

Parish Stewardship Update

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Lent: A Great Stewardship Season

The Sacrificial Aspect of Tithing and Almsgiving

Excerpted from Phil Lenehan
Vice President "Catholic Answers"

Question:

I remember reading that the Church encourages us to give alms in a more sacrificial way during Lent. Is this still true and why is this? How do you recommend I implement this practice?

Answer:

Lent provides a wonderful opportunity for us to grow closer to Christ and His Church by taking advantage of the abundant spiritual exercises which the Church offers during this time. As you consider what Lenten steps you will take to improve your relationship with God, I encourage you to include almsgiving as part of your plan.

Section 1438 of the *Catechism* tells us, "The seasons and days of penance in the course of the liturgical year (Lent and each Friday in memory of the death of the Lord) are intense moments of the Church's penitential practice. These times are particularly appropriate for spiritual exercises, penitential liturgies, pilgrimages as signs of penance, voluntary self-denial such as fasting and almsgiving, and fraternal sharing (charitable and missionary works)."

I promote tithing as the best way to fulfill our obligation to support the Church and its works. Since most American Catholics give only 1% of their income to charity, the thought of giving away 10% represents a *radical* approach. Yet, Lent provides the perfect opportunity to stretch your faith by increasing your charitable giving. Malachi 3:10 says, "Bring the full tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house; and thereby put me to the test, says the Lord of hosts, if I will

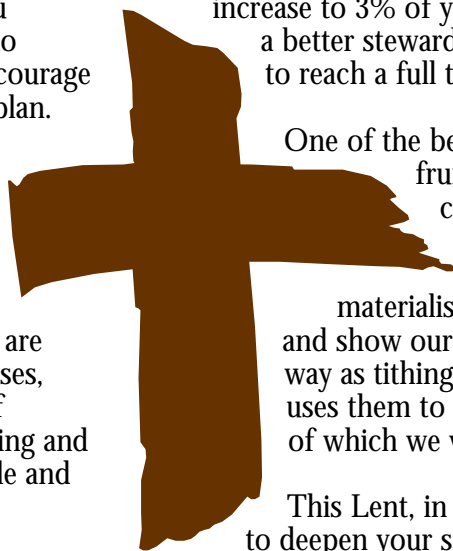
not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you an overflowing blessing."

When counseling couples on how they can integrate tithing into their financial plan, a frequently asked question is how they can increase their giving from 1% to 10% when they're already swimming in credit card debt. A key is to have a long-term goal of becoming debt-free *and* tithing. In the short term, your budget may only allow an increase to 3% of your income, but, as you become a better steward, you'll find the ability *and* desire to reach a full tithe (10%).

One of the beautiful and often unmentioned fruits of tithing and almsgiving comes from its sacrificial nature. God is pleased when we are able to overcome the

materialism so prevalent in our society and show our love for Him in such a tangible way as tithing. He accepts our sacrifices and uses them to accomplish good things, many of which we will never know about.

This Lent, in addition to other steps you take to deepen your spiritual walk, increase your charitable giving as an offering to our Lord. Your gifts can be offered for such purposes as our Holy Father's general intentions, those of your parish priests, or for the suffering people of the world. Or, you may have specific family intentions or burdens on your heart, such as a family member who has left the faith, a troubled child, or problems in your marriage. Uniting your sacrifice to Christ's perfect sacrifice on the cross, ask our Lord for his help and guidance with your intentions.



FOR LENT ...

FOR LIFE ...

- Give up *complaining* ... **focus on gratitude.**
- Give up *pessimism* ... **become an optimist.**
- Give up *harsh judgments* ... **think kind thoughts.**
- Give up *worry* ... **trust divine providence.**
- Give up *discouragement* ... **be full of hope.**
- Give up *bitterness* ... **turn to forgiveness.**
- Give up *hatred* ... **return good for evil.**
- Give up *negativism* ... **be positive.**
- Give up *anger* ... **practice patience.**
- Give up *pettiness* ... **put on maturity.**
- Give up *gloom* ... **enjoy the beauty that is all around you.**
- Give up *jealousy* ... **pray for trust.**
- Give up *gossiping* ... **control your tongue.**
- Give up *sin* ... **turn to virtue.**
- Give up *giving up* ... **hang in there!**

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Children's Stewardship Resource Manual



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