

## Healthy Spiritual Giving - Stewardship

**Like other non-for-profit organizations, St. Thomas survives almost entirely on voluntary contributions of its members and friends. We do have some small parish savings and investments as well. This year we have a total budget of \$549,678.68 to operate our parish including campus ministry. This translates to \$62.75 per hour or about \$1.06 per minute.**

**Unlike other cases, supporting the parish is not a "fee for services" or a price of admission. Rather our giving is intended to be an expression of our spiritual relationship with God. Our faith tradition and, hopefully, our personal experience is that everything life itself - is a gift of God. St. Ignatius and many others tell us that when we really experience this reality our natural response is *gratitude*. This gratitude is a major characteristic of Catholic Christian tradition. Our word "Eucharist" itself means "thanksgiving."**

**Our whole Biblical tradition tells us that gifts from God are not meant to be hoarded or kept for our own use exclusively. Instead, the Hebrew prophets, Jesus, and the Saints tell us that if we wish to have a healthy life we must *share* a portion of our blessings to others, especially others in need.**

## How can we do this?

We give of our time. We have no way to know the length of our lives and even the longest life passes quickly. A healthy spiritual person recognizes time as a blessing from God, is grateful for this precious gift, and willingly shares part of these limited moments with and for others. **The ministries of St. Thomas would not be possible unless parishioners made choices to give of their time.** Those who have chosen this path seem happy and fulfilled in their choices.

We give of our abilities. Talent includes our natural gifts and those skills and abilities we have learned and developed during our life. **Cooking, wood-working, sewing, compassionate listening, skills at building maintenance and many other talents are shared here at St. Thomas by parishioners.**

We give of our money. For Jesus money was not a "dirty word." In fact he spoke of money and how we use it more often than almost any other topic. In our culture money is a key important way we make connections and even place value on things. For most

of us there seems not to be enough - of time or money. Yet our faith tradition promises that when we make a real gift ("sacrificial giving" - something that takes an effort and maybe hurts a little), we will receive back more **than** we give in return.

## What does this mean? What does healthy spiritual giving look like?

Your gift of time, talent, and money is a conscious decision that comes **from** gratitude to God. Your giving is not just done out of habit or what happens to be handy or leftover after everything else is taken care of.

You have prayed over our culture's constant call to buy, to get something new, and in this way discovered what do **I** really need? What are the differences between my needs and my wants? One group of friends has pledged to do "a year without buying anything new" - except clear necessities such as socks and underwear. Their aim is to gain the freedom to make real choices.

You decide to use the **envelope system** in support of St. Thomas. Using the envelopes helps you make a more conscious decision about your support and helps the parish know what the expected support will be. You find in the **biblical concept of tithing** a guideline in estimating your level of support for both the parish and other charitable causes. A traditional tithe 10% of your income often divided with half going to the parish and half to other causes. Some people today use a figure of 5% (The average New Englander today gives about 1%). What does this look like?

<u>annual income</u>	weekly contribution based on %				
	1%	2%	3%	4%	5%
\$20,000	4	8	12	15	19
30,000	6	12	17	23	29
40,000	8	15	23	31	38
50,000	10	19	29	38	48
60,000	12	23	35	46	58
70,000	13	27	40	54	67
80,000	15	31	46	62	77
90,000	17	35	52	69	87
100,000	19	38	58	77	96
150,000	29	58	86	115	144
200,000	38	76	116	154	192

The **regularity of your support** is important. Each year St. Thomas struggles because our income falls off drastically when many people are away in the summer. Yet our costs continue. And, more importantly, setting a regular amount of support aside weekly or monthly, even when you are not able to be here, breaks that sense of an offering as the cost of going to Mass and strengthens the idea of your gift as an expression of your spiritual life.

Using the envelope system helps in this. Also for many people the **Electronic Funds Transfer** option may be a good one. This is a completely safe and confidential arrangement which allows your bank to transfer to St. Thomas weekly or monthly the gift you designate.

For more information on the EFT option contact Joanne Cichocki in the Parish Office.

**Mass stipends** are a traditional source of support. At St. Thomas the offerings for Mass go directly to the parish. The common offering is \$10, but Mass may be arranged for any offering - or none at all. For generations Catholics have considered having a Mass offered for a deceased person an important act. Mass

can also be offered for the intentions of a living person. All intentions are listed in the bulletin. To arrange for a Mass intention contact the Parish Office.

**Memorial gifts** are another helpful source of support for parishes but not one often used at St. Thomas. At the time of a person's death the family can request that memorial gifts be directed to St. Thomas. This is a service provided by the Funeral Director. Gifts can be designated for a specific purpose or for the general support of the parish.

**Bequests** are an important source of support to many parishes but not currently very common at St. Thomas. There are a number of forms of bequests: direct provisions in a will, pre-arranged gifts of stocks, setting up an Endowment. Endowments can be named, and use of Endowment income can be restricted to specific areas of parish life. The diocese of Norwich offers several possible ways of structuring your pre-planned gift. For more information contact the Parish Office.

St. Thomas is facing expensive repairs to the Chapel and other build upgrades and maintenance costs in the next few years. Support of the **Building/Parish Improvement Fund** through the monthly collection or special gifts is crucial to our success here.

*Prayer for Generosity*

Eternal Word,  
only begotten Son of  
God, teach me True  
Generosity, teach  
me To Serve as You  
Deserve, To Give  
without counting the  
cost, To Struggle  
Heedless of wounds  
to Labor without  
seeking rest, To  
Sacrifice myself  
Without thought  
of any Reward save  
the Knowledge that  
I am doing Your Will.

*Ignatius of Loyola*