

Lent is a season of repentance. Repentance is turning away from sin, while we turn toward God for the forgiveness of sins. During Lent, we hear the Word of God and consider our lives in light of it. We confess our failures, and receive absolution, that is, forgiveness, and then commit ourselves to do better.

What does God say about giving to the Church? The Bible tells us. Our giving should be first fruits giving (Genesis 4:4; Proverbs 3:9). Our giving should be regular, on the first day of week, which has the Divine Service in mind (1 Corinthians 6:1–2). Our giving should be proportional: according to our income (1 Corinthians 16:1–2), according to what we have been given (2 Corinthians 8:12; Luke 12:48), our giving should be given with a spirit of eagerness and enthusiasm (2 Corinthians 9:2), generosity and liberality (2 Corinthians 8:20), cheerfully without compulsion (2 Corinthians 9:7). Our giving should be directed to those who teach us (Galatians 6:6–7) because a laborer is worthy of his hire, and we all know the going rate of such laborers in our communities (Luke 10:7; 1 Timothy 5:18).

Now consider your own giving in light of the Bible's teaching. Are you giving of your first fruits, taking it out of your paycheck first, or does God get what's left over? Are you giving voluntarily and cheerfully? Are you giving proportionally and generously? Are you giving with eagerness and enthusiasm? Are you giving to your local congregation, sharing all good things with the one who teaches you? If your answer to any of these is "No," then repent. Turn away from your sin and toward God for forgiveness. Confess your failure. Receive absolution. And commit to do better. We know that the Spirit is willing but our flesh is weak. We believe, and we pray that God, through Word and Sacrament, would help our unbelief, our lack of trust in His ability to provide.

And this is precisely what God promises. This is what St. Paul wrote to the Church in Corinth: "The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must give as he has made up his mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work. As it is written, 'He has distributed freely, he has given to the poor; his righteousness endures forever.' He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness. You will be enriched in every way for all your generosity, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God" (2 Cor 9:6–15).

St. Paul tells us that the Lord of all will both supply and increase what you need to give to the church for its work in and for the world. He tells us that this work that God is doing in us will enrich and bless us in every way and through this it will produce thanksgiving to God. Everyone benefits. We will be blessed in our giving, and it will produce thanksgiving to God in those who receive it.

Giving to the church is not a burden, just like all of God's teaching (1 John 5:2–4). They are not a burden because of He who gives it: the God who loves us and gave His only Son to die so that we may live. He loved us in that He sent His Son, born of a woman, born under the law to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption as sons. . . . So we are no longer slaves, but sons, and if a son, then an heir through God (Galatians 4:4–5, 7). We are heirs. We receive the full rights of sons, a status that Christ our Lord achieved for us by His death, resurrection, and ascension.

So we strive to do what He asks because we are His children. And when we don't, we repent. We confess our sins. We receive absolution. We desire to do better, praying that God would work in us both to will and to do according to His good pleasure (Philippians 2:13).