

Homily Notes for Sunday, Nov 11, 2018, Stewardship Sunday **And a summary reference guide to Catholic biblical principles guiding our stewardship**

Readings: 1 Kings 17:10-16; Hebrews 9:24-28; Mark 12:38-44.

1. Today is both the season and the readings to deal with stewardship. First, the examples of the widows in the first and the Gospel readings show how two widows gave of their substance. How important giving is is demonstrated by the fact that Jesus sat in the Temple and watched how the crowd put money in the treasury.
2. **Scripture lessons: The first reading** and the Gospel today both present poor widows who sacrificially gave their whole lives and means of livelihood to God, symbolizing the supreme sacrifice Jesus would offer by giving His life for others.
3. **In the first reading**, taken from the First Book of Kings, a poor widow who has barely enough food for herself and her son welcomes the prophet Elijah as a man of God, shares the last handful of her food with him and receives her reward in the form of a continuing daily supply of food for an entire year.
4. **In the Gospel**, Jesus contrasts the external signs of honor sought by the scribes with the humble, sacrificial offering of a poor widow and declares that she has found true honor in God's eyes. The poor widows in both the first reading and the Gospel gave away all that they possessed for the glory of God. The sacrificial self-giving of the widows in the first reading and the Gospel reflects God's love in giving His only Son for us, and Christ's love in sacrificing himself on the cross.
5. **The second reading** tells us how Jesus, as the High Priest of the New Testament, surrendered His life to God His Father totally and unconditionally as a sacrificial offering for our sins – a sacrifice far beyond the sacrifices made by the poor widows.
6. **Furthermore, Bishop Barron highlighted the importance of the stewardship of our money in our study last week of The Mass.** What does this money represent? It represents our work. It represents hours of our lives. Money really represents our “stored-up selfhood.” For which is it, for ourselves for our futures or to offer unto the Lord. Bishop Barron says, “Our checks and pennies are more profoundly evangelical in nature than we realize, for they communicate a message of constancy and commitment to the mission.” Our gifts say, “God has given unto us; we are making a sacrifice unto God in return” (p. 73). Let's look briefly at the spirituality of money in the Bible. “At a more basic and personal level, our gifts also say, “this is us in the measure with which we dare to give ourselves to you.”
7. **Over 800 verses in the Bible** deal with the right use of money. Over half of Jesus's parables deal with the right use of money and possessions. This is a very spiritual subject!
8. **Basic Principle: God has given us all that we have. He is the owner. We are the managers (stewards) for the short time we are on earth of whatever he has loaned to us.**
 - Genesis 1:28-30, 2:15.** God placed us on the earth to till it and to care for it.
 - Psalms 24.** “The earth is the Lord's and all it holds, the world and those who live therein.”
 - 1 Peter 4:10.** “As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another as good stewards of God's varied grace.”
9. **General Principles:**
 - a. **The love of money is described as the root of all evils.**

1 Tim 6:6-10: “Indeed, religion with contentment is a great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, just as we shall not be able to take anything out of it. If we have food and clothing, we shall be content with that. Those who want to be rich are falling into temptation and into a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires, which plunge them into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is the root of all evils, and some people in their desire for it have strayed from the faith and have pierced themselves with many pains.
 - b. **Jesus was poor. He had few material possessions. We should imitate him (cf. St. Francis).**

Simplicity and voluntary poverty are positive spiritual goods.
 - c. **Our giving is a training ground using measurable and tangible things to demonstrate our faithfulness so that we can inherit eternal life.**

Luke 16:8b-13. “For the children of this world are more prudent in dealing with their own generation than are the children of light. I tell you, make friends for yourselves with dishonest wealth, so that when it fails, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings. The person who is trustworthy in very small matters is also trustworthy in great ones; and the person who is dishonest in very small matters is also dishonest in great ones. If, therefore, you are not trustworthy with dishonest wealth, who will trust you with true wealth? If you are not trustworthy with what belongs to another, who will give you what is yours? No servant can serve two masters. He will either hate one and love the other, or be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.”

