

Should we—members of the Church—be worried about fundraising?

Generally, churches whose members practice a form of *Proportional Giving* or *Tithing*— i.e., Christian Stewardship, do not worry about “making the budget,” nor do they worry about how to fund missions and evangelism, charitable giving, youth programs, fresco painting, bell towers, baptismal fonts, etc., of the constant expense of running a parish. In such parishes, the focus is on doing God’s work in our sorrowful world, charity, worship and the acquisition of the Holy Spirit. Churches that practice limited or no *Proportional Giving* generally spend a lot of time and effort worrying, and holding fundraisers to meet their expenses and needs.

Thanks be to God, our parish is somewhere in the middle when it comes to tithing. Some members regularly give, some infrequently, some do not. We have perhaps 200 people in Church on a Sunday. Of that number perhaps 100 make an offering to God; of that number perhaps 20 make an offering weekly. They practice Christian Stewardship.

Christian Stewardship is the practice of systematic and proportionate giving of time, talent and treasure, based on the conviction these three things are a trust from God given to each person, to be wisely used in service for the benefit of all people, in grateful acknowledgment of Christ’s redeeming love and care for us, in recognition that God gives, and we are to be like God. Conviction, service, gratitude.

In other words, we give a proportion, a percentage, of what God has given us, as St. Paul said to do: “Upon the first day of the week let everyone of you lay by him in store, as God has prospered him.” (I Cor. 16:2). If we have wealth, we give a percentage (be it 2, 5 or 10%) out of that wealth to concretely demonstrate our gratitude to Jesus Christ.

If we have little to give, we still give out of that little for the same reasons, and the Lord will increase it as only He can do.

Stewardship is not a once a year event; not all about money, or dues, or fund-raising or even meeting our annual budget. Stewardship is about making choices, as individuals and in a community. It’s about being faithful disciples, caring for and managing all God has given us: the commitment of time, talent and treasure. God gives, so we do too. Our financial resources are blessings from God. How we manage those finances can help us escape the trap of anxiety (and often selfishness). Failing to manage those resources finds us anxious and distracted when it comes to our faith.

Two more points to consider: *Proportional Giving* does not leave out anyone at all. All should participate, and all will benefit from the blessings of returning a small percentage back to God what He has given us. This is true whether one is rich, or poor, or just getting by— success in a parish is judged **not** by how much money is brought in, but by how much we trust God and are grateful to Him. The “Widow’s Mite” of the Gospel of Matthew speaks eloquently: Jesus “looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the treasury; and he saw a poor widow put in two copper coins. And he said, ‘Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all of them; for they all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all the living that she had.’”

Finally, we must remember that giving to the Church is not a form of charity. By no means; for God does not need our money, nor our time nor our talents. He has all things, and providentially uses them for the good of His People. More rightly, the Church is God’s charity toward us— therefore we joyfully, responsibly and honestly give out of gratitude to Him,

understanding that He brings us into His Divine plans for our benefit and to serve others. – *Fr. Lawrence*