they cannot adequately plan and coordinate the ministries necessary to meet the needs of the members.

### **Why make such a big deal out of this?**

Because Jesus did! Think of all the parables and other ways Jesus spoke of money and what we should value. Why? Because until we have given God control of our finances we have not really surrendered to Him control of our lives. Our attitude toward money will either be a major barrier between us and God, or a means of growing in grace. Remember: Keeping the tithe, as the Bible teaches, is essentially a matter of the heart and not the wallet!

### **What about gifts through wills and bequests?**

Including the Church in your will is a sign that the church is part of your family. We encourage you to remember St. Theresa Catholic Church in your will. For more information about how to include St. Theresa in your will or estate plan contact the parish office.

“Do all the good you can  
By all the means you can,  
In all the ways you can,  
In all the places you can,  
At all the times you can,  
To all the people you can,  
As long as ever you can.”

John Wesley