

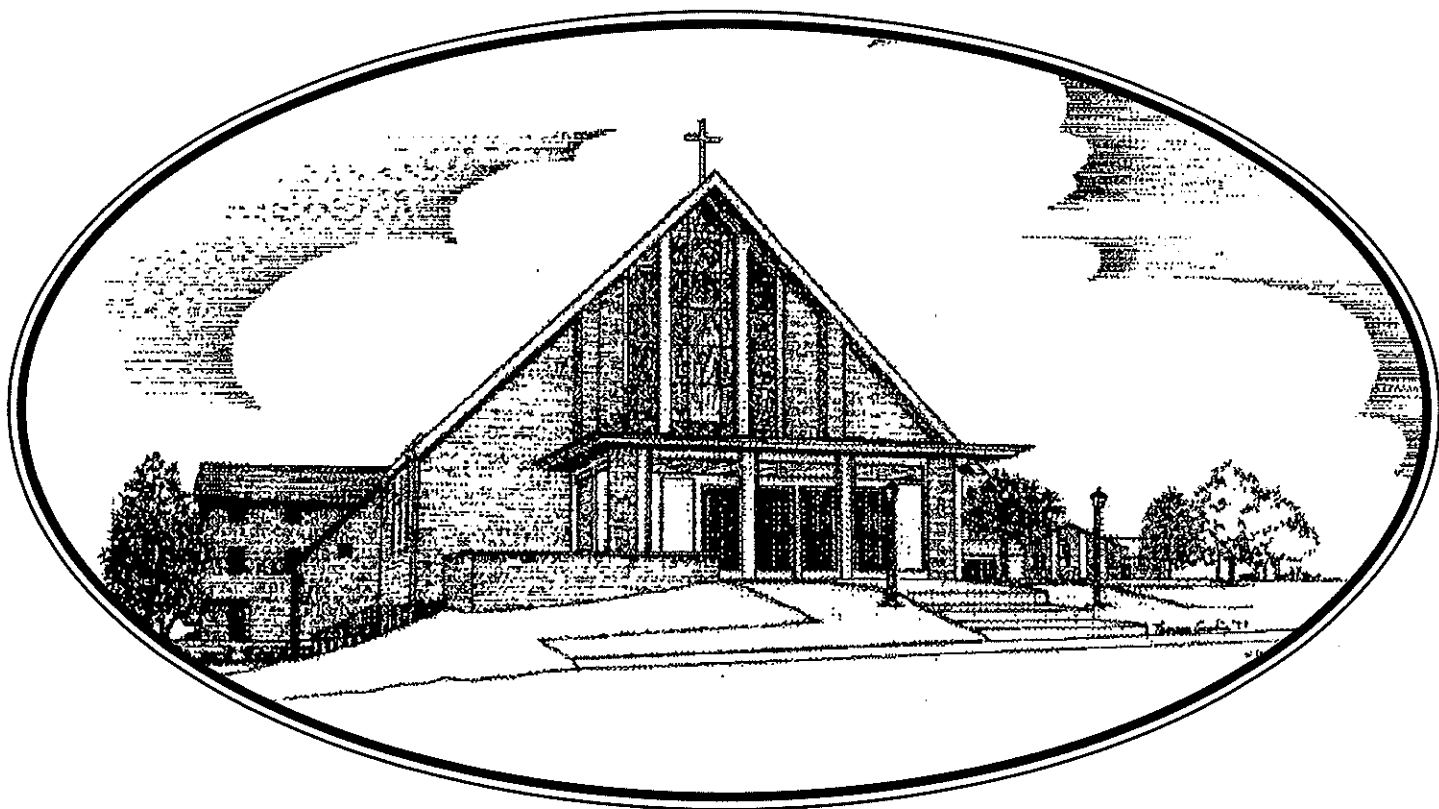
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“GOD’S PLAN FOR GIVING”

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Fr. John Gallagher, OFM Cap.
Pastor - St. Pius X, Middletown, CT

From The Pastor... I want to thank Lisa Rohrer and Joe Seeber for taking time from their families to share their personal experiences with us. I know you will be inspired as I have been. This is their ministry; they accept no compensation for being here this weekend and will be in the rear of the church after Mass and at the coffee social to answer any questions you may have.

Today, in our country, the Catholic Church depends greatly on fairs, raffles, and other similar activities for support. Despite all the effort, these methods never seem adequate. That is why I'm presenting for your consideration an approach to church support that has its foundation in God's inspired word. We might call it "God's Plan for Giving."

Tithing in the Bible . . . Tithing is mentioned more than 40 times in scripture. Numerous Old Testament stories recount how God asked that the first ten percent of the land's produce be set aside as a sign of gratitude for His goodness. The early Church had no tithing system, but as it grew, so did its material needs. Gradually, the Old Testament model of tithing was adopted. A number of regional Church Councils and finally the Council of Trent made the tithe Church law. With the later separation of Church and State, tithing was abandoned.

