

THE CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF WICHITA

TITHING.
AN ACT OF WORSHIP.
AN ACT OF STEWARDSHIP.



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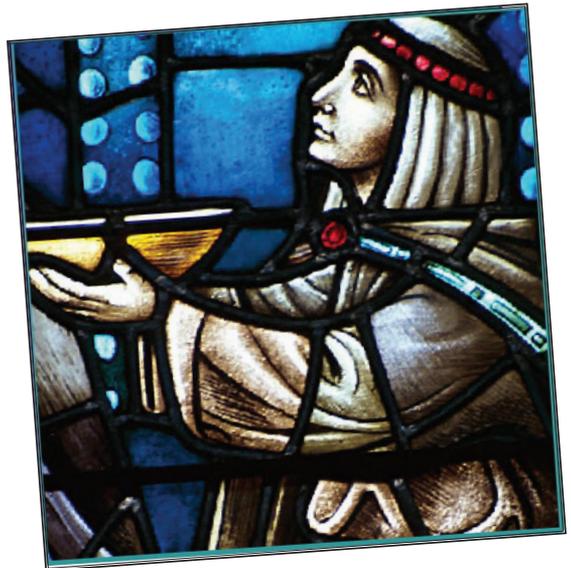
INTRODUCTION

Stewardship is embedded in the New Commandment of Jesus Christ, “Just as I have loved you, you also must love one another. By this love you have for one another, everyone will know you are my disciples.” (*John 13:34-35*)

Jesus promises the Holy Spirit will come to those who love him and keep his commandments. (*Jn 14:15-16*) If the incarnation and death of the Son was an act of the Father’s love, the indwelling after the resurrection is a special act of love for the disciples and every Christian.

The Holy Spirit acts within each person as well as the whole Church, animating, vivifying and sanctifying. Stewardship is a concrete manifestation of the indwelling spirit.

Everyone has a responsibility to answer the call to mission and to develop the gifts she or he has been given by sharing them in the family, the workplace, the civic community, and the parish or diocese. One very important decision and ancient manner of answering the call to mission and sharing one’s gifts, is through the tithe.



WHAT IS TITHING?

So what is tithing? Tithing, the setting aside a tenth of one's income to return to the Lord, is a very ancient practice of worship. It was established in the Old Testament five centuries before the Law of Moses,



by Abraham and a mysterious man named Melchizedek (*Genesis 14: 18-20*). Originally a tithe was given in the form of produce or livestock but as society shifted from a barter-based system of trade to a monetary exchange system, the tithe began to be paid in currency. For faithful Jews, there were three separate tithes: an annual tithe (*Num. 18: 21-24*), an annual feast tithe (*Dt. 14:22-27*), and a third year tithe (*Dt. 26:12f*). Added up, these three tithes might exceed 1/3 of a person's income, not 10%!

How one tithed was not as important as understanding, a tithe is part of one's grateful response to a generous God. For a tithe was not given based on the needs of the priests, Temple, or the poor it was given in recognition and gratitude for the blessings God had bestowed. Thus, every believer had a need to tithe to God, and it was first and foremost an act of worship, not merely a duty.

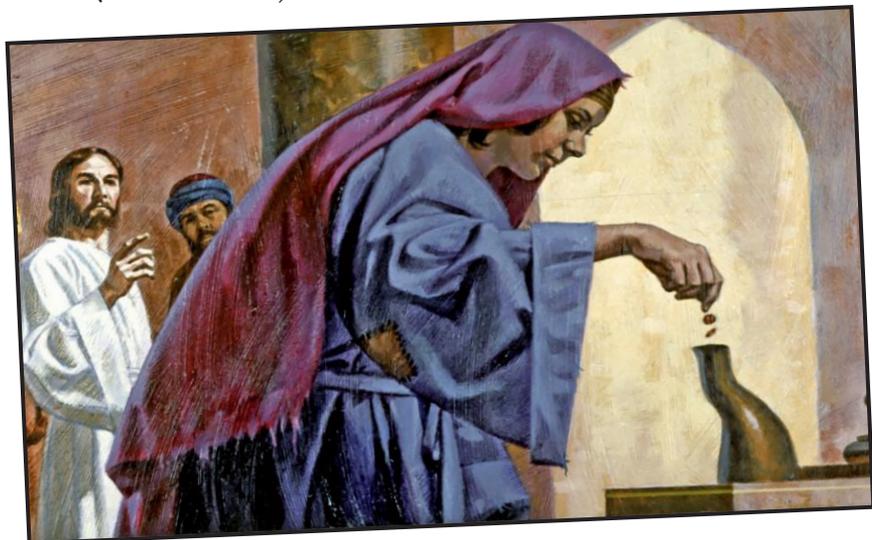
“STEWARDSHIP IS A DECISION OF THE WILL NOT A FEELING, ALTHOUGH GOOD FEELINGS OFTEN FOLLOW. WE CAN'T WAIT FOR OUR ATTITUDES REGARDING STEWARDSHIP TO CHANGE OUR BEHAVIOR. BY CHANGING OUR BEHAVIOR OUR ATTITUDES WILL CHANGE TO MATCH THE GOSPEL WAY OF LIFE.”

