



Bringing Home the Word

Thirty-second Sunday in Ordinary Time
November 11, 2018

What Shall We Give?

By Mary Katharine Deeley

When my husband and I were first married, we didn't have much money. I took the bus to work, and he ate peanut butter-and-honey sandwiches nearly every day. Chunky soup with rice was frequently on our dinner menu. Like many young couples, we struggled to make ends meet. One result of that experience was that we became very careful about how we spent money. Could we afford lunch at a restaurant once a month? How would we save for the future or budget for a growing family?

Also of concern was the amount we would donate to our church. Clearly, large contributions were out of the question, but because income and expenses often varied, we even avoided pledging a set amount per week. Instead, we agreed to give something every week—as much as we thought we could afford. Some weeks it was a dollar; in weeks of plenty or good fortune, we gave a little more. Our children took great pride in putting whatever amount we had in the basket each Sunday.

Our finances are much less stressful these days. Our careers and income have been blessed, and we still support our church, serve the poor, pay our ministers a living wage, and strive to make our parish a welcoming place for all. But whenever I read this Gospel passage I wonder, "Are we simply giving out of our surplus, or are we pushing ourselves to let go of some of our desires and dreams to help others in our midst?" We all should ask ourselves this question weekly, as my family did years ago. +

Sunday Readings

1 Kings 17:10–16

For the LORD, the God of Israel, says: The jar of flour shall not go empty, nor the jug of oil run dry.

Hebrews 9:24–28

Christ...will appear a second time, not to take away sin but to bring salvation to those who eagerly await him.

Mark 12:38-44 or Mark 12:41-44

[Jesus said,] "They have all contributed from their surplus wealth, but she...has contributed all she had, her whole livelihood."

A Word from Pope Francis

How many people have distanced themselves...from some parish or community because of the environment of gossip, jealousy, and envy they found there? Even for a Christian, knowing how to love is never a thing acquired once and for all. We must begin anew every day.

—Regina Caeli, May 21, 2017



REFLECTION QUESTIONS

QUESTIONS REFLECTION

- Is my piety and religiosity also expressed in charity and service?
- Am I doing what I can do to help the poor?

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Surviving Hard Economic Times

By Jim and Susan Vogt

For some, economic hardship means belt-tightening: eating out less, skipping vacation, going from two cars to one. For others, it's much more: losing a job, house, or health care. Both groups feel pain, but to those for whom it's the difference between eating and hunger, complaints about giving up cable TV can seem insensitive and frivolous. So how should Catholics respond to economic difficulties?

What NOT to Do

- **DON'T view adversity as God's punishment.** In some theologies, wealth signifies God's favor and poverty indicates sin. Although Catholicism doesn't support these views, the wealthy may be tempted to attribute bounty to hard work and virtuous living. Sometimes these go together but, just as there are innocent people born into poverty, there are wealthy people who didn't achieve success through virtuous living. Remember that we're all God's beloved children.
- **DON'T hoard what you have.** It's tempting to cling tightly to what we have. If we're in survival mode, we naturally focus on caring for ourselves first. If I barely have enough food, why should I share? This all makes human sense, but it's not what Jesus did. When Jesus fed the multitudes, a few generous followers offered their bread

and fish which, when blessed, fed all.

- **DON'T complain, act illegally or immorally.** In hard economic times it's natural to feel angry and complain. Venting and crying out to God in pain and fear are common in the psalms.
- Still, a time comes when these attitudes rob us of energy to find positive solutions. We might understand why a desperate person feels driven to illegal or immoral acts to survive. That doesn't make it right. Job's trials included both economic and physical pain. His uprightness in the face of adversity is why he's such a compelling model.

Embracing Christian Simplicity

Although some Christians choose poverty as a means to holiness, too many people find themselves living in a poverty that is neither willed nor holy.

In the last recession, many of us were being pushed to simplify our lifestyles. This is consistent with Church teaching that calls us to "practice poverty of spirit and generosity of heart" (*United States Catholic Catechism for Adults*). Jesus said, "Do not worry and say... 'What are we to wear... Your heavenly Father knows [what] you need...'" (Matthew 6:31-32). For many of us, the simple lifestyle that is thrust upon us is one we should aspire to anyway.

Deepening Our Spirituality

- **DO steward resources with care.** Although we may already be good stewards of our money and

possessions, hard times force us to do even more: *Where am I wasteful? Do I conserve electricity, gas, food, water? Do I wear practical clothes or am I a slave to fashion? Do I repair broken things instead of replacing them?*

Keeping a budget may be bothersome, but it can help us become responsible stewards.

- **DO practice generosity.** It sounds counterintuitive to give things away when money is tight, but Christians are called to be generous. Does everyone on your block really need their own lawn mower, camping gear, or basketball hoop? It's convenient to have your own, but sharing reduces cost and builds community.
- **DO stay spiritually centered.** Few people welcome hardships, but when they arrive, God may be pricking our consciences or opening untried doors. Hardships may drive us to deeper prayer. They give us solidarity with those who regularly go without. In the end, we place our lives in God's hands, remembering that the same God who created the lilies of the fields loves and watches over us. +

PRAYER

Lord, I am grateful for your abundant gifts. Open my hands and heart that I may give my all in sharing your peace and love with the world.

From Grateful Meditations for Every Day in Ordinary Time, Rev. Warren J. Savage and Mary Ann McSweeney

WEEKDAY READINGS

November 12-17

Monday	<i>St. Josaphat:</i> Ti 1:1-9 / Lk 17:1-6
Tuesday	<i>St. Frances Xavier Cabrini:</i> Ti 2:1-8, 11-14 / Lk 17:7-10
Wednesday	<i>Weekday:</i> Ti 3:1-7 / Lk 17:11-19

Thursday	<i>Weekday:</i> Phlm 7-20 / Lk 17:20-25
Friday	<i>Weekday:</i> 2 Jn 4-9 / Lk 17:26-37
Saturday	<i>St. Elizabeth of Hungary:</i> 3 Jn 5-8 / Lk 18:1-8