And Today . . . In our time, the difficulty of raising funds for the growing needs of the Church has led to a modified and voluntary system of tithing. Since 1977, more than 1000 Catholic parishes, most of them East of the Mississippi River, have become tithing parishes.

What is a Tithe? The word tithe means tenth. A tithe is the first tenth of a wage earner's income. It's giving back to God something God gave in the first place. Tithing is not any tenth; it's the first tenth of one's income--salary, dividends, interest--income from any source.

How Does Tithing Work? Five percent of one's income is given to God through the parish church. The other 5% can be used for the Catholic Appeal,

Catholic school tuition, care of one's parents, special diocesan collections, and private charities. The spirit of tithing, the most important part of the program, means giving to God, not to me, your pastor, or to this church. And it means giving to a point of sacrifice for the word sacrifice means "to make holy." The spirit of tithing means not caring what anyone else gives; it's spiritual giving in every sense. What you give to God is between you and God. The ideal tithe of 5% to God's church and 5% to His other works can be explained by an example.

If your income from all sources before taxes is \$300 per week, the 5% Sunday Mass offering would be \$15.00. You might give the other 5% to private charities, parish school tuition, and diocesan extra collections. Tithing is really very logical. Everything we have comes from God, and when we give back the first 10% of our earnings, we're saying to Him, "Thank you, God, for letting me use the other nine-tenths!"

What Are the benefits to the Tither and to the Parish? Every parish that has adopted this method has improved its spiritual and material status. It means one collection for the parish at the Offertory of the Mass with the true spirit of offering oneself with the offering of Christ. And for the individual, tithing tells us what God expects. Most important for the tither, however, is the spiritual effect. Tithing helps establish a proper sense of values. It helps us to remember that God comes before all else and that everything we have comes from Him.

What Do We Do Now? Nothing. No one will ever call on you; you will never be asked to sign anything. Just come again next week and listen to the rest of "God's Plan." In the meantime, seek God's will through earnest prayer. And when you pray, please remember that the true purpose of tithing is to secure not the tithe, but the tither; not the gift, but the giver; not your money, but you -- for God.

Lisa Rohrer
St. Theresa of the Infant Jesus Parish,
New Cumberland, PA

I first heard about tithing approximately 14 years ago. At that time I was 5 months pregnant with my second child, and my son was 15 months old. So my initial reaction was, "God certainly doesn't mean me." At that time I was giving very little in my envelope each week but felt that I really couldn't afford any more than that. Charity begins at home. After reflecting upon what it meant to tithe...that my tithe is my thank you to God for all He has done for us...and discussing the subject with my husband we decided we would try it. I was not ready to completely commit to the idea. I was worried that giving more would really hurt us. Well once we started there was no stopping.

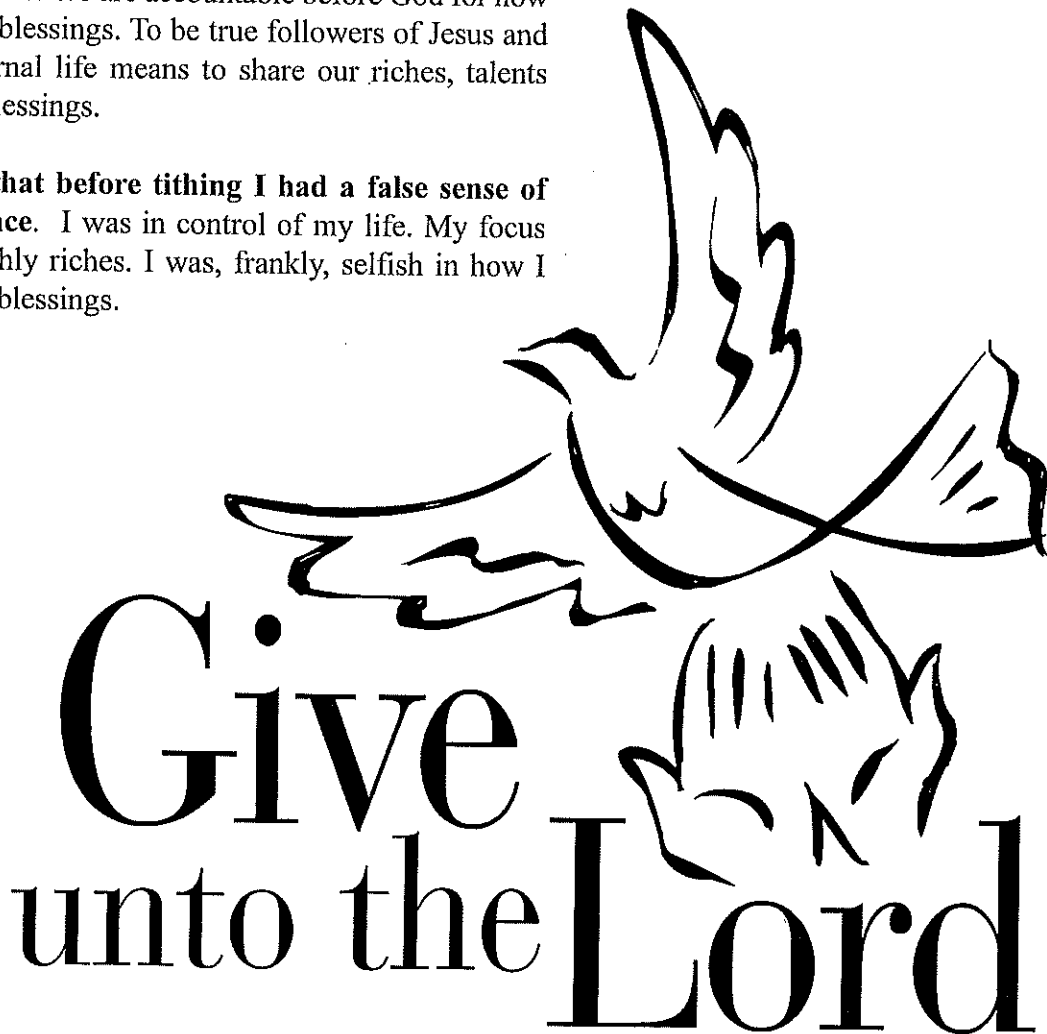
Tithing showed us that our possessions often possess us. We tend to give our "things" top priority. Tithing allows us to put God in His rightful place. When we put God above all else we receive everything He has predestined for us. We are accountable before God for how we use our blessings. To be true followers of Jesus and possess eternal life means to share our riches, talents and other blessings.