- EMERITUS EUGENE J. GERBER

THE TITHES OF THE HERD AND THE FLOCK SHALL BE DETERMINED BY CEDING TO THE LORD AS SACRED EVERY TENTH ANIMAL AS THEY ARE COUNTED BY THE HERDSMAN'S ROD.

- LEVITICUS 27:32

Perhaps this is why our Lord praised the widow in Jerusalem for placing two small copper coins into the Temple treasury (*Luke 21:4*), and why early Christians sold ALL they had and gave it to the church (*Acts 4:34-35*).



Finally, the principle of the New Testament of giving is the principle of wise stewardship and concern for the needs of others. St. Paul praises the Philippian believers for recognizing and receiving his apostolic ministry, and willingness to share in love of God and neighbor.

“When I departed from Macedonia, no church shared with me concerning giving and receiving but you only. For even in Thessalonica you sent aid once and again for my necessities” (*Philippians 4:15–16*).

A few verses later, he calls their financial gifts “*a sweet-smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God.*” This beautiful imagery confirms the Mosaic understanding of tithing and giving as an act of worship.

FOR EVERY BEAST OF THE FOREST IS MINE, AND THE CATTLE
ON A THOUSAND HILLS. I KNOW ALL THE BIRDS OF THE
MOUNTAINS, AND THE WILD BEASTS OF THE FIELD ARE MINE. IF I
WERE HUNGRY, I WOULD NOT TELL YOU; FOR THE WORLD IS MINE,
AND ALL ITS FULLNESS.

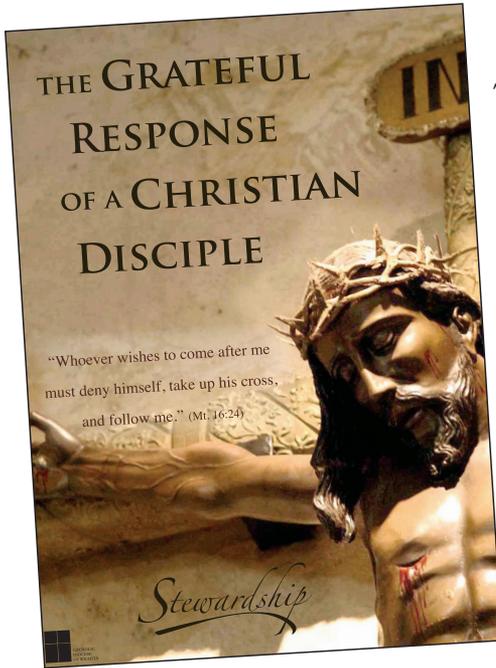
- PSALM 50:10-12

FOR YOU KNOW THE GRACE OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST,
THOUGH HE WAS RICH, YET FOR YOUR SAKES HE BECAME POOR,
THAT YOU THROUGH HIS POVERTY MIGHT BECOME RICH.

