

# OUR STEWARDSHIP OF TREASURE: THE LORD'S PORTION

Who then is the faithful and wise steward, whom his master will set over his household, to give them their portion of food at the proper time? Blessed is that servant whom his master, when he comes, will find so doing. Truly, I say to you, he will set him over all his possessions. (Luke 12:42-44, RSV).

## INTRODUCTION: PRELIMINARY REMARKS

Next week, we have Our Catholic Appeal. This Sunday is designated in the entire Diocese of Orlando as the "Appeal Announcement Weekend" where the "Pastor presents Campaign Plan." Permit me, therefore, my dearest brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus, to present "Our Campaign Plan". The plan is to promote a new outlook towards Stewardship, entitled, "Our Stewardship of TREASURE: THE LORD'S PORTION". I thank you very much for the commitment in true faith you have shown through the years and continue to show toward the growth of our beloved parish, St John the Baptist Community. In a special way, I wish to acknowledge the enormous contributions in the stewardship of time and talents also. Our great volunteers have been exceptionally wonderful in serving the Church of God and we are grateful to you all and ask the Good Lord to bless you abundantly through Christ our Lord. Amen. But this initiative is exclusively directed towards the stewardship of treasure, "The Lord's Portion."

This is not an issue I normally want to address. Some people readily get turned off and say, "All they talk about is money". But wait a minute! According to St. Paul: "For if I preach the gospel, that gives me no ground for boasting. For necessity is laid upon me. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!" (1Cor. 9:16). My work as the Parochial Administrator (Pastor) is not different from this. It is a necessity laid upon me. It is part of my responsibility to work, in collaboration with you, for the growth of this Catholic Community in Dunnellon. And, what is more, it is the will of God. We cannot shy away from "talking about money". Our Stewardship of TREASURE: THE LORD'S PORTION is an integral part of the gospel we preach. Jesus Christ and his apostles challenged Christians of the First Century to greater acts of stewardship. That led many to give above the required tithe level. I, therefore, have an obligation today to challenge you to do more.

## THE CHALLENGE BEFORE US:

I can testify that all of you have been making enormous efforts to sustain our parish. But what we may not have observed is that "We have stopped growing". It is not necessarily on account of the Economic Trend; there are other factors inhibiting our growth which I'll address shortly. A look at the structures we have on the grounds of this campus, undoubtedly, shows "the golden days" of St. John the Baptist Community. I wonder, "Why can't we grow anymore?" The statistical data the Finance Council presented to me about our dwindling resources is quite alarming. It is my estimation, if the trend continues unabated, this parish will cease to exist in about four year's time. As you know this has occurred in other diocese. I know you all love this Community so much that you will not allow this to happen. So I pray the Lord to touch us anew with the same "Pentecostal zeal and anointing" that the apostles and early Christians experienced, so that our stewardship commitment of treasure will soar beyond expectation.

## OUR CATHOLIC APPEAL GOAL

Beloved, last year's assessment was \$63,558. I am pleased to inform you that we netted in generous pledges the amount of \$59,443.56. We were only \$4114.44 shy of the total goal. I want to thank those of you who augmented their initial pledges, when I appealed, and helped us get closer to the goal. **This Year's Assessment is \$64,433.** It is only \$875 more than the last year. So the change is not significant. And, happily, I want to announce to you that something has changed in the way Our Catholic Appeal

Assessment is made. In the spirit of justice and fairness, the Diocese of Orlando has graded the parishes as follows:

<b>Contribution Income</b>	<b>Classification of Parishes</b>	<b>Allocation Rate</b>
\$2 million or more	Extra-Large Parishes	19.405%
\$1 million up to \$2 million	Large Parishes	18.172%
\$500,000 to \$1 million	Medium Parishes	16.939%
Less than \$500,000	Small Parishes	15.706%

