



Why Give?

Your Offertory Contributions in Action

“Stewardship, in its simplest terms, asks us to put God’s priorities before our own. Good stewards give the first portion of their gifts of time, talent, and treasure to the Lord’s work in gratitude for His many blessings.” – Stewardship: Disciples Respond – A Pastoral Guide for Pastoral Leaders

This document focuses on the financial aspect of stewardship, the gift of treasure, realizing the profound connection that exists in giving time, talent and treasure.

An Uncomfortable Subject

“I don’t want to go to Mass anymore. All the priest ever talks about is money!” Everyone has heard someone speak these words at some time in their parish life. Money is a sensitive subject, especially when it is our money and we feel someone is challenging us about how we spend it. It is an uncommon person who says “I have too much money. Do you know of a way I can get rid of some of it?” On the contrary, most people feel they do not have enough. Yet our faith challenges us to share all kinds of our possessions, including money.

Why should I give?

The Scriptures remind us that giving is a very real way we can live out the Great Commandment to love one another. There are several Bible passages that promise rewards, both worldly and spiritual, both earthly and eternal, waiting for those who give generously from what has been given to them. Stories such as the Good Samaritan, or the poor widow who gave much of what little she had, pointedly remind us of Jesus’ message to give to others.

The United States Bishops’ letter, *Stewardship: A Disciple’s Response*, explains that God blesses each of us abundantly. All that we are – our abilities, our talents, our resources (including our possessions and wealth) – ultimately come from God. While we may have worked hard to earn what we have in life, even the opportunity and the potential to do so came to us as a blessing. (If we think about it, we must admit that if our life had been a little different, we would never have had the opportunity to achieve what we have.) When we recognize how blessed we are, the natural response is gratitude. Like the leper in the Gospel story who “realized that he had been cured,” we feel the need to show our thanks. We have a desire to give back because of all the gifts God has given to us. This certainly includes giving back to our parish where we benefit from the many gifts of the sacraments, faith formation and community life. *“Parishioners must accept responsibility for their parishes and contribute generously – both money and personal service – to their programs and projects.” (Stewardship: A Disciple’s Response, p. 32)*

Ask not what your parish can do for you; ask what you can do for your parish

Parishes exist and are deeply needed to serve the people of God and to build the kingdom on earth, helping to prepare us for eternal life. They often serve not only the people of the parish but also people in the broader community who are in need. Parishes are an essential way for the Church to provide a Catholic presence in neighborhoods and communities around the world.

The previous bulletin inserts on *Vibrant Parish Life - Phase II* have shared information about some realities of parish life today. Costs are going up; it takes a lot of money to run a parish. Mass attendance is going down. With decreasing Mass attendance, there are fewer envelopes being dropped into the collection basket. Yet Offertory collections are what finance a parish, far more than any other fundraising events.

What is the right amount to give?

Every individual and family has to decide what God is asking of them. What is right for one individual may not be right for another. What is fitting to give at one point in a person’s life will likely change at another point. What is most important is that people prayerfully consider what God is asking of them.

The International Catholic Stewardship Council offers this “giving guideline”:

- 5% of your income to your parish;
- 1% to your diocesan appeal (i.e. the Catholic Charities Appeal in our diocese);
- 4% to your favorite charity.

Some people are able and are called to give more than that, while others are not able at this time to give that much. But people can start at whatever is the right percentage for them and increase as they are able by either ½% or 1% at a time.

Once you have decided what God is asking of you, it is important to commit to what you will give and plan how you will do it. Making a commitment about how much money you will give helps you to make it part of your weekly budget. When it’s in the budget, it is much easier to give regularly, rather than to just put in “whatever’s left” at the end of the week, or whatever happens to be in your wallet when you come to church. In the same way, making a commitment to do something specific at the parish makes it easier to plan your weekly schedule and keep your commitment.

What is most important is to pray carefully over how God is calling you to spend your money and use your resources, including your time and talents. God has a plan for His kingdom and each and every one of us is called to be a part of this plan. God asks that we pay attention to how we use all of the marvelous gifts God has given us to help in building this kingdom.

Going Deeper:

As you reflect upon the above information, consider the following questions:

1. Is your parish negatively impacted today in what it can do because of not having enough money? In what areas of parish life is the lack of funds having an impact?
2. If your parish had more money, what other ministries would you hope to see created? What ministries or activities that currently exist in the parish today would you like to see benefit from additional funds?
3. The chart below, from a national survey referenced by Catholic researchers, provides a comparison of giving in various denominations. What do you think about the level of Catholic giving? What is possible if giving increased to a level comparable to other denominations?