- 2 CORINTHIANS 8:9;

SEE ALSO PHILIPPIANS 2:5-8

THE CHURCH'S TRADITION OF TITHING



What has the church said about tithing? The *New Catholic Encyclopedia* says, "The payment of tithes was adopted from the Old Law, and early writers speak of it as a divine ordinance and an obligation of conscience. The earliest positive legislation on the subject seems to be contained in the letter of the bishops assembled at Tours in 567 and the canons of the Council of Macon in 585." By the 8th century, Charlemagne made tithing to the Church a

civil law. The Council of Trent (1545-1563) also reiterated the call to tithe.

Why does the Church often refer to tithing as "giving back?" We gratefully recognize and receive everything as belonging to God. He made the world and all within it. He made us and blessed us with absolutely every gift we have. Our lives, our families, our health, our education, our unique talents and skills, our job and our income are all blessings from God, entrusted into our care for the good of all peoples. Thus, when we tithe we are returning 10% of something that ultimately 100% belongs to God anyway. But this giving back is an act of worship and trust in our generous and abundant God who wants us to keep and enjoy 90% of all His blessings.

CARDINAL HEIMERIC WISHED TO KNOW FROM ST. BERNARD WHY AND HOW GOD IS TO BE LOVED. ST. BERNARD RESPONDED, "THE REASON WHY GOD SHOULD BE LOVED IS GOD HIMSELF; THE MEASURE IN WHICH HE IS TO LOVED IS TO LOVE HIM WITHOUT MEASURE.... LOVE IS AFFECTION, NOT A CONTRACT; IT IS NOT BOUGHT, NOR DOES IT BUY. LOVE IS SATISFIED WITH ITSELF. IT HAS ITS REWARD IN WHAT IS LOVED. TRUE LOVE DEMANDS NO REWARD, BUT MERITS ONE."

TELL THE RICH IN THE PRESENT AGE NOT TO BE PROUD AND NOT TO RELY ON SO UNCERTAIN A THING AS WEALTH BUT RATHER ON GOD, WHO RICHLY PROVIDES US WITH ALL THINGS FOR OUR ENJOYMENT. TELL THEM TO DO GOOD, TO BE RICH IN GOOD WORKS, TO BE GENEROUS, READY TO SHARE, THUS ACCUMULATING AS TREASURE A GOOD FOUNDATION FOR THE FUTURE, SO AS TO WIN THE LIFE THAT IS TRUE LIFE.

- 1 TIMOTHY 6:17-19

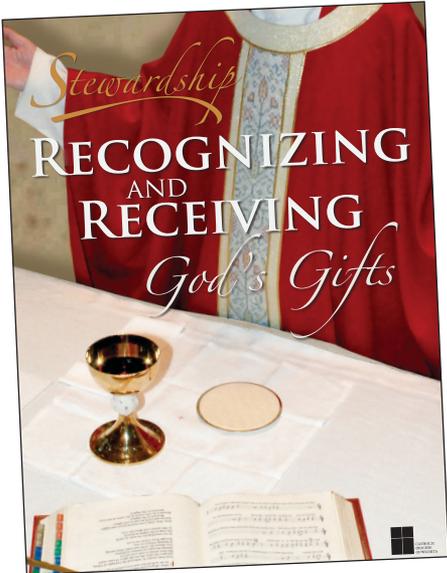


TITHING VERSUS FUNDRAISING

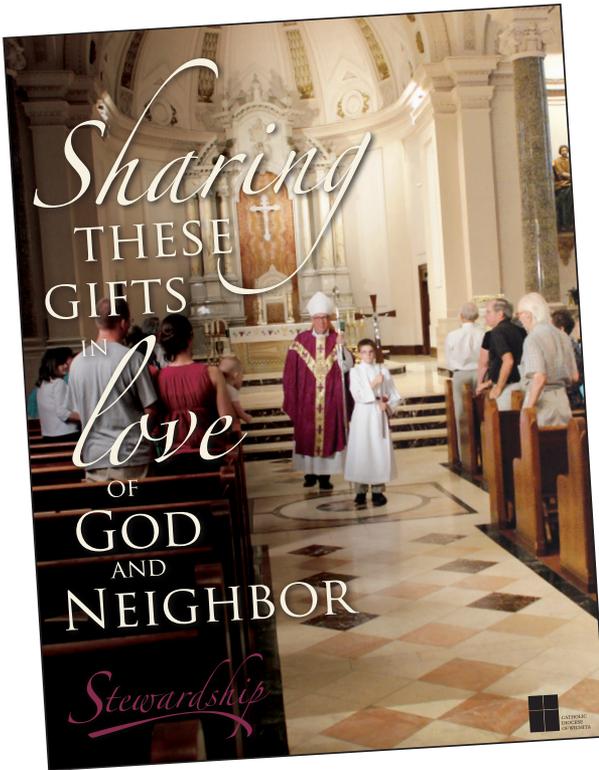
Why can't my parish and diocese just ask for my support when it has special needs? Some parishes and dioceses function in this way, but this leads to endless fundraising activities and ever increasing needs of the Church. There is never an end to the ministry the Church could do, if it had the funds. Without consistent tithes given freely each Sunday, a parish or diocese must appeal for funding for every activity or ministry it wishes to undertake. Parishioners grow tired of the constant talk about the need of money and the demands on their time this kind of approach takes. In doing so, are we turning our Father's house into a marketplace? Are we in danger of this when we resort to constant sales and gimmicky fundraising activities rather than simply asking all parishioners to bring their sacrificial, proportionate, and generous tithe to God's altar first?

