



St. James Parish Ministry - Philosophy of Giving and Stewardship

by Fr. Timothy Murphy (October 2025)

Our Foundational Belief

Offering financial support to the Church is both an invitation of faith and an obligation of faith. From the very beginning, Scripture declares that God is the Creator of all things:

“The earth is the Lord’s, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it.”
(Psalm 24:1)

Though we may work hard and earn our wages, it is by God’s provision, grace, and blessing that we have life, opportunity, and the fruit of our labor. Therefore, we believe that what we “have” is never truly *ours*, but entrusted to us by God for His glory and the good of His people.

The life of a disciple of Christ is marked by a different understanding of possessions. Faith gives us this perspective: All we have is God’s, and what we return to Him—our prayers, our gifts, our time, our resources—is an act of **worship, thanksgiving, and trust.**

1. Giving as an Act of Worship

For the Christian, the Offertory is a sacred moment, a communal act of worship that acknowledges God as the source of all blessings. It is an opportunity to examine our faith and go deeper.

- In the Old Testament, God commanded His people to bring the first and best of their harvests, symbolizing that God deserves priority (Leviticus 27:30; Deuteronomy 26:1–11).
- In the New Testament, Paul exhorts believers:
“Present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.” (Romans 12:1)

If offering our very lives is worship, then offering our material gifts is part of the same response of love. When the gifts are brought forward, they symbolize more than bread, wine, and money. They represent the sacrifice of the people, the giving of themselves in thanksgiving to God.

2. Giving as an Act of Thanksgiving

Generosity flows from a grateful heart. The heart controls the hand.

To the extent that we experience the mercy of Christ, we respond with gratitude and generosity. Our giving is not coerced but freely offered in thanksgiving for God's goodness.

"Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you."
(1 Thessalonians 5:18)

Just as we pray to return thanks to God, our financial support is a visible expression of gratitude.

3. Giving as an Act of Trust.

Giving requires faith. Every time we give, via the offertory basket, online, or through special gifts, we make a statement: **"Lord, I trust You to provide for my needs and I want to place You first in my life."**

- Jesus said, "Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Matthew 6:21).
- The widow's offering in Mark 12:41–44 shows us that trust in God, not the size of the gift, is what matters most.

Generosity helps us resist the false security of wealth and instead lean on God's providence.

The Early Church Witness

The Acts of the Apostles gives us a beautiful picture of how the early Christians lived out generosity:

- "All the believers were together and had everything in common" (Acts 2:44).
- "There were no needy persons among them" (Acts 4:34).

Their giving was Spirit-driven, joyful, and communal. It reflected unity of heart and soul, and it provided a powerful witness to the resurrection of Jesus.

The Fruits of Generosity

When we give with a willing heart, several spiritual graces unfold in our lives:

- We align ourselves with Scripture and the life of Jesus by giving the first and best back to God (Proverbs 3:9–10).
- We gain the wisdom to distinguish between *needs and wants*.
- We come to a deeper appreciation of the blessings we already have.
- Gratitude replaces the endless pursuit of “more.”
- Joy becomes more visible in our daily lives.
- Our hearts become free to serve and open to the love of God.
- We invest in people’s faith, in which there is no greater return.

As Paul reminds the Corinthians:

“Each one should give what they have decided in their heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.” (2 Corinthians 9:7)

Why We Give at St. James Parish

At St. James, we do not communicate giving as merely an expectation or obligation. Our approach is invitation and discernment:

- We invite parishioners to **pray** and ask what God is calling them to give.
- We affirm that giving is not a penalty, a tax, or a fundraising tactic. It is an act of **worship, thanksgiving, and trust**.
- We highlight the impact of giving—supporting parish ministries, helping those in need, building up the Church for future generations.
- We focus on forming disciples who see their offering as a spiritual commitment and a pathway of deeper relationship with Christ.

We want every offering to be the fruit of prayerful discernment, bringing peace and blessing to the giver as much as it brings blessing to the parish and community.

Conclusion

Giving at St. James is an invitation and an obligation. It is about worshiping God, returning thanks, trusting His providence, and uniting ourselves with the Body of Christ.

Our calling is to prayerfully discern: *Does my offering reflect thanksgiving to God for all that He has given me?* When our giving flows from the heart, it leads us deeper into Christ’s peace, joy, and generosity.

“For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” (Matthew 6:21)