

There's an old story that goes something like this. Two men were marooned on a deserted island. One of the men paced back and forth. He was worried and so very scared. The other man simply sat back and basked in the sunshine. The first man asked the second man, "Aren't you afraid we'll die out here on this deserted island?" "No," said the second man, "I make \$100,000 a week and faithfully tithe to the offertory every Sunday at Mass. My pastor will find me."

God certainly has a sense of humor. On the weekend we've designated to reflect on and pray about our stewardship to the parish each Sunday, today's gospel ends with "you cannot give yourselves to God and mammon (or money)." Nevertheless, I think it's fair to say that this reading isn't about money, per se. It's about how we use our money to honor and glorify God. It's also about the effort we make and the time we take to build up God's Kingdom among us.

Christian stewardship is first about acknowledging that everything we have is a gift from God. If we are blessed with financial security it's because God gave us the ability to work. He gave us the intelligence which guides us in our work. He gave us the energy and stamina to carry out that work. Our gift to the offertory is a sign of our gratitude to God for those blessings. That gift is also our commitment to help build up our community and the world beyond by supporting the ministries of our parish. Our ministries to educate, form in the faith, and console others is possible because of your financial generosity to the offertory.

About a year ago, I told the children in our school this story. When I was in 4th grade, I found a dollar on the school grounds. I couldn't believe my good fortune. I was so excited that I told my teacher, Sr. Maria Seraphim, what I had found. She told me I should hand that over to her and that she would place it in the poor box. I lamented my bad fortune and doubted if she was really going follow through with what she told me. But as we walked back to class and passed the part of our building that served as our temporary church, I saw that she did indeed put that dollar in the poor box.

Later in the day, after I told that story to our children at Mass, a child let me know he found some money when walking back to his classroom after Mass. He immediately asked to go back to church and place his newfound treasure in the poor box. And he did just that.

That child taught me to appreciate the things we receive – acknowledging those things as gifts from God. He also taught me that we are to give back to God a portion of what we have, in gratitude for God's blessings and favors.

I give to the parish offertory – more than 5% of my salary – to assist and support the mission of this parish. I do that because I am grateful for the salary I receive. I also do that because I am duty-bound to give back to God what he has so generously given to me.

My mom and dad taught me that principle when I was just a young boy. My parents truly lived paycheck to paycheck

supporting our large family. But the first check my mom wrote out each week was for her gift / our family's tithe to the offertory and mission of the parish. When asked why she did that, my mom would always answer, "because you can't outgive God."

I've already increased my gift to the offertory for this coming year. I did that online, since that's how I make my regular contribution.

I'm going to ask now that we fill out a commitment card, which I've done, and in a few minutes put that into one of the baskets as a sign of your gratitude to God for the blessings you've been given. May it also represent your intentional support of our parish's mission.

Let's now go through that card and fill it out together.