

Fr. Thomas M. Pastorius
June 7, 20115
Spiritual Ponderings
Spirituality of Fundraising

According to one Biblical scholar there are approximately 700 direct references to money in the Bible and hundreds more indirect references. Plus, nearly two thirds of the parables of Jesus dealt with the use of money and yet most priest (including myself) are afraid to talk about money. Perhaps it is because the old saying “the last part of a person to be converted is their wallet” has more truth to it than we would like. We always seem to find the time and money to spend on things that we want.

While preparing couples for marriage, I have stumbled upon a large number of books written by Dr. Gottman. Dr. Gottman has been listed as one of the top 10 Most Influential Therapists of the past quarter century by the Psychotherapy Networker and has published over 190 academic articles and co-authored over 40 books. I believe that one of his greatest insights is his understanding of how money and financial matters affects relationships. For Dr. Gottman money is more than money because money has come to in our society to represent our dreams and hopes. He points out in his writings that while money is often listed as the number one cause of divorce both the rich and the poor in the end it has very little to do with actual money itself. Instead he explains that the couples are arguing over whose dreams will be fulfilled and whose dreams will go unfulfilled. For example for a young man thinking about going to college money represents the possibility of furthering his education. For a newly married couple, money may symbolize the hope of one day owning a home, financial stability, the creating of a loving and safe environment for their future children, and or all the above.

In one of his books he writes about a couple who were heading toward divorce because they were tired of arguing over money. The husband in the situation desired to have so much money in savings and the wife desired to have a place in the country and there was no way that their incomes were going to allow the couple to accomplish both. After talking with them for a while, he helped them see that they were not really arguing about money but about their dreams. The wife wanted to be able to give their children something that she had treasured growing up because she loved going out to her parent’s place in the country and felt that it allowed her family growing up to bond better than other families she had known. The husband on the other hand desired to have a large savings account in order to end up living in a state run nursing home like his uncle. It was a fear that the husband had carried with him since he was a child and parents would force him to go with them to visit his uncle. Once each person realized what the money symbolized for them, they were not only able to compromise but they also felt better understood by their spouse and their relationship grew stronger because of it.

What does money symbolize to you? Most things that money can or we believe it can buy fall into one of two categories: Pleasure or Security. Here are list of common things that money can symbolize according to Dr. Gottman:

Here is a list of some common “deep” dreams expressed by couples I’ve worked with.

A Sense of Freedom	The Experience of Peace	Unity with Nature	Exploring Who I Am
Adventure	Justice	A Spiritual Journey	Honor
Becoming more powerful	Unity with my Past	Healing	Knowing My Family
Becoming All I Can Be	Having A Sense of Power	Dealing w/ growing older	Exploring Creative side
Getting over a personal hang-up	Becoming more competent	Asking God for Forgiveness	Exploring an old part of myself I have lost
Getting over past hurts	Having a sense of order	Being productive	place & time to just “be”
Being able to compete and win	Exploring the physical side of myself	Getting my priorities in order	Finishing something important
Quietness	Being able to just relax	Travel	Reflecting on my life
Atonement	Building something important	Ending a chapter of my life-saying good-by to something.	

I am going to end today’s Spiritual Ponderings with Dr. Gottman’s tips for planning a budget.

Dr. Gottman's Suggestions For Budgeting:

Step 1: Itemize Your current Expenditures

Step 2: Manage Everyday Finances

Step 3: Plan your financial future

1. Imagine your life 5, 10, 20, 20 30 Yrs. What would be your ideal circumstances?
2. Now list your long-term financial goals
3. Share your list with each other

Fr. Thomas M. Pastorius

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Spiritual Ponderings

Spirituality of Fundraising

In our last Spiritual Ponderings, I reflected on Dr. Gottman's insight on how money is more than money to us and how money has become a symbol of a dreams and hopes. Some of the dreams are dreams of pleasure and some of these dreams are attempts to avoid nightmares and thus have more to do with security. Either way, we also know our dreams and our hopes are intimate part of who we are. And this is where things get tricky because God wants us to share with Him our whole lives and this is where stewardship comes in. As a Catholic, I know that everything I have is a gift from God and that God desires a personal relationship with Him. In a very real way when I share with God some of my money, I am sharing with God my dreams and hopes. When I share with God my money I am saying "Lord I trust that Your dreams are better than mine," "Lord I trust, that if I am faithful to You with the small amount of things that I have, You will reward/entrust me with more," and "Lord I trust, in You to take care of me, more than I trust in myself or my own efforts." This amazing sign of trust and sharing with God our dreams cannot but help strengthen our relationship with God because God is always faithful and God is never outdone in generosity.

A few years ago a priest friend gave me a little book that changed my life forever. It was a book written by Henri Nouwen and was only about 50 pages called: *The Spirituality of Fundraising*. For the rest of our Spiritual Ponderings this month, I am going to share with you different quotes from Fr. Nouwen's little book. His quotes will be in bold and my commentary will follow in regular font.

