

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. He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your resources and increase the harvest of your righteousness. You will be enriched in every way for great generosity, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God (2 Corinthians 9:6-8, 10, 11).

CONTRIBUTIONS TO CHRIST

The following summarizes the Christian vision of contributions of money in the name of Christ:

- ✧ **Contributions must be made.** By sharing that with which we have been blessed, we share a part of ourselves with others while recognizing Christ within “the least of our brethren.” Our gifts are not “charity” or “leftovers.” Instead, they are a vital part of the Christian life.
- ✧ **Contributions must be made in secret.** They must be made as a sacrifice, from our own poverty rather than from our abundance. There is no sacrifice if we give our “leftovers” or if we seek recognition by others.

- ✧ **Our gifts must be given cheerfully.** They must not be advertised. They must be given freely, not under compulsion or as an “obligation.”

In giving, we should have complete detachment as our goal—total freedom from captivity to worldly preoccupations with perfect poverty as the goal of personal perfection. Then, and only then, will our treasure be great in the Kingdom of God!

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GIFTS OF MONEY



Together with prayer and fasting, Christ teaches us that almsgiving is one of the three fundamental attributes of the spiritual life.

When you give alms, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by men. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your alms may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you (Matthew 6:2-4).

A SPIRITUAL MEANING

Sometimes Christians are embarrassed at the mere mention of money, particularly in the Church. Many feel that a distinction should be maintained between “spiritual” and “temporal” matters. Such distinctions are, at best, false distinctions. The false spirituality which reduces the very mention of money to a purely temporal matter helps to explain why the spirituality of money is often lost in the Church and in the world and why so many un-Christian and anti-Christian practices relative to money have entered into the life of the Church itself.

Christ spoke extensively about money. In fact, He put it in the forefront of spiritual life, giving it a deep and important spiritual meaning. While Christ never condemned the use of money, He did speak out against its

abuse. Material wealth, like anything else, can easily become a devious preoccupation, an obsession which is sinful precisely because it overlooks the fact that all we possess is ultimately a gift from God.

PERFECTION THROUGH POVERTY

The Old Testament Law of Moses required a person to give ten percent of his or her goods to the Lord. This is the famous rule of tithing.

In the New Testament, however, ten percent is seen as the minimum, not the norm: Christ requires a person to offer everything! The poverty of total non-possession is Christian perfection.

If you will be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me (Matthew 19:21).

Christ blessed the poor. He preached the Gospel to the poor. Christians are called not only to help the poor, but to be the poor—to be totally freed and detached from the things which “rust corrodes and moths consume and thieves steal”—the riches which bar humanity’s entry into the Kingdom of God.

SECRET SACRIFICE

When we offer gifts of money—to others, to the poor and the needy, to the Church for its

ongoing work of proclaiming the Good News of Christ—we must do so secretly and sacrificially. The Gospel clearly demonstrates Christ’s insistence on these two principles:

And He sat down opposite the treasury, and watched the multitude putting money into the treasury. Many rich people put in large sums. And a poor widow came, and put in two copper coins, which make a penny. And He called His disciples to Him, and said to them, “Truly, I say to you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the treasury. For they all contributed out of their abundance; but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, her whole living” (Mark 12:41-44).

THE CHEERFUL GIVER

The New Testament epistles are filled with suggestions concerning the proper attitude toward and the Christian use of money. The disciples taught and did what Christ Himself taught and did, and they expect us to follow their example.

The apostles collected money for the poor. They accepted some money for their own work in proclaiming the Gospel. They emphasized that gifts of money and possessions were indeed a part of the Christian life. They begged all to follow this principle: