

In today's Pastor's Notes, I would like to delve further into the fifth precept. As a reminder, the Precepts of the Church can be abbreviated by saying:

1. You shall attend Mass on Sundays and holy days of obligations and rest from servile labor.
2. You shall confess your sins at least once a year.
3. You shall receive the Sacrament of the Eucharist at least once during the Easter season.
4. You shall observe the days of fasting and abstinence established by the Church.
5. You shall help to provide for the needs of the Church.

There also was traditionally a sixth precept, that stated:

6. You shall obey the marriage laws of the Church.

From §2043 of the Catechism:

"The fifth precept ('You shall help to provide for the needs of the Church') means that the faithful are obliged to assist with the material needs of the Church, each according to his own ability.

"The faithful also have the duty of providing for the material needs of the Church, each according to his own abilities."

Many times we have spoken about stewardship. This not something extraneous to the Christian life. It is not above and beyond, or meant to be from one's surplus. Stewardship of the goods that God has provided the faithful involves the sustenance of the community of the Church, her ministers, the upkeep of our facilities, and works of the apostolate. This has traditionally been understood as the Biblical "tithe." We heard about it on the feast of Corpus Christi. After Melchizedek, the priest of Salem, blessed Abraham, Abraham gave him a tenth of everything. The exact numerical donation is no longer delineated for us as Christians. However, the tithe, or ten percent, has become a good standard by which we measure our responsibility towards the community of faith. While many secular charities are worthy of donating to, for the baptized faithful, the primary responsibility is to the Catholic Church, her ministries, and charities.

The foundation of this precept is not merely practical realities, as some would presume. Stewardship is a spiritual reality that goes beyond the mere dollar amount or the physical needs of the Church. The reality is, we have a spiritual **need** to give. Jesus says, **"It is more blessed to give than to receive."** (Acts 20:35)

In fact, Jesus speaks more about money and our relationship with it than any other single topic. This may surprise many, because either they never hear the Good News about money, or they resent when money is spoken about in church. I remember my grandfather always complaining every time there was a second collection or appeal for funds, "They're always asking us for money!" While I sympathize with him, there is another way of understanding that. Rather than saying, "They're asking us for money," we might say they are giving us an opportunity to put our money where our heart is. Jesus says, **"For where your treasure is, there also will your heart be."** (Mt 6:21)

It is a reality that we need the goods of this world to sustain our ministry. But it is also a reality that if we are too attached to the goods that we have control over, they begin to control us. So the next time the second collection comes around, remember: we're giving you an opportunity to give. Fight the temptation to be resentful of the ask.

Here at The Basilica of Saints Peter and Paul, we have many ways in which you can directly provide for the material needs of the Church. Every Sunday, we pass the basket, and this is an opportunity to give. We can provide envelopes every Sunday, mailed to your home, as a convenient way to make your contribution. We also have an online option through our website and myParish app, "WeShare," for you to set up one-time or recurring donations to our offertory and other causes. I encourage you to make use of any of these means to fulfill this fifth precept for practicing Catholics.

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