“C.S. LEWIS DISTINGUISHES BETWEEN GIFT-LOVE AND NEED-LOVE. DIVINE LOVE IS “GIFT-LOVE.” OURS IS ONE VAST “NEED-LOVE.” INHERENT IN OUR “NEED-LOVE” IS THE NEED TO GIVE LOVE. OUR “GIFT-LOVE” IS MOST GOD-LIKE WHEN IT IS MOST CHRIST-LIKE. WHO CAN LOVE AS CHRIST LOVES! THE SAME SPIRIT MUST BE THERE, NONETHELESS: LOVING UNSELFISHLY, GENEROUS WITH OURSELVES, WILLING TO SPEND OURSELVES FOR OTHERS, WITHOUT RECKONING THE COST; SO EAGER TO HELP THAT WE WILL GIVE AND GIVE, OUR VERY LIFE IF NEED BE.”

- BISHOP EMERITUS EUGENE J. GERBER



Should everyone tithe? Rich and poor? Priests? Our Lord exempted no one from giving. In the story of the “Widow’s Mite” it is important to note Jesus did not reach into the offering box and give the widow back her two small coins. When He multiplied the loaves and fishes He used all the food they found. Even the priests of the Old Testament were not exempt from the tithe. Today, although many parishioners might be unaware of it, parish priests are most generous in giving back a percentage of their own salaries to the parishes in which they serve.



“THE SAME SPIRIT MUST BE THERE, NONETHELESS: LOVING UNSELFISHLY, GENEROUS WITH OURSELVES, WILLING TO SPEND OURSELVES FOR OTHERS, WITHOUT RECKONING THE COST...”
- BISHOP EMERITUS EUGENE J. GERBER

“GIVE THE LEVITES THESE INSTRUCTIONS: WHEN YOU RECEIVE FROM THE ISRAELITES THE TITHE I HAVE ASSIGNED YOU FROM THEM AS YOUR HERITAGE, YOU ARE TO MAKE A CONTRIBUTION FROM THEM TO THE LORD, A TITHE OF THE TITHES...”

- NUMBERS 18:26

THE BENEFITS OF TITHING

What are the benefits to tithing? The satisfaction from gratefully sharing your blessings is tremendous.

- ✦ When you take a hard look at your spending and plan to make God first in your budget you quickly begin to realize the difference between what you need and what you want.
- ✦ You begin to eliminate the endless clutter of material wants from your life and start to more fully appreciate the many blessings you already have.
- ✦ You realize commercialism works to convince us we never have enough of the right things, even though God has already blessed you with all you need.
- ✦ You stop being “consumed by consumerism” and “possessed by your possessions” and begin to slow down and prioritize not only how you spend your money but also how you spend your time.
- ✦ Once you stop trying to satisfy yourself with material possessions and spending, you find enjoyment in simple pleasures – especially time to deepen your relationships with God, with loved ones and with your community.

Ultimately, those who tithe feel the practice brings more joy, more peace, more contentment and more balance to their lives.

