



SAINT ANTHONY
CATHOLIC CHURCH

"The Church's function is to proclaim the Gospel, not to solve all of life's specific problems. Once the Gospel is proclaimed, each of us has the task of applying it to his own situation in all the intricacies of a concrete life." - Fr. Thomas Dubay, "Happy are You Poor"

The Church's lack of a general prescription for spending and giving is not an allowance for us to spend wantonly or to forgo generosity, nor is it a failure of the Church's teaching. Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition provide for us ideals and examples to which we may measure our lives against the truth. We are all called to the standard of the Gospel, but the particular sacrifice demanded of each individual is different. Our duty as Christians is to prayerfully discern what God asks of us as individuals based on the truths of our Faith.

The questions and passages below offer a guided examination by which you may begin a discussion of these truths with God in prayer.

General Examination:

- Does the message of the Gospel influence my view on wealth and possessions? In what ways?
- Am I a productive member of my community and the larger body of Christ? Am I a good steward of my resources?
- Have I taken on debt imprudently? Do I seek to do justice and pay my debts?
- Does my spending on wants outstrip my spending on needs? Am I dominated by impulsive spending habits?
- Do I have a plan for using my money well? Do I know what my savings are for, or am I simply accruing wealth for its own sake?
- Do I view my worldly possessions and wealth as gifts from God? Do I seek to use my gifts for the service and salvation of myself and others?
- Does the thought of giving up my worldly wealth and security to serve God and His Church give me anxiety, fear, or pause?
- Do I attempt to serve both God and Mammon?
- Am I aware that sharing with the needy is a condition for possessing a "Living Faith" (James 2:14-17) and therefore of being in a state of grace (1 Jn 3:17-18)?
- Do I give from my superfluities to the poor and needy outside of my direct care? Do I give to the Church from my superfluities?
- Do I go without necessities in any way so that others may have more?
- Do I believe that living for others before myself is a mark of holiness and an ideal to which we are all called in some capacity? Do my actions align with my belief in this regard?
- Do I place my security in things, rather than in God?

- Am I a hoarder? Do I have superfluous things?
- Do I view my gifts and capacity to give only as an extension of my wealth, or do I consider my time and talents as gifts to be stewarded as well?
- Do I use my time and talents to serve others and the Church? Do I use these as an excuse to not give from my treasure as well?
- Am I sensitive to the fact that my deepest hunger is not for things of this world, but for the kingdom of heaven? Does this realization dictate my choices, spending, and habits?
- Do I ever bring wealth and the possession of worldly goods into my prayer life and relationship with Jesus? Do I seek to find how God wants me to use my gifts and possessions?
- Do I relate to and use my wealth in such a way that the Gospel would be impressed upon those who know me? Do I believe that intentional poverty and true generosity have the capacity to evangelize?

Consider the following dispositions, to which one do I most closely align?

- **Miserliness:** A strong desire to have and accrue money and not to spend it, especially on others.
- **Prodigality:** A wasteful and careless extravagance in spending, even on others.
- **Liberality:** An expression or manifestation of generosity that is *freely* given and unopposed to justice (that which is owed) within proportion to one's means. The virtue disposing a person to a reasonable balance between the opposite extremes of prodigality and miserliness.

For those who are married:

- Do we honor our shared duty as spouses and both contribute to a prayerful vision for our finances and giving?
- Do we budget and steward our resources in a way that is just for our family? Do we provide for the needs of our dependents and those under our direct care?
- Have we, in our marriage, worked out a balance between providing for our family on one hand and providing for the needs of others and the work of the church on the other?
- Are we vain in our home, our furnishings, our dress, and our other possessions?
- Do we use our status as lay people as an excuse to *completely* disregard Gospel poverty and the counsels of perfection? Do we seek God's will for how to give in our marriage?

2nd Corinthians 8:2-3

"We want you to know, brethren, about the grace of God which has been shown in the churches of Macedonia, for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of liberality on their part. For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own free will."