In this assessment, we are considered a small parish. The good news, my dear friends, is that we have room for growth without incurring an increase in our overall percentage allocation rate of 15.706%. Our last year’s total income was \$410,000. We can grow up to \$500,000 without any percentage increase. According to the diocesan reports we received, only 233 of our 900 registered families, less than 26%, responded last year. Yet we almost made the goal. Against this background, I want to make a challenge. First, to those who gave last year, please increase your pledge. Second, to those who gave nothing, have a change of heart and make a commitment in the name of Christ Jesus. We need all the help we can get to offset our budget deficit. Accordingly, please, work with me, the Parish Council and the Finance Council to realize our own LORD’S PORTION Appeal. The goal we’ve set is \$100,000. Why? We can keep the difference between the diocesan assessment and the goal we’ve set, and use it for our own campus. This will be a reality if we get at least a 60% response from our 900 registered families. Please do your best and God, who sees your generosity, will repay you. Depending on your personal or family financial strength, “...nothing is too great” to offer to God for the growth of his Church on earth. Remember, the balance we raise over the diocesan goal, remains in the parish and will not be included in the assessment calculation for next year.

**WHY WE NEED TO GROW AGAIN:**

Brothers and sisters, when I was appointed as the Parochial Administrator by the Bishop almost two years ago, I had enormous pastoral plans for the parish, both material and spiritual. With the passage of time, I readjusted to the reality of the day. You can not build a skyscraper overnight. I found our present offertory would not support that vision, in terms of cost of maintenance, insurance premiums, staffing and utility bills. To sustain our present operating strength, our stewardship should be an average of at least \$10,000 weekly. This will still keep us within the classification of a “Small Parish.” There are many projects to be done, but the Finance Council members will readily tell you of the many corners that have been cut and the sacrifices the staff has made, because we have not met the weekly goal. For instance, the parking lot resurfacing project, presently nearing completion, was put off for a long time for want of funds. The church building is in need of renovation, such as new flooring, painting inside and out, new organ, pew repair, etc. The hall is in need of a face lift. Many other areas of our campus need attention.

We are small but not too small. Make a comparison between our parish and the Baptist Community next door. They have 8-10 buses for transporting people to their worship services. Perhaps, they may be bigger than our congregation. I’m not sure. But what I am sure about is that they are not 8 times bigger than we are. Yet, we cannot say, “At least we can afford one bus”. We can not afford the gasoline for a bus, let alone the bus, insurance and maintenance. Doesn’t that call for serious concern?

**REASONS WHY SOME DON’T GIVE:**

Some factors hinder our stewardship of treasure. Among the ones I’ve heard directly are: “The Orlando Factor”, “I Built or Contributed up North”; “the Economy is bad”; “I Live on a Fixed Income”; “My Offering is between God and Me, I don’t use an Envelope”; “This is the Amount I’ve always given”; “I Give to a Church up North”; “All the Church wants is my money”; “Tithing is a Protestant Thing”, “I got where I am today on my own”, “Scandal Factor”; etc. I believe that if we review these in the spirit of faith, hope and love, we could rededicate ourselves to our divine commitment.

**“The Orlando Factor”:** Some parishioners do not want to support the Diocese or the Bishop’s direct projects; they care only about their parish. To this end, if any percentage of their contribution would go to Orlando, they would decline making a contribution. May I point out that there is nothing different from the way the Church is structured and administered here, from the way it is in any part of the world. Right from the time of Christ the Church is supported from the bottom up, not from “Rome” down. We are the Church not just of Dunnellon but of the Orlando Diocese. The Bishop has no private bank and unlike the Government cannot print money. Our diocese depends solely on the generosity of all parishioners in all the parishes that make up the diocese to function as an entity. Our diocese through the Bishop, apart from administrative expenses (see items in appendix one), has an obligation to Rome which supports many poor dioceses in the world. This is the way our Bishop unites with Rome, not just to administer our own Diocese, but to contribute to the support of new mission communities, especially in the Third World. This is who we are; this is the way it has been from the beginning as we see from the following passages:

For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make some contribution for the poor among the saints at Jerusalem; they were pleased to do it, and indeed they are in debt to them, for if the Gentiles have come to share in their spiritual blessings, they ought also to be of service to them in material blessings.” (Rom 15:26-27).

Now concerning the contribution for the saints: as I directed the churches of Galatia, so you also are to do. **On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up**, as he may prosper, so that contributions need not be made when I come. And when I arrive, I will send those whom you accredit by letter **to carry your gift to Jerusalem**” (1Cor 16:1-3).