From the perspective of the gospel, fund-raising is not a response to a crisis. Fund-raising is, first and foremost, a form of ministry. It is a way of announcing our vision and inviting other people into our mission.

Soon after I arrived at Epiphany of Our Lord Parish as pastor, it was discovered that our beautiful rose window in the back of the Church was in severe needs of repairs. It was determined that in order to do the job correctly, the repairs would cost around \$18,000. After consulting different people from the parish, I decided to hand out canisters of mini M&M's with a label on it asking the people of Epiphany of Our Lord parish to enjoy the M&Ms and return the canister the next weekend with a donation toward the stained glass window repairs. I honestly thought that after a month, we would have about \$6,000 toward our goal but amazingly after three weeks we had collected the entire \$18,000 because of the generosity of the people of Epiphany.

From that moment on, I realized that the people of Epiphany have a deep love for their Church both the physical building but also the building made up of living stones and that many people have the same trust in God and shared dream of a beautiful Church to worship in. I went from seeing financial challenges like the stained glass windows as an a crisis to seeing them as an opportunity to allow people to come together. The people of Epiphany announced loud and clear that month of October that their faith was important to them and I felt/feel blest to be a part of this community.

Fund-raising is proclaiming what we believe in such a way that we offer other people an opportunity to participate with us in our vision and mission.

In the Advent of 2013, I held up to Epiphany Parish three parish goals with the one of them being to raise money for Sts. Peter and Paul Community Center as they fight to end homelessness in St. Louis. Why out of all the charities in the St. Louis area did I choose Peter and Paul Community Center? It was because an old high school teacher, who now works for them, invited me to see all the good that they were doing for the homeless in the Saint Louis area. As I talked with my old high school teacher, I felt that I was getting more than just a sales pitch for some product. I could tell that he was invested and believed in the mission of Peter and Paul Community Center and now he was invited me to be a part of his vision which included working with the chronically homeless.

Fund-raising is precisely the opposite of begging. When we seek to raise funds we are not saying, "Please, could you help us out because lately it's been hard." Rather, we are declaring, "We have a vision that is amazing and exciting."

When I am at a parish fundraiser, the bottom line for me is not how much money we bring in. The bottom line for me is how much community have we built. Are people leaving this parish event with a stronger idea that Catholics are loving and joy filled people? We could make a \$1,000,000 on a fundraiser and if we give people a negative idea about what it means to be a Catholic then we have not had a successful fundraiser. I love our parish fish fries, homecomings, BBQ competitions because it gives me a chance to see the people of God gather and celebrate life together.

Fr. Thomas M. Pastorius

June 21, 20115

Spiritual Ponderings

Spirituality of Fundraising

As we continue to reflect on the Spirituality of Fundraising let us begin this reflection with a joke.

My pastor will find me.

There were two men shipwrecked on this island. The minute they got on to the island one of them started screaming and yelling, "We're going to die! We're going to die! There's no food! No water! We're going to die!"

The second man was propped up against a palm tree and acting so calmly that it drove the first man crazy. "Don't you understand?!? We're going to die!!!"

The second man replied, "You don't understand. I make \$100,000 a week."

The first man looked at him quite dumbfounded and asked, "What difference does that make?!? We're on an island with no food and no water! We're going to DIE!!!"

The second man answered, "You just don't get it. I make \$100,000 a week and I tithe ten percent on that \$100,000 per week. My pastor will find me!"

As we continue to reflect on this idea of money and the Church that I am calling the Spirituality of Fundraising, let us turn once again to Fr. Nouwen's book: *The Spirituality of Fundraising*. Quotes from his book will be in bold and my commentary will be in the regular font.

Fund-raising is also always a call to conversion. And this call comes to both those who seek funds and those who have funds. Whether we are asking for money or giving money we are drawn together by God, who is about to do a new thing through our collaboration (see Isa. 43:19). To be converted means to experience a deep shift in how we see and think and act.

We read in the Gospels that St. Peter when he first encounters the Lord, he catches a huge amount of fish, which would probably be the equivalent in our society as winning the lottery. If we stop and reflect on this scene, we can almost see St. Peter being torn as he looks to his right and sees Jesus calling him to follow Him and the file of fish (money) on his left. He has to make a decision – which one will bring him true happiness? Peter must have decided that being a successful fisherman was not going to bring him true happiness and so decides to follow Jesus.

We read in the Gospels that Mathew was sitting at his custom's post when Jesus called him and Mathew gets up and leaves all that money behind to follow Jesus. Why? The only answer could be that deep down Mathew knew that all the money in the world would not make him happy but maybe this wandering preacher could lead him to happiness.

We also know the story of Zaccheus who climbed the tree, the woman who put into the treasury her last coin. It seems that the Gospel makes it truly clear that at some point we have to decide what is more important the collection money and material goods or following Jesus. "No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money." Mathew 6:24.