GIVE AND GIFTS WILL BE GIVEN TO YOU; A GOOD MEASURE, PACKED TOGETHER, SHAKEN DOWN, AND OVERFLOWING, WILL BE POURED INTO YOUR LAP. FOR THE MEASURE WITH WHICH YOU MEASURE WILL IN RETURN TO MEASURED OUT TO YOU.

- LUKE 6:38

HOW TO TITHE

When I tithe, should I be calculating it on my gross or net income? When striving to give a tithe, you should calculate the amount you give back to God based on your gross income. The reason for this is stewardship calls us to give back to God first, before we take care of any of our own wants, needs or obligations – including our obligation to our government. After all, God should come before Uncle Sam, shouldn't He? By placing God first – above all other financial obligations – we show how much we love and trust Him. Some people may never be able to reach a full tithe. Others reach this goal and keep giving; knowing in reality it all belongs to God.

With our current financial obligations, I don't know how it would be possible for us to convert to giving away a full 10%. Are there any other options? Yes! It is important to begin with some percentage. Begin by committing to giving a gift which is planned, proportionate and sacrificial. Most Catholics do not realize what percentage they currently are giving.



When they take the time to calculate the amount, they are often surprised and uncomfortable. We often think we are very generous yet despite the strong urging throughout sacred scripture to give back 10% the average US Catholic today gives less than 1%.

The first step in working towards a tithe is to determine what percentage you are currently giving. Then see if you can increase the percentage by at least a small percent. If you increase your giving every year by at least ½ percent or more, you will eventually reach a full tithe of 10%. It is usually suggested that you give 8% to your parish and 2% combined to any other charities which touch your heart.

Input from the entire family is beneficial in finding ways you can tighten the budget so more can be given upfront to God. A legalistic approach to a certain percentage really is not as important as developing an overall grateful and generous way of life. Many who begin on this type of stewardship journey eventually find they feel called to increase their giving even beyond the 10% level.

HONOR THE LORD WITH YOUR WEALTH, WITH FIRST FRUITS OF ALL YOUR PRODUCE; THEN WILL YOUR BARNES BE FILLED WITH GRAIN, WITH NEW WINE YOUR VATS WILL OVERFLOW.

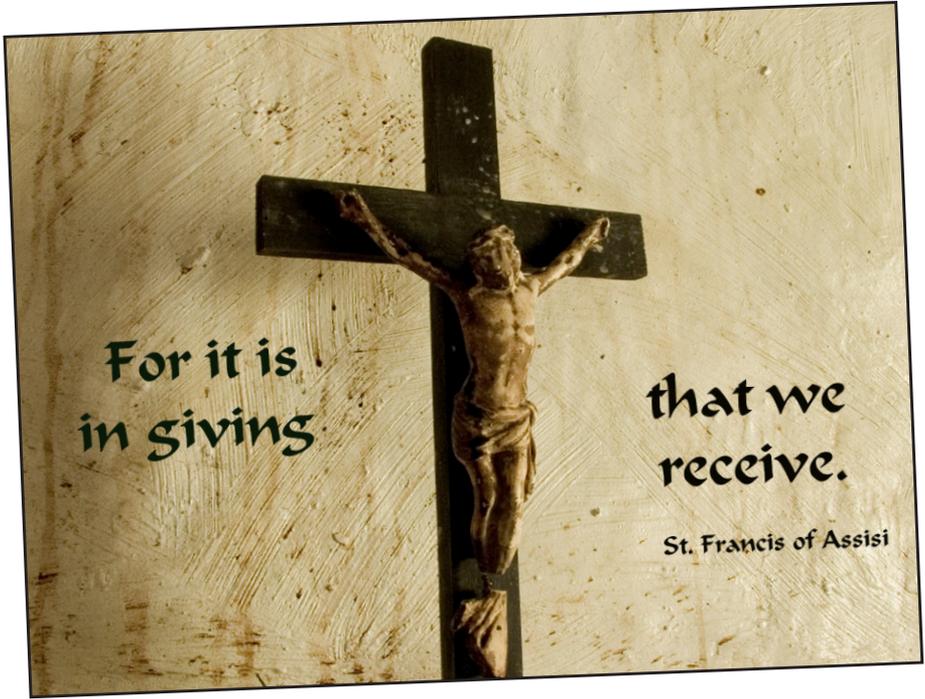
- PROVERBS 3:9-10

MUCH WILL BE REQUIRED OF THE PERSON ENTRUSTED WITH MUCH, AND STILL MORE WILL BE DEMANDED OF THE PERSON ENTRUSTED WITH MORE.