For the rendering of this service not only supplies the wants of the saints but also overflows in many thanksgivings to God. Under the test of this service, you will glorify God by your obedience in acknowledging the gospel of Christ, and by the generosity of your contribution for them and for all others; while they long for you and pray for you, because of the surpassing grace of God in you” (2Cor 9:12-14).

Yet it was kind of you to share my trouble. And you Philippians yourselves know that in the beginning of the gospel, when I left Macedonia, no church entered into partnership with me in giving and receiving except you only; for even in Thessalonica you sent me help once and again. Not that I seek the gift; but I seek the fruit which increases to your credit. I have received full payment, and more; I am filled, having received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent, a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God. And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus” (Phil 4:14-19).

**“I Built or Contributed up North”:** Certainly, the Church is one. God will bless us for all our contributions to the growth of His Church. But we don’t stop building. In any community where we worship, we still have a responsibility to contribute our quota for its sustenance. Just imagine what precarious situation we would be in if all parishioners began to make the argument about their “past glories”, what they had done in their earlier years in the parishes they had belonged to. Then this Church would not have been created in the first place. So kindly, in the spirit of true Christian charity and love of Christ, contribute to the needs of this community also.

**“I’m Retired; I’ve done my Part in the Past”:** What if God should say, “I helped you from birth, I was with you through school, helped you find a college, lead you to a good job, helped you find a spouse and raise a family. Now at your present age of 65 (or older), you’re on your own; I’m retiring from helping

you. I'm going to play golf or go on a cruise." Certainly, that is not what anyone would ask for. We all need God always; He does not retire. We should not retire from our responsibility to Him, but respond through a loving and consistent stewardship of treasure?

**"The Economy is bad"**: It is in these tough times that faith shines best! A saying goes, "When the going gets tough, the tough get going." Do you remember the discourse between Elijah and the poor widow? What lessons of faith regarding stewardship in the midst of a difficult economy can we learn here?

So [Elijah] arose and went to Zarephath ... behold, a widow was there gathering sticks; and he called to her and said, "Bring me a little water in a vessel that I may drink." .... "Bring me a morsel of bread in your hand." And she said, "As the LORD your God lives, I have nothing baked, only a handful of meal in a jar, and a little oil in a cruse; and now, I am gathering a couple of sticks, that I may go in and prepare it for myself and my son, that we may eat it, and die." And Elijah said to her, "Fear not; go and do as you have said; **but first make me a little cake of it and bring it to me**, and afterward make for yourself and your son (1Kings 17:10-13, bold mine).

**"I Live on a Fixed Income"**: Certainly, no one expects you to make a mountain out of a molehill." Within any income, fixed or variable, there is the Lord's Portion. The gifts God has given us are not just for material benefits but also for the building up of his kingdom of God on earth.

**"My Offering is between God and Me, I don't use an Envelope"**: The idea is to use the Offering Envelopes. It benefits you for tax purposes. However, many examples abound in Scripture about the generous "private" donations, offerings and gifts of people known to the apostles and their closest associates.

There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of what was sold and laid it at the apostles' feet; and distribution was made to each as any had need. Thus Joseph who was surnamed by the apostles Barnabas (which means, Son of encouragement), a Levite, a native of Cyprus, sold a field which belonged to him, and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet (Acts 4:34-37).

So this does not violate in any way the privacy of offerings since it is not broadcast to the entire parish or the public. It helps the parish in planning and budgeting for the programs of evangelization and administration. We would definitely benefit from a 100% response in this regard.

**"This is the Amount I've always given"**: In this area, it is important to review the amount in terms of "What is the Lord's Portion?" If the amount is a fair amount that represents the Lord's Portion, then it is okay. But if not, it calls for a spiritual re-evaluation and a greater commitment to God's loving invitation to an outstanding stewardship of treasure.

