



During this Nativity fast, as we prepare ourselves through fasting and prayers, to receive the greatest gift that humanity could ever receive from the Creator, let us contemplate the true virtue of giving.

The subject of giving draws upon two main principles: Stewardship and Worship

**Stewardship.** By definition, stewardship is the act of being in charge of something that belongs to someone else who have entrusted us with that responsibility. This 'someone' referred to here is naturally God, the Creator of all things, "*For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things*" (Romans 11:36). Therefore, it follows that when we give God anything, we are in fact giving back a portion of what He has already entrusted us with. King David, in the Old Testament, realized that and expressed it openly by saying, "*But who am I, and who are my people that we should be able to give as generously as this? Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand. We are aliens, and strangers in your sight, as were all our forefathers*" (1 Chronicles 29:14,15).

**Worship.** By definition, worship is strong feelings of love, respect and admiration to God. When we

practice giving, we are in essence worshipping God. Giving is therefore a kind of worship and not only an act of charity; and givers are not to perceive themselves as benefactors but basically worshippers. The proof of that is found in the Holy Book of Numbers 18:24, where God labels tithing as 'offering' and not 'giving', "*For the tithes of the children of Israel, which they offer up as a heave offering to the Lord, I have given to the Levites to inherit.*" The interpretation of this verse is that we give what we give to God, and He in turn gives it back to whomever He chooses to give to. It follows that tithing is not a charitable deed, but worship. The church endorses this concept in its rituals; for among the many litanies that we pray, the only litany that we pray at the altar is the Litany for the Oblation, in which we say, "Accept them upon Your holy, rational altar of heaven as a sweet savor of incense before You."

When considering the subject of giving, one cannot help but think of many important angles from which we can assess our giving. Among these are: our attitude in giving, the methods of giving, the rewards we get because of giving, the amount we give, to whom we give, and results of not giving.

### ***Attitude in Giving:***

Our attitude should be one inspired by love and love

alone with giving being the fruit of this love. In the Holy Book of 1 Corinthians 13:3, St. Paul confirms that by saying "*And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give myself to be burned, and I have no love, it profits me nothing.*" In the Holy Gospel of St. John 3:16 we read, "*For God so **loved** the world that He **gave** His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.*" It is clear that because God loved, He gave. Giving out of compulsion, reluctance, or guilt, will render our giving fruitless "*So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver*" (2 Corinthians 9:7). On the other hand, giving God with the right attitude of love, willingness, and generosity will bestow blessings on our giving. The world teaches that profit and gain abide in receiving whereas Christianity manifests the blessings that abide in giving, "*It is more blessed to give than to receive.*" (Acts 20:35)

### ***Methods of Giving:***

According to St. Paul, giving should be done:

1. Periodically. "*On the first day of the week that there be no collections when I come*" (1 Corinthians 16:2). The first day of the week is naturally Worship Day. So every week, giving

should take place on worship day as it is a form of it.

2. Personally. "*Let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper*" (1 Corinthians 16:2), since giving is worship, each person in the family should then take part in worship, by giving to the Lord.

3. Abundantly. That is how the Lord expects us to give. "*He who gives, with liberality*" (Romans 12:8) and in the Old Testament, "*Giving freely and wholeheartedly to the Lord*" (1 Chronicles 29:14).

4. Cheerfully. "*God loves a cheerful giver*" (2 Corinthians 9:7).

### ***Rewards of Giving:***

The blessings that await a giver are manifold:

1. *A strong relationship with God.* Giving will strengthen our relationship and bond with God. Since giving is worship, then the more you give, the more you worship, and the stronger will your

relationship with God become. Our Lord Jesus Christ teaches us that "*where your treasure is, there your heart will be also*" (Matthew 6:21). If your treasure is in heaven, your heart will also be in heaven.

2. *Spiritual growth and maturity.* A giver is transformed into the image of Christ; Our Lord Jesus Christ is the perfect example of perfect giving because He gave His life for the world. Therefore whenever we give we set our selves up to become like Him; as giving helps us get rid of our selfishness, and self centeredness, and focus on Christ. In the Holy Book of 1 Timothy 6:18-19 St. Paul says, "*Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share.*" What St. Paul is referring to here is the readiness to give and share rather than the act of giving itself. Do we have the willingness and readiness to give and share, or are we reluctant? St. Paul continues, "*Storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time, that they may lay hold on eternal life.*" The ultimate outcome of giving is faith, joy, confidence, and assurance in the inheritance of eternal life, in addition to acquiring the image of Christ, the mega giver.

3. *Investment in heaven and earthly blessings.* Giving brings an abundant harvest in our lives;

not just financially but in any other area such as healing or restoration. Take for example the episode of the widow of Zarephath and Elijah. She was in need of a miracle of raising her only son. Therefore her giving had to precede the fulfillment of that need in her life (1 Kings 17:9-24). St. Paul in the Holy Book of Philippians 4:17, says, "*Not because I desire a gift, but a fruit that may abound to your account.*" God said that He will reward you a hundred fold. God is never broke and therefore is never in need of our money. Even if everyone decided not to give to the church, God would still provide for all the needs of the church, so St. Paul was encouraging the people to give not out of need but because he desires the fruits that will abound to their account. The Holy Bible offers many examples where God provided: the children of Israel in the wilderness of Sinai, the miracle of the five loaves of bread and the two fish, and many more. So when we speak about giving, it is not because God needs, but because it is an investment in your heavenly account. "*There is one who scatters, yet increases more; and there is one who withholds more than is right, but it leads to poverty. The generous soul will be made rich, and he who waters will also be watered himself*" (Proverbs 11:24-25).

