

# Tithing and Almsgiving - the Lord's Plan for Us



“GOD’S fundamental message is *love*. We share our financial resources because we *love*. This is a giving love, an unconditional love, a sacrificial love.”

-- Bishop John

**A**s your bishop, I am responsible for teaching the fullness of the Catholic Faith without omitting anything. Finances are one of the most difficult areas for us to deal with much less feel comfortable discussing. We may even want to overlook the Lord’s teaching on money. However, Jesus openly told His apostles, disciples, and faithful that “**You cannot serve God and wealth**” (Luke 16:13). What is the Lord saying about money to you and me? Hopefully, the questions I address below will help shed some light on the Lord’s teaching.

-- Bishop John

Bishop John, what’s with *tithing*; isn’t that just for the Old Testament folks?

NOT at all! “**Of everything you give me, I will faithfully return a tenth part to you**” (Genesis 28:22). This verse starts with God’s gracious generosity. *He gives us everything*: our very lives, the food we eat, the air we breathe, our families, our faith. And, through our employment, he also gives us financial means.

He calls us to *faithfully return* a tenth part, 10 percent, to Him. This is called a *tithe*. In the Old Testament days, this was done after the harvest, as a tenth part of the crop was given to the temple. Today, it is normally a check, a bank withdrawal, or cash each Sunday in the collection basket.

That is well and good, but in today’s world, I find this tithing idea just plain old-fashioned and personally impossible. Thoughts?

GOD calls us to holiness. The Lord desires that we be saints. He doesn’t give us tasks that are impossible. But, we need to always call on Him for help. Fundamentally, this is a matter of finding and putting God’s will first in our lives. Priorities. Conversion. Money should be integrated into our spiritual lives, not treated as something separate.

Tithing may strain a budget at first. I suggest

starting with a smaller amount than 10 percent, and faithfully share that each week or month. Next year, increase your commitment. In no time, you will be generously sharing with the Lord 10% of your gross income. We give a much higher percentage each month to the government; what do we give to God? We ask the Lord to assist us to not give reluctantly or half-heartedly, since “**God loves a cheerful giver**” (2 Corinthians 9:7).

Bishop John, we are in the middle of the Vibrant Ministries -- Uniting our Church Appeal. You call the Appeal *almsgiving* versus tithing. What is the difference?

JESUS said: “**Give alms ... for where your treasure is, there also will your heart be**” (Luke 12:33-34). *Almsgiving* directs us to give to a specific need: a parish building project, a natural disaster relief fund, a food pantry for the poor, etc. Thus our Vibrant Ministries appeal is asking for alms for works of mercy (including Catholic Charities and family life), Catholic faith formation for all ages, and priestly vocations. This almsgiving is above-and-beyond our tithing in the offertory basket, thus it is a call to an extra sacrifice, an extra generosity.

Bishop John, there are a lot of suffering folks out there: natural disasters, unemployment, health concerns, family crises. I wonder about Vibrant Ministries as we face all this. Thoughts?

YES, there are many families who are suffering financially and in other ways. God is with them. We ask the Lord how we can assist them. Each of us may be in this position at some time in our lives. When I was a teen, my family experienced a significant fire on our farm, and in my 20s I owned a failing business. Despite these setbacks, I have financially helped my family in medical and financial crises throughout the years.

Other families are doing well financially. They



have the means to significantly share their resources with the parish, the diocese, and other local, national, and international charities. The *Vibrant Ministries Appeal* has received generous and sacrificial gifts of all amounts from more than 4,100 of our diocesan families.

Through works of mercy, including Catholic Charities, the *Vibrant Ministries Appeal* will directly help families who are struggling. Donations will help members of our church family and community to “adopt children, recover from addictions, form healthy relationships, give birth to healthy babies, feed the hungry, move from homelessness into housing, take classes, get jobs and achieve goals” (from VMA brochure). In addition, we have added “wildfire relief” to these works of mercy goal, to help families devastated by this local disaster.

Bishop John, why did you suggest a specific amount in your letter for us to prayerfully consider?

MY REQUEST to each family in the diocese is based on another Biblical principle: *proportionate sharing*. “**As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another as good stewards of God’s varied grace**” (1 Peter 4:10). We each receive different financial gifts, depending on our education, experience, talent, work ethic, type of employment, etc. God calls us to share our gifts *proportionately*. In other words, folks with higher incomes are to share higher amounts while those with lower incomes are to give less. Simply put, “**Give alms in proportion to what you own**” (Tobit 4:8).

Bishop John, why do you think the Lord gives us these teachings about money?

GOD’S fundamental message is *love*. We share our financial resources because we love. This is a giving love, an unconditional love, a sacrificial love. We are called to reach out to the hungry, thirsty, ill-clothed, imprisoned, stranger, and sick with compassion (cf. Matthew 25:31-46).

Letting go of some of our money is to let go of the material, and leave more room for the spiritual. Again, “**You cannot serve God and wealth**” (Luke 16:13). It is in money matters that we express our own will, and willfulness. To submit that to the Lord is not only needed in itself, but also can result in our being open to the Lord’s will for us in many other ways.

You have opened my eyes to several teachings of the Lord regarding money. Any final words of wisdom for me?

TAKE this to prayer. These teachings do not come from your pastor, or me, or Pope Francis. Teachings on the proper role of money in our lives come from God in His Sacred Word. I suggest you take this article to church, sit before the Blessed Sacrament, and ask Jesus for understanding, guidance, humility, and courage. Take strength from our sacramental life: the Eucharist and confession. Trust in our Gentle Lord, He loves you so much!

**“Letting go of some of our money is to let go of the material, and leave more room for the spiritual.”**

## *Appeal Prayer*

Compassionate God,  
you are the light of the  
world. You give us your Son  
to illuminate our path,  
and the Holy Spirit to  
shine through us.  
Loving God, fill us  
with the desire  
to be with you in all things,  
Invite others into your  
light and love,  
and walk with us on our  
journey to holiness.  
Merciful God, bless our efforts  
to unite our Church  
as you help us to  
respond to the  
needs of the least among us.  
Form our faith and  
strengthen priestly vocations.  
May we generously  
share our gifts with  
one another,  
in the name of  
Jesus our Savior. Amen.

## Vibrant Ministries in the *Southwest Kansas Catholic*

**V**ibrant ministries are a celebration of God and God’s people. As the initial stages of the Vibrant Ministries appeal come to a conclusion, the celebration of the many vibrant ministries in the diocese is just beginning.

Future editions of the *Southwest Kansas Catholic* will include ongoing features highlighting those people, com-

munities and organizations helping light the way for others through their own vibrant ministry.

This may include stories from the many ministries of Catholic Charities, to the story of the individual who is providing support in their own, unique way.

As proven by the results of the appeal, people of the Diocese of Dodge

City are not lacking in compassion.

The stories will tell of a diocese that has taken the admonition of Christ to heart through ways large and small.

If you have a story, or know of a person or organization with a story to tell of their own vibrant ministry, contact Dave Myers at (620) 227-1519, or [skregister@dcdioocese.org](mailto:skregister@dcdioocese.org).