**"I Give to a Church up North"**: Certainly! This is quite in order. If I attend a Church up North for Eight Months in the year, it is proper to support that Church in order to facilitate the administrative costs, insurances, maintenance, etc. The Church down South also faces the same challenges. It is only a matter of justice and fairness that if I attend a church for four months of the year down South, I should extend the same hand of friendship and love for its upkeep.

**"All the Church wants is my money" and "I got where I am today on my own"**: This is clearly not true. We also pray here. Was Mass celebrated? Were the Sacraments administered? Was the worship area maintained and conducive for worship? Were there parish staff and volunteers performing their

duties creditably? Is the parish responding to the needs of the Community? If your answer is “Yes”, then, the statement is false. The Church is set up with this vision and command from the Lord himself: “Carry no purse, no bag, no sandals .... And remain in the same house, eating and drinking what they provide, for the laborer deserves his wages” (Luke 10:4,7). Why? Jesus is the one who wants YOU to contribute to the material needs of His Church. So the statement invariably amounts to saying, “All that Jesus wants is my money.” And clearly, this is not true. All you have is given to you by God. As St. Paul declares, “What have you that you did not receive? If then you received it, why do you boast as if it were not a gift? (1Cor. 4:7).

**“Scandal Factor”:** Some do not give because of the past mistakes of the Church hierarchy and the abuses and scandals that rocked the Church. Certainly, our anger and pain were not out of place. Even Jesus abhors scandals and actually condemns them in these words, “Temptations to sin [scandals] are sure to come; but woe to him by whom they come! It would be better for him if a millstone were hung round his neck and he were cast into the sea, than that he should cause one of these little ones to sin.” (Luke 17:1-2). However, if because of these past terrible errors, we degrade the Church, that would be pushing the matter too far. Notice that Jesus, after making the above statement, quickly added, “Take heed to yourselves; if your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him; and if he sins against you seven times in the day, and turns to you seven times, and says, ‘I repent,’ you must forgive him” (Luke 17:3-4). And the apostles were overwhelmed and said to him, “Lord, Increase our faith!” (Luke 17:5). So, we pray, let the Spirit of God heal any wounded hearts yet to be healed. Certainly, the scandal shows that the devil can attempt to destroy the Church, not just from without, but also from within. Only the grace of God is responsible for the Church still thriving. Let us cooperate with the grace of God that wants to heal the broken hearted and to shame the enemy, the devil. Let us not allow Satan and his minions to use us unknowingly as instruments of obstruction of God’s work. See how the Word of God wants us to deal with these issues:

Be angry but do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give no opportunity to the devil.... And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, in whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, with all malice, and be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you (Eph 4:26-27, 30-32).

**“Tithing is a Protestant Thing”:** Not at all! This notion is one of the greatest myths of all time. Tithing is a very Christian thing. Tithing has its basis in the Old Testament and continues in the New Testament, evident in the words of Jesus (indicting the Pharisees and Scribes): “But woe to you Pharisees! For you tithe mint and rue and every herb, and neglect justice and the love of God; these you ought to have done, without neglecting the others” (Luke 11:42). Notice that Jesus did not saying tithing is abolished. Rather he said, “these [that is, tithes of mint, rue and every herb] you ought to have done, without neglecting the others [justice, peace, love, kindness, etc]”. But why did tithing seem to be absent in the New Testament? Because people were evidently giving more than the tithe (10%). Some were giving 100% like the poor widow who had two coins and gave all; or like Barnabas and many others who sold their real property and brought all the money, NOT A TENTH OF IT, to the apostles. In that situation, why would the apostles discourage such a commitment to extraordinary stewardship of treasure? But today, when such heroic actions of faith seem rare, we need to renew the basis: The Lord’s Portion.

## **BIBLICAL EXPOSITION OF STEWARDSHIP OF TREASURE: PRORITIZING THE LORD’S PORTION**

Why should we be concerned about the need to prioritize the Lord’s Portion? The whole of Scripture emphasizes the need to prioritize this. Let us consider the following passages and let the Spirit of God speak to us from the depths of our being.