I realized that before tithing I had a false sense of independence. I was in control of my life. My focus was on earthly riches. I was, frankly, selfish in how I viewed my blessings.

A little over 2 years ago our tithing journey changed. I received a call from my husband from our home phone. I asked him why he was calling me from home in the middle of the day. He had been fired.

This was devastating news. However, through tithing we had learned that God is in control. That God's divine providence was working in our lives. Certainly, He had not abandoned us. I told my husband that he was a talented and good person... God must have amazing plans for him. I cannot rely on my own understanding. I must have faith in God's plans for us. His plans are much better than any plans we have for ourselves. And yes, our tithe continues, on whatever income we have.

My hope is that you will embrace this call to holiness and surrender yourself to God's will in your life. Give yourselves away and give lavishly.



Joe Seeber
St. Mark Church, Bristol, PA.

My name is Joe Seeber and I'm visiting you from St. Mark Catholic Church in Bristol, PA.

My family's journey with tithing began in 1978 when my wife, Sue, and I, with our five children, moved from suburban Philadelphia to a small farm town in central Indiana. And after Sunday Mass we registered, and learned that Our Lady of Mount Carmel was a tithing parish. Now I didn't know anything about tithing so maybe you can understand my reaction when I read about it.

This is impossible...

"Tithing is God's plan for giving and is mentioned over forty times in the Bible. "Literally, tithing means 'a tenth' or 'ten per cent, and is . . ." "Yikes! Sue, wait until you read this! These people must live in another world! They're crazy! They're asking for ten percent of my salary; before taxes, yet! We can never do this. . . This is impossible!" And there was something else going on, too. Inside, I was upset and a little bit angry. "Who are these people. . . telling me what to do with my money? Doesn't my money belong to me?" That was to be the end of tithing in my family. But it didn't work out that way. Why?

Giant Leap in Faith...

First came God's grace. Like water on a stone over time, it changed our hearts. Next came our new parish community. As Sue and I went to Mass week after week, month after month, our eyes were opened and we saw a group of adult Roman Catholics together in community striving for holiness. We came to see tithing as a visible sign of their commitment to *time* together in prayer; using their *talents* in the service of others, and to the self-sacrifice of their *treasure*. They were teaching us that tithing was about giving, not keeping; about sharing, not accumulating; it's about being generous, not selfish. Sue and I knew we needed these virtues in our lives and in the lives of our children; we made our family's "Giant Leap in Faith" and began our tithing journey.

God took care of us...

A lot of water has gone under the bridge since then, and now when we examine that journey we see that our weekly tithe has become for us a constant reminder that God, Our Father, has been loving, caring, and providing for us during all those years - even when we were off the path and "lost in the desert". So today when life gets scary, when we worry and are anxious about tomorrow, tithing reminds us to stop, turn around, and look back over our journey, and remember that the same God Who took care of us yesterday will take care of us tomorrow.

Your turn...

And now it's your turn! What are you going to do? Will you dismiss this invitation as I at first did? My prayer is that you will realize that tithing will help you in your journey toward Him just as it is helping Sue and me.

Thank you for your attention!