In fund-raising as ministry we are inviting people into a new way of relating to their resources. By giving people a spiritual vision, we want them to experience that they will in fact benefit by making their resources available to us.

Since, I have started taking stewardship serious in my life, I know that giving to the Church or another charity requires me to change how I relate to my possessions and what I decide is necessary. I recently starting helping a young lady who is being a missionary in Haiti and to help her financially meant that I had to cut some other expenses from my life. Sometimes, I find better ways to give of my time. Each year, I give of my time to lead a retreat for Project Rachel and each year the Respect Life Apostolate sends me a financial gift for leading the retreat. I in turn donate the money back to them. There are many things I can do with that money but I know that part of what God is calling me to do is to give to the pro-life cause. I feel that the sacrifice involves makes my donation a little more special in God's eyes because it comes not from a surplus.

Fr. Thomas M. Pastorius

June 28, 20115

Spiritual Ponderings

Spirituality of Fundraising

My first pastor had one talk that he would give each year on finances. It was the same talk every year and the Sunday that he gave the talk because known as "Apple Sunday" because his talk always involved peaches (Only kidding his talk always involved apples).

He would go on to tell the following story: "Once upon a time . . . there was a man who had nothing . . . and God gave him ten apples. He gave him three apples to eat. He gave him three apples to trade for shelter from the sun and rain. He gave him three apples to trade for clothing to wear. He gave him one apple so that he might have something to give back to God to show his gratitude for the other nine.

The man ate the three apples. He traded three for shelter from sun and rain. He traded three for clothing to wear. The man looked at the tenth apple . . . and it seemed bigger and juicier than the rest. So the man ate the tenth apple . . . and gave back to God . . . THE CORE!"

The point of the story is twofold. The first is that it reminds us that all we have is from God and secondly not to give God something back would be a sign of great disrespect.

I remember a few years ago, when my little nephew was about 2 years old, we were sitting down at Wendy's and I had already gotten my food because I had arrived early. So my nephew is sitting in his high chair looking at me as his parents go up to order their food and he begins grunting and sticking out his hand toward me. It was obvious that he wanted one of my French fries and so I gave him one. A few moments later he started grunting again and so I gave him another French fry. Eventually his parents returned with their food and they put a few French fries on his plate. To my surprise he began to grunt again and when I turned to look at him, he was holding out his hand and in his hand was a French fry that he wanted to share with me. He was giving back and I was a very proud uncle because I realized that his willingness to share was a sign of unselfishness which marked the sign of great maturity. If only we could all be that selfless.

Fr. Nouwen in his book *The Spirituality of Fundraising* (quotes will be in bold) spends a good portion of his book asking why is it hard for us to ask others for money for good causes? Could it be because we do not have a good relationship with money?

Those of us who ask for money need to look carefully at ourselves. The question is not how to get money. Rather, the question is about our relationship with money. We will never be able to ask for money if we do not know how we ourselves relate to money.

If we remember back to our first reflection on this topic we know that money does mean so much to us because it signifies our dreams and our hopes. I believe also that we can begin to think that we protect our dreams and hopes because they are an intimate part of us and it often feels that when people reject them they are rejecting us. This is not always the case, for while I may never understand a person's dreams like the desire to go sky diving, it does not mean that I can build a relationship with them on other common interests.

Money is central reality of family relationships. It is also a central reality in our relationships with people, institutions, and causes beyond family life. Therefore we need also to think about this side of our financial life. If money touches our relationships with family members as well as the world beyond our home, it also reaches into our inner life. It is interesting that the phrase "personal worth" can mean both the extent of our financial assets and our value as a human being.

The only place as a Catholic to receive our identity from is from God. We are all children of God no matter how much money we make. One of the great things about the Mass is that all are welcome and there are no places for social distinctions.

Money and power go together. There is also a real relationship between power and a sense of self-worth. Do we ever use money to control people or events? In other words, do we use our money to make things happen the way we want them to happen? Do we ever use money simply to give others freedom to do what they want to do? How do we feel when people ask us for money?

The above are all powerful questions that Fr. Nouwen asks and to be completely honest, I wrestle with them a lot. Having money and being secure allows me to be a sort of judge to where am I going to spend it and to what charities that I am going to give some of my money to. I know that I cannot do all the good that is presented before me but am I least doing some.

The pressure in our culture to secure our own future and to control our lives as much as possible does not find support in the Bible. Jesus knows our need for security. He is concerned that because security is such a deep human need, we do not place our trust in things or people that cannot offer us real security. "Do not store up treasures for yourselves on earth, where moth and woodworm destroy them and thieves can break in and steal. But store up treasures for yourselves in heaven, where neither moth nor woodworm destroys them and thieves cannot break in and steal. For wherever your treasure is, there will your heart be too" (Matt. 6:19-21). – 14&15