Thus says the LORD of hosts: This people say the time has not yet come to rebuild the house of the LORD." Then the word of the LORD came by Haggai the prophet, "Is it a time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses, while this house lies in ruins? Now therefore thus says the LORD of hosts: Consider how you have fared. You have sown much, and harvested little; you eat, but you never have enough; you drink, but you never have your fill; you clothe yourselves, but no one is warm; and he who earns wages earns wages to put them into a bag with holes" (Hag 1:2-6).

The fact is that God has revealed to us that He does not accept all offerings. The onus is on us to aspire to make our sacrifices acceptable. Scripture tells us that Abel's, not Cain's, was pleasing and acceptable to God:

In the course of time Cain brought to the LORD an offering of the fruit of the ground, and Abel brought of the firstlings of his flock and of their fat portions. And the LORD had regard for Abel and his offering, but for Cain and his offering he had no regard. So Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell" (Gen 4:3-5).

### **CHURCH COLLECTION (OFFERING) – ONLY A DONATION OR GIFT TO GOD?**

It is not just a donation or a gift, it is required by God. It is a command of God. Nevertheless, God wants us to give freely and willingly, not out of compulsion, as we see from the passages below:

And Kore the son of Imnah the Levite, keeper of the east gate, was over the freewill offerings to God, to apportion the contribution reserved for the LORD and the most holy offerings" (2Chro 31:14).

And those descendants of Levi who receive the priestly office have a commandment in the law to take tithes from the people, that is, from their brethren, though these also are descended from Abraham. (Heb 7:5).

Now it is superfluous for me to write to you about the offering for the saints, for I know your readiness, of which I boast about you to the people of Macedonia, saying that Achaia has been ready since last year; and your zeal has stirred up most of them. But I am sending the brethren so that our boasting about you may not prove vain in this case, so that you may be ready, as I said you would be; lest if some Macedonians come with me and find that you are not ready, we be humiliated--to say nothing of you--for being so confident. So I thought it necessary to urge the brethren to go on to you before me, and arrange in advance for this gift you have promised, so that it may be ready not as an exaction but as a willing gift. The point is this: he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must do as he has made up his mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that you may always have enough of everything and may provide in abundance for every good work (2Cor 9:2-8).

### **DISMISSING THE MYTH OF "TITHING AS A PROTESTANT THING"**

One of the erroneous convictions among most Catholics is that "Tithing is a Protestant Thing". Nothing is farther from the truth. We have seen that not all offerings are pleasing to God. Thus, we must ask, "WHAT IS THE BASIC OFFERING REQUIRED?" Beloved, the basic requirement in both the Old and New Testaments is to tithe 10% of one's total income. This is the minimum all Christians should aspire to make.

## **OLD TESTAMENT REVELATION ON TITHING: “The Lord’s Portion”**

All the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land or of the fruit of the trees, is the LORD's; it is holy to the LORD (Lev 27:30).

To the Levites I have given every tithe in Israel for an inheritance, in return for their service which they serve, their service in the tent of meeting (Num 18:21).

Moreover you shall say to the Levites, 'When you take from the people of Israel the tithe which I have given you from them for your inheritance, then you shall present an offering from it to the LORD, a tithe of the tithe (Num 18:26).

So shall you also present an offering to the LORD from all your tithes, which you receive from the people of Israel; and from it you shall give the LORD's offering to Aaron the priest (Num 18:28).

When you have finished paying all the tithe of your produce in the third year, which is the year of tithing, giving it to the Levite, the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow, that they may eat within your towns and be filled, then you shall say before the LORD your God, 'I have removed the sacred portion out of my house, and moreover I have given it to the Levite, the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow, according to all thy commandment which thou hast commanded me; I have not transgressed any of thy commandments, neither have I forgotten them; I have not eaten of the tithe while I was mourning, or removed any of it while I was unclean, or offered any of it to the dead; I have obeyed the voice of the LORD my God, I have done according to all that thou hast commanded me (Deut 26:12-14).

And the priest, the son of Aaron, shall be with the Levites when the Levites receive the tithes; and the Levites shall bring up the tithe of the tithes to the house of our God, to the chambers, to the storehouse. For the people of Israel and the sons of Levi shall bring the contribution of grain, wine, and oil to the chambers, where are the vessels of the sanctuary, and the priests that minister, and the gatekeepers and the singers. We will not neglect the house of our God. (Neh. 10:38-39).