## ***How much should we give?***

David the psalmist pondered over the same question. He felt that whatever he did was not enough to repay God for His infinite love, blessings and salvation. "*What shall I render to the Lord For all His benefits toward me?*" (Psalm 116:12). The Blessed Virgin Mary did not give less than all her life from childhood.

In the Old and the New Testaments God explicitly expresses His precepts concerning giving.

The Old Testament teaches about:

1. *Tithing.* "*Bring all the tithes into the storehouse that there may be food in My house If I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you such blessing That there will not be room enough to receive it*" (Malachi 3:10). God promises that when we give the 10% 'tithe', the remaining 90% will miraculously become more than 100%. On the other hand, when we do not tithe, we will not only miss the blessings, but be convicted of robbery. "*Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me! But you say, 'in what way have we robbed You?'*" (Malachi 3:10). In addition, God was very specific in His instructions to His people as to how to handle and present their tithing (Deuteronomy 14:22-29). All the tithes should be directed to the local

church as it is mentioned in (Numbers 18:24). Helping the poor, buying books in Church, paying for the costs of conventions are not to be deducted from our tithes.

2. *Offering*. God distinguishes between tithing and offering. This is very clear in the Holy Books of Malachi 3:8-9 and Numbers 16:24.

3. *Giving the first fruit*. This refers to the first product of our endeavors. We are supposed to give God that first product in gratitude. The Holy Book of Deuteronomy 16: 1-11 says to give the first fruit of your harvest to God.

4. *Vowing*. A vow, by definition, is a serious promise made voluntarily by the person concerned. Since it is a voluntary act, it cannot be based on an obligation. For example, we cannot vow tithing because the latter is a commandment in itself. Nor can we vow the fasts set by the church for the same reason. Vows are extra just like the extra mile recommended by our Lord Jesus Christ.

5. *Harvesting*. The Holy Book of Deuteronomy 24:19 teaches about the necessity of selflessly and intentionally considering the others during our harvesting time so that we provide for the widow, the orphans, and the strangers "*While*



*you are reaping your harvest in your field, and forget a sheaf in the field, you shall not go back to get it; it shall be for the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work of your hands."* Thus God wants us to be generous in our giving to help the stranger, the widow, and the orphans. Ruth, the widow benefited from such an act when Boaz in his generosity ordered the harvesters to intentionally leave some of the crop behind.

6. *Releasing.* (Deuteronomy 15:1-3) The year of release was a year of freeing those who could not pay back their debts. This leads us to understand that God intended for the poor to be responsible, work and pay back what they have borrowed: "*If you lend money to any of My people who are poor among you...*" (Exodus 22:25) thus He wants to discourage laziness and reinforce work. In the Holy Book of 2 Thessalonians 3:10 St. Paul says, "*If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat.*" If there is any person in need, we should lend them until they get over their hard time, and pay back. If this needy is trying very hard to repay this debt, and after seven years he could not, you should release him from this loan.

7. *Helping the poor.* (Deuteronomy 15:7,8) "*If there is among you a poor man of your brethren, within any of the gates in your land which the Lord your God is giving you, you shall not harden your heart nor shut your hand from your poor brother, but you shall open your hand wide to him and willingly lend him sufficient for his need, whatever he needs.*"

The New Testament teaches the Law of Perfection and sums it all in the following precept:

*"If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me"* (Matthew 19:21). This verse is not about monasticism, because at the time it was said, the latter had not existed yet. The Apostles left everything, and followed Him. It is not expected that all of you sell everything literally, and follow Christ, but it should at least put you on the right track of giving and thus growing in and through it. Giving is worship, and as you grow in every other aspect of worship, you should grow also in your giving.

### ***To whom should I give?***

1. *To the poor and needy.* Whatever we give to the poor, we give to God, He says; "*He who has pity*

*on the poor lends to the Lord, and He will pay back what he has given" (Proverbs 19:17).*

2. *To the local church.* The tithes should go to the local church as it says in the following verses in the Holy Books of 1 Timothy 5:17, Galatians 6:6, Numbers 18:24, and Malachi 3:10.
3. *To the immediate family, and relatives.* The man should be generous with his wife, children, and relatives.

### ***What will I lose if I do not give?***

1. *My prayers will go unanswered. "Whoever shuts his ears to the cry of the poor Will also cry himself and not be heard" (Proverbs 21:13).*
2. *No Growth.* My knowledge and relationship of the Lord Jesus Christ will remain stagnant and possibly become weak. The Holy Book of Jeremiah 22:16 says, *"He judged the cause of the poor and needy; then it was well. Was not this knowing Me? Says the Lord."*
3. *My possessions might get affected.* The Holy Book of Proverbs 28:27 says, *"He who gives to the poor will not lack, but he who hides his eyes will have many curses."*

Whenever you get an opportunity to give do not ignore that opportunity, for you will not reap a harvest unless you sow a seed. Change your perception about giving, and become a generous person not just satisfied with paying tithes, but is ready to give not just his shirt but the cloak as well and to go not just one mile but the extra mile (Matthew 5:40-42). Always remember that giving is not a charity; it is worship to God.

Glory be to God for ever. Amen.

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