

TALK BY: Francis and Barbara Scholtz
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BARBARA:

Dutch and I have been invited by your pastor and parish leaders to share our thoughts and experience with stewardship - everything comes from and belongs to God and our commitment to stewardship is based on scripture which calls each of us through baptism to be givers, sharing our love, our faith, our prayers and our gifts of time, talent and treasure.

DUTCH:

Over forty years ago our parish in Appleton, Wis. was in desperate financial trouble. Seventeen people from all walks of life met for three months to study the most successful offertory giving plans in the country. All seventeen members agreed that tithing was the only fair plan to introduce because it is proportionate to income and is based on scripture, the word of God. I couldn't wait to share the new approach with Barbara.

BARBARA:

When Dutch said we should begin to tithe with the very next paycheck, I was angry, because I was afraid. We had two young children and Dutch was our sole wage earner, teaching in our parish school for 30% less than his public school counterpart. We were living from one paycheck to the next and I had been saving money for a real bedroom set. You know the kind where everything matches! I couldn't see how we could give 10% of our income to the church and the poor and keep a roof over our heads. Dutch said, "I know the lord will take care of us". I had no understanding of trusting in the Lord so I said "OK, you trust in the Lord and I will depend on you and we will try this for one year". Verses from the Gospel of St. Matthew helped my unbelief. "God in heaven knows all that you need. Seek first God's kingship over you, God's ways of holiness and all these things will be given you besides." Mt 6:26-34.

We have been married for 55 years and a few years after we began to tithe we decided that we needed to spend more time in prayer. After breakfast, we read scripture; use a biblical commentary to help us understand the readings and then we pray aloud about what God is saying through this sacred word. This has been a wonderful gift to our sacrament. But tithing our money was the biggest step in faith for us. Maybe it is because we live in a media-animated society which tells us that our "wants" are our "needs"

DUTCH:

We call the stewardship of our money, sacrificial giving. It is based on four principles:

- (1) We put God first in our lives, including the use of our time, talent and treasure.
- (2) We use an envelope for our offering each week, that way we make a conscious decision about what we are going to give and "gift wrap it in an envelope". When our envelope is taken up with the bread and the wine in the offertory procession; it represents our week of work, "our sacrifice to the lord".
- (3) We use the biblical tithe as a guide for our gift. We give 5% of our income to the parish and 5% to the poor.
- (4) Our gift should be a sacrifice. As Barbara said, it is not easy to begin---it means we have to take a step in faith to become less attached to material possessions and to put God first in our lives. We have a wonderful peace about how we spend our money!! I also have a word for your children and youth: we encourage you to give 10 pennies out of every dollar you earn or receive as a gift or allowance. Not only are you the present church, Pope John Paul II called you the hope of the future.

BARBARA:

We recently experienced two life-changing events--first a trip to Mandeville, Jamaica, where we met people who are desperately poor living without the things that I don't give a second thought to such as clean, running water and electricity at the flick of a switch. And then there was Uncle James, over 80, blind, living all alone on the side of a hill in a zinc lean-to. He had nothing except a box to sit on and a piece of foam on the ground for a bed. He was asked, "Uncle James, the church is here to help you, what can we do for you?" He thought a moment and then replied, "A little girl brings me a pail of water every morning and the neighbor down the hill brings me a meal every night. I have everything I need!" The second life changing experience is very personal, I was diagnosed with cancer. I have always enjoyed good health and am physically active so this news came as a terrible shock! Fortunately after 20 radiation treatments and a year of chemotherapy I am on the mend. Uncle James and my cancer brought home to me how much I have to be grateful for. Worldly "things" are not what make me valuable. I am lovable and capable because I have been created in God's image. God lives in me. God lives in each one of you. The Spirit of God empowers me to respond to God's goodness. Sacrificial giving puts God first ---we are making a sacrifice and our sacrifice is made Holy because we give to please God. We say "thank you" to a loving God who has given us everything, by sharing our time, talent and treasure in a sacrificial, responsible and planned manner.

DUTCH:

In the gospel of Luke, Jesus says, "give to others, and God will give to you." Indeed, you will receive a full measure, a generous helping, poured into your hands---all that you can hold. The measure you use for others is the measure that God will use for you." Based on that promise, we believe that the church and the poor should be supported by each of us giving according to our means---a generous portion--off the top! We invite you to try sacrificial giving for one year. We believe that you will find, as we have and thousands of others, that God will take care of your needs and many of your wants as well. You will experience peace, and a joyful way to live. Pray for us, we will continue to pray for you.