Then all Judah brought the tithe of the grain, wine, and oil into the storehouses. And I appointed as treasurers over the storehouses Shelemiah the priest, Zadok the scribe, and Pedaiah of the Levites, and as their assistant Hanan the son of Zaccur, son of Mattaniah, for they were counted faithful; and their duty was to distribute to their brethren. (Neh. 13:12-13).

## **OTHER COLLECTIONS APART FROM TITHES IN THE OLD TESTAMENT**

Speak to the people of Israel, that they take for me an offering; from every man whose heart makes him willing you shall receive the offering for me. And this is the offering which you shall receive from them: gold, silver, and bronze, blue and purple and scarlet stuff and fine twined linen, goats' hair, tanned rams' skins, goatskins, acacia wood, oil for the lamps, spices for the anointing oil and for the fragrant incense, onyx stones, and stones for setting, for the ephod and for the breast piece. And let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell in their midst. (Exod. 25:2-8).

## **CAN ONE OFFER MORE THAN THE REQUIRED TITHE?**

Certainly! As we can clearly see from the above quotation, after one has given what is required (tithe), anything above is rightfully an additional donation or offering in love. It is an act of aspiring to greater commitment to God in love. Jesus indirectly encouraged this when he declared, “For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the Scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven” (Matt 5:20). The Pharisees would only do what the Law stipulated (namely 10%), but Jesus challenges us to do more than the required. This brings us to the New Testament position on tithing.

## **NEW TESTAMENT FULFILLMENT REVELATION ON TITHING: The Lord’s Portion**

Before we hastily dismiss tithing as a Protestant Thing, it is important to take a second look at the stand of the Scriptures: First, since tithing is a command of the Law, what did Jesus say about the Law of Tithing? Did he say it was abolished? Nowhere did he say that. Instead, he declares,

Think not that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets; I have come not to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the law until all is accomplished. Whoever then relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but he who does them and teaches them shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. (Matt 5:17-19).

From his indictment of the Pharisees below, we see that Christ actually endorses tithing as something we “should be doing” along with the other requirements of God.

Woe to you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law, justice and mercy and faith; **these you ought to have done**, without neglecting the others (Matt 23:23; Luke 11:42).

## **WHY DID TITHING APPEAR ALMOST “ABSENT” THEN IN THE NEW TESTAMENT?**

One explanation is found in the Parable of the Sower. Although all received the word of God, some bore seeds not just 10 fold (10%); actually some bore a hundredfold (100%), some sixty (60%), some thirty (30%) of stewardship yields or returns.

A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seeds fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured them. Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they had not much soil, and immediately they sprang up, since they had no depth of soil, but when the sun rose they were scorched; and since they had no root they withered away. Other seeds fell upon thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. Other seeds fell on good soil and brought forth grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty (Matt. 13:3-8).

One may quickly dismiss the above as a “parable” and therefore unreal. But wait a minute! The knowledge of this parable among the early Christians, perhaps, was chiefly responsible for their overwhelming response to stewardship of treasure. They exceeded the tithe level as we see below:

There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of what was sold and laid it at the apostles' feet; and distribution was made to each as any had need. Thus Joseph who was surnamed by the apostles Barnabas (which means, Son of encouragement), a Levite, a native of Cyprus, sold a

field which belonged to him, and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet. (Acts 4:34-37).

We are in need of many sons and daughters of encouragement in our parish. This need of exceptional responses was also acknowledged by St. Paul as seen in the passages below:

And you Philippians yourselves know that in the beginning of the gospel, when I left Macedonia, no church entered into partnership with me in giving and receiving except you only; for even in Thessalonica you sent me help once and again. Not that I seek the gift; but I seek the fruit which increases to your credit. **I have received full payment, and more; I am filled**, having received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent, a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God. And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus” (Phil 4:15-19).

Let the elders who rule well **be considered worthy of double honor**, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching; for the scripture says, "You shall not muzzle an ox when it is treading out the grain," and, "**The laborer deserves his wages**” (1Tim 5:17-18).

