



## Ask, Father James:

### How Can I be Very Generous to my Church?

I imagine that you mean financial generosity! Generous behaviour is the best validation of what Christians believe and profess about God, faith, the Bible and eternity. While I recognize that generosity for the sake of building the kingdom of God is manifested in giving funds, resources, time, talents, gifts, prayer and personal presence at worship services; to be all of these, we have to ask God to grant us the grace of the spirit to understand that freely we received and freely we should give (Matthew 10:5-8) and that way, generosity would become part of our DNA. For it is by the Holy Spirit that we are fully empowered to practice holistic stewardship; that is, generous giving of ourselves and gracious financial giving to the church.

Both the Old and New Testaments repeatedly call for God's children to support God's mission on earth with blessings received. In the Old Testament, the Israelite's gave generously in material and time to build the Tabernacle; the place of worship (Exodus 35). In the Old Testament, the people tithe their offerings to support the ministry of the priests and Levites (Deut. 14:28-29). They do so as an act of worship. Although the New Testament does not speak of a tithe *per se*, but it asks that God's work should be supported by the gifts and offerings of God's people. The reason why we give to the church is because, as followers of Christ, we seek to imitate the one who gave himself for us (1 Thess. 1:6; 2:14). Our giving should be to God our biggest sacrifice in thanksgiving for God sacrificing his son to save us. The Eucharist means Thanksgiving. We are called to be a Eucharistic people; that is; a People who give thanks to God. We give thanks because God has been very generous to us. We have all been blessed by God and thus are called upon to return to give thanks. St Paul explains that our financial gifts at offertory collection is literally 'a service of worship' that overflowed in thanksgiving to God (2 Cor. 9:12-13) and is a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God' (Phil 4:18b) and he says **You WILL BE ENRICHED** in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God (2 Cor. 9:11).

We need to understand the Bible from the perspective of a generous God who made the world for the enjoyment and stewarding of people whom he made in his image. God sent his son, Jesus Christ into the world to teach generosity. Everywhere God provided, God provided abundantly. He turned water into wine abundantly (John 2:1-11); He fed the 5,000 abundantly (Matthew 14:13-21), and made Peter catch a haul of fish in abundance (Luke 5:1-11). Being made in the image and likeness of God, we are called to be like Him who became like us, Jesus, and have a spirit of radical generosity. Everyone is asked to give in God's way - which is radical generosity. Because we received freely from our generous God and we are to give freely as well. Giving in church is seeding. St. Paul describes it in this way; "Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously" (2 Corinthians 9:6). Thus, every time we make an offering, it is giving ourselves to God and then to others - helping someone along the way to salvation. We all have responsibility to support the work of the church and to faithfully use our resources to serve its mission.

*Please email/send your faith questions to Fr. James and he will answer them in our Sunday Bulletins*

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