10. Concerning Tithing: Giving a tenth of our increase to God and His work. The practice of tithing is rooted in the Old Testament and was reinforced by the teaching of Jesus and his Apostles and the example of the early Christians. But the term “tithe” can also refer to any required or indicated payment (not just percentage). For a much more extensive list of biblical references to giving and tithing see Fr. Key’s summary.

11. God promises a special blessing if we tithe, see Malachi 3:8-12.

Yet you say, “How must we return?” Dare a man rob God? Yet you are robbing me! And you say, “How do we rob you?” In tithes and offerings! You are indeed accursed, for you, the whole nation, rob me. Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house, and try me in this, says the Lord of hosts: Shall I not open for you the floodgates of heaven, to pour down blessing upon you without measure? For your sake I will forbid the locust to destroy your crops; and the vine in the field will not be barren, says the Lord of hosts. Then all nations will call you blessed, for you will be a delightful land, says the Lord of hosts.”

12. Jesus assumed the tithe and never said anything to negate it. There are a number of references to giving God a tenth of the first fruits, even of garden herbs (**Mt 23:23, Lk 11:42**). Jesus gave no specific instructions on tithing. We assume that he assumed it as part of the Jewish religion. He did encourage the generous sharing of our blessings with others: **Lk 6:38**: “Give and gifts will be given to you; a good measure, packed together, shaken down, and overflowing, will be poured into your lap. For the measure with which you measure will in return be measured out to you.”

13. We are living in a critical time of danger for us, our family our children. Example of homily this weekend by Fr. Sayf Bowlin at Gun Barrel City. How are we to provide ministry and education to prepare ourselves, especially our children to battle the evil of the world?

14. Summary: I believe personally that the moral guideline to tithe is very strong and should be taken seriously. As we consider tithing we should know that:

- 1) tithing is part of the very existence of the created world and commended unto us in the O.T.
- 2) tithing has as purposes both giving thanks to God and supporting His work in the world.
- 3) tithing also has as its purpose to train us in our management of material possessions so that we manage them and they do not manage us, and that we gain habits that will lead us to eternal life.
- 4) tithing should not be understood legalistically but within the context of all our obligations.
- 5) We must actually work out practical models of life and giving in order to “do” or to “respond” to this guideline of God.

One of the great blessings of doing this is growing in money management. You can’t give if you aren’t on top of finances.

15. Questions for reflection and discussion:

Can we as a Catholic community meet the needs of our people, especially our children if we do less than tithe? Or give significantly more, sacrificially?

To what extent does our giving reflect our faith? Do we have the faith to do whatever is necessary to build up and protect our church family?

We must run our parish community on what we are able to give. Not the federal government.

If we can’t cover our ordinary expenses, we can’t move ahead on building, nor on programming for more aggressively building Catholic culture through education and other programs.

16. What are the options for us in this situation? More toward more complete stewardship and/or growing as a community to increase our resources.

From our material resources:

Being able to do this is growth in conversion, in relationship to ourselves and our resources.

Tithes and offerings of money and possessions (usually “increase”).

**This chart is based on a model of proportional giving (percentages),
with income defined as “take home” income.**

| Guidelines | Percentage of Giving | Types of Giving |
|---|--|--|
| Giving in these areas is above and beyond the basic giving required for the tithe. Such giving should give us great joy See Lev 27:30, Deut 12:17 Deut 14:22 Matt 23:23, Lk 18:12 Heb 7:1-10 | 100% - joy | Offerings Note here the role of “special” or “second” offerings. These are voluntary if we can and if we desire. They are good for personal self-discipline. |
| | 90% - joy | |
| | 80% - joy | |
| | 70% - joy | |
| | 60% - joy | |
| | 50% - joy | |
| | 40% - joy | |
| | 30% - joy | |
| | 20% - joy | |
| Basic Tithe | | |
| These additional categories should be for the work of the Lord. Making these decisions should be enjoyable. | 1% - fun | Basic Tithe 10% See Mal 3:6-12 |
| | 1% - fun | |
| | 1% - fun | |
| | 1% - fun | |
| To the Diocese | 1% - vision | |
| Local Parish | 5% - faith This is regular, planned giving. If our income is irregular and cannot be planned, this is best done after each earning opportunity. | |

In addition to this are Savings and Investments, Properties, etc. Retirement accounts