Hence, Jesus and the apostles encourage **YOU** to do more than the tithe level through the following teaching:

Give, and it will be given to you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For the measure you give will be the measure you get back (Luke 6:38).

This is why the emphasis on the tithe appears to be silent. People would do the required amount; but they were encouraged to do even more than the minimum. Hence, these lines from the New Testament: “For the measure you give will be the measure you get back” and “...he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. If one goes to an Elementary, Middle School, High School, or College and scores 10% in each subject in the examination; could the person be declared as an “Excellent Student?” Would you tell a student who scores between 90% and 100% in school grades to only aspire to score 10%? That is why the New Testament did not emphasize the minimum required stewardship of resources: The Lord’s Portion. Just as Christ in the New Testament did more than Moses in the Old Testament, we are encouraged to do more, NEVER less. **Should Old Testament people be more renowned for their stewardship of treasure (10%) than modern Christians who are unwilling to commit the basic 10%?**

#### **CONCLUSION:**

My dearest friends in Christ, let us therefore rise up and shine more and more in our commitment for the growth of our parish community. Our God can replenish us abundantly according to His riches and glory (cf. Phil 4:19).

#### **STEWARDSHIP PRAYER**

Lord, Almighty and Bountiful God, through the Holy Spirit inspire me with your holy words: “Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must do as he has made up his mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver” (2Cor. 9:6-7). Help me to realize my need for individual stewardship of Time, Talent and Treasure. Give me a generous heart. In Jesus’ name, I pray. Amen

## STEWARDSHIP FACTS

We currently have over 900 families registered in our parish.

If 450 families contributed each week (1/2 of our registration)

Percent given	Amount per week	Family Annual total (50 wks)	Total offertory per week
1%	\$6.00	\$300	\$2,700
2%	\$12.00	\$600	\$5,400
3%	\$18.00	\$900	\$8,100
4%	\$24.00	\$1200	\$10,800
5%	\$30.00	\$1500	\$13,500
6%	\$36.00	\$1800	\$16,200
7%	\$42.00	\$2100	\$18,900
8%	\$48.00	\$2400	\$21,600
9%	\$54.00	\$2700	\$24,300
10%	\$60.00	\$3000	\$27,000

If 300 families contributed each week (1/3 of our registration)

Percent given	Amount per week	Family Annual total (50 wks)	Total offertory per week
1%	\$6.00	\$300	\$1,800
2%	\$12.00	\$600	\$3,600
3%	\$18.00	\$900	\$5,400
4%	\$24.00	\$1200	\$7,200
5%	\$30.00	\$1500	\$9,000
6%	\$36.00	\$1800	\$10,800
7%	\$42.00	\$2100	\$12,600
8%	\$48.00	\$2400	\$14,400
9%	\$54.00	\$2700	\$16,200
10%	\$60.00	\$3000	\$18,000

## WEEKLY STEWARDSHIP OF TREASURE, THE LORD'S PORTION GUIDE

The median income for Marion County residents, as determined by the county, is \$30,000.

Total Income	1%	2%	3%	4%	5%	6%	7%	8%	9%	10%
\$10,000.00	\$2.00	\$4.00	\$6.00	\$8.00	\$10.00	\$12.00	\$14.00	\$16.00	\$18.00	\$20.00
\$20,000.00	\$4.00	\$8.00	\$12.00	\$16.00	\$20.00	\$24.00	\$28.00	\$32.00	\$36.00	\$40.00
\$30,000.00	\$6.00	\$12.00	\$18.00	\$24.00	\$30.00	\$36.00	\$42.00	\$48.00	\$54.00	\$60.00
\$40,000.00	\$8.00	\$16.00	\$24.00	\$32.00	\$40.00	\$48.00	\$56.00	\$64.00	\$72.00	\$80.00
\$50,000.00	\$10.00	\$20.00	\$30.00	\$40.00	\$50.00	\$60.00	\$70.00	\$80.00	\$90.00	\$100.00
\$60,000.00	\$12.00	\$24.00	\$36.00	\$48.00	\$60.00	\$72.00	\$84.00	\$96.00	\$108.00	\$120.00