- LUKE 12:4

SPIRITUAL BENEFITS OF TITHING

Does tithing really make a difference in my spiritual life? Absolutely! Although the Church and the world it serves may suffer when Christians decide to take care of their own needs and wants before giving back to God, ultimately what will suffer most is our relationship with God. It is God who blessed us with gifts to share. It is God to whom we are returning a portion of these blessings as an act of worship and faith. It is God to whom we will one day give an accounting of how well we used and shared gifts with others. Our happiness depends upon sharing what we have received.



Tithing is such a huge step. How do I know I am ready?

Tithing does take great faith. Simply place your trust in God. If you wait until you feel you are financially comfortable you will never take the step. The commercialism of our society works to convince us we never have enough. No matter how much we have, there is always something else we will want. If you are ever going to tithe, you will have to step back from your endless list of wants. Then you will have to believe that our generous and abundant God will always provide you with all that you need and even with enough to give back a generous share.

“**S**TEWARDSHIP IS AN EXPRESSION OF DISCIPLESHIP, WITH THE POWER TO CHANGE HOW WE UNDERSTAND AND LIVE OUT OUR LIVES. DISCIPLES WHO PRACTICE STEWARDSHIP RECOGNIZE GOD AS THE ORIGIN OF LIFE, THE GIVER OF FREEDOM, THE SOURCE OF ALL THEY HAVE AND ARE AND WILL BE ...

THEY KNOW THEMSELVES TO BE RECIPIENTS AND CARETAKERS OF GOD’S MANY GIFTS. THEY ARE GRATEFUL FOR WHAT THEY HAVE RECEIVED AND EAGER TO CULTIVATE THEIR GIFTS OUT OF LOVE FOR GOD AND ONE ANOTHER.”

- UNITED STATES BISHOPS PASTORAL LETTER ON STEWARDSHIP

Having made the decision to live stewardship as the way of life, one might ask, how do I know that my decision is the right size? God tells us in Malachi 3:10: *“Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house, and try me in this, says the Lord of hosts: shall I not open for you the floodgates of heaven, to pour down blessings upon you without measure?”*

Pope John Paul II uses the story of the rich young man to illustrate that we must first, accept the truth about ourselves as creatures utterly dependent on God's grace. Second, we must really choose to act in accordance with His divine will for us. And thirdly, we must be willing to give away everything trusting that paradoxically we will gain it all back in abundance.



So, what is the right size? Here is a helpful hint: after prayerful thought about the size of our gift, when we do not find ourselves making excuses for its size, when we know in our hearts it is sacrificial, that we have been completely honest with God and ourselves, then our gift is of the proper size. (Adapted from unknown author.)

Bishop Emeritus Gerber said, “Stewardship is a truth embedded in our life. We have only to receive it. The deeper we go into stewardship as a way of life the freer we are to hear God’s word, to ponder it and to put it into practice. Our wants, our desires will be purified and transformed until more and more we want what God wants and delight in it.”

HE WHO DID NOT SPARE HIS OWN SON BUT HANDED HIM OVER FOR US ALL, HOW WILL HE NOT ALSO GIVE US EVERYTHING ELSE ALONG WITH HIM?

ROMANS 8:32

THEN HE SAID TO THE CROWD, ‘TAKE CARE TO GUARD AGAINST ALL GREED, FOR THOUGH ONE MAY BE RICH, ONE’S LIFE DOES NOT CONSIST OF POSSESSIONS.’

LUKE 12:15

“YOU CAN’T KEEP THE REWARDS OUT OF PRACTICING STEWARDSHIP ANY MORE THAN YOU CAN KEEP HAPPINESS OUT OF VIRTUOUS LIVING. MARCUS AURELIUS SAID, “THE EYE DOES NOT CLAIM A REWARD FOR SEEING. THE SEEING IN ITSELF IS A REWARD.”

EMERITUS EUGENE J. GERBER

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