

How to Encourage Charitable Giving within Our Flock continued from front cover

THREE: My local parish, St. Barnabas in Costa Mesa, CA, had five charitable minded men from the parish do the homily (one man each month so we spread out the message and didn't overwhelm people with money related homilies all in a row). Each man shared why they give. Not all of them were wealthy. One is a police officer, and one a teacher. We chose a financial cross section so people wouldn't say "...well of course he can tithe because he's wealthy...". As an aside St. Barnabas gives generously to various charitable entities like OCMC, IOCC, etc as we want God's blessing as a parish as well!

God has blessed my family as noted in Malichi: "...Test me in this," says the LORD Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it." As my dad often says, "I don't understand how the math works. How you can give 10% away, and more comes back, but God makes it work..." I've absolutely experienced this in my life. Thanks be to God! Feel free to share any of my stories if they will help you encourage your flock.

Yours in Christ,
Deacon Thomas Braun



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How to Encourage Charitable Giving within Our Flock

A Reflection by Deacon Thomas Braun

How do we encourage our flocks to be more charitable in their financial giving? We know how good this is for people, how much it will transform their lives, but it is hard for the priest to push this idea as it can seem self-serving: "...Father just wants a raise/bigger church...".

I am a simple Deacon, but I come from a lineage of clergy: My dad is Fr. Jon Braun (retired), his dad was a covenant minister, and my Father in Law is Fr. Peter Gillquist (of blessed memory). So I see and am aware of the priestly challenges, especially when they relate to this sensitive subject of one's money. Let me offer three ideas that have encouraged me in my outlook on charitable giving, and hopefully one or more of them may prove helpful to you.

ONE: Strongly encourage the men in your parish to consider being "working" Deacons. I have been a working (secular job, and not paid by the parish) Deacon since 1987. For my day job I run an 80 person engineering company, and serve on several Boards including Ancient Faith Ministries, and St. Athanasius Academy of Orthodox Theology (SAAOT). I've been married 41 years and have 8 grandkids. So I'm busy. I offer this background as a common objection is "...I'm too busy...". I love to serve and truly feel called to the Diaconate. Encouraging working Deacons can foster a charitable mindset in your flock (and we all need more Deacons!). When I preach at a parish I'm visiting, I often put in a "plug" for such a role and offer myself as an example that one can have a busy work/family life, and still find time to serve as a Deacon (God will multiply our talents if we give Him a chance!).

TWO: If your older adults seem tough to reach, consider working on your youth (including young adults) to develop a habit of charitable giving. I was taught as a teen to tithe. Fr. Richard Ballew (of blessed memory) would ask: "...which Kingdom is more important: The US Government, or the Kingdom of God? Then who should get first "cut" of your money? This made sense to me and I started tithing from my lawn mowing and babysitting jobs, and continue to this day. It's a habit that I don't think about any more than getting out of bed each day. And don't hesitate to aim even higher: Fr. Richard went on to explain that you aren't giving "alms" unless you give over and above the tithe. I wanted God's promised blessing so I started giving \$10/month as a teen to a charitable organization. I offer the above personal examples to encourage you that people, and especially youth, can grasp the vision of charitable giving and make it a lifelong habit. In fact, it's easier if people start young so they never feel like they are "giving up" their current standard of living.

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