

Dear Parishioners,

Ok, I'm either courageous or crazy, because I'm going to bring up a "taboo" subject. But before diving in, let me give you some background info.

In my first assignment as a pastor, I inherited a parish with mountains of debt and very low weekly collections. Naturally, I was apprehensive, and shared my anxieties with a priest friend. It turns out that this particular priest was a Certified Public Accountant before entering the seminary! As you may know, most accountants are *eminently pragmatic*, highly analytical individuals not generally known for pie-in-the-sky thinking. So you can imagine my surprise when he said:

"Your problem is not financial...it's spiritual."

My first thought: I'd better check his college transcripts to see how many accounting classes he flunked. I mean, no accountant I know even *thinks* like that, let alone *says* such a thing out loud!! Maybe that's why he's a priest now instead of a CPA!

My next thought: If what he's saying is true, then things are going to be just fine. I mean, for all my struggles understanding debits, credits, balance sheets, etc. in my business school accounting classes (though I did get "A's" in those classes, proving that miracles *do* still happen), I *do* have a pretty good grasp of the spiritual life.

So, I took *Father CPA's* advice and made it my mission to connect the parishioners' hearts to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and not worry about money. In less than a year-and-a-half, this so-called "poor" parish wiped out more than **\$85,000** in debt. They say God will not be outdone in generosity...and I am proud to be accounted among the believers!

So, what is this taboo subject?

TITHING!

Over the next few weeks, we will consider the following:

- What tithing **is**.
- What tithing is **not**.
- What the **Bible** says about tithing.
- What **people who actually tithe** say about tithing.

In the meantime, if you have Internet access, I highly recommend a couple of articles I read recently on excellent Catholic websites:

Robbing God?

(<http://catholicexchange.com/2011/01/07/145243/>)

Would You Take Jesus to Taco Bell?

(<http://marysaggies.blogspot.com/2011/01/would-you-take-jesus-to-taco-bell.html>)

Here's an excellent quote from the second article that really hits the nail on the head:

"Most Catholics are *tippers*, not *tithers*. Many don't sacrificially give to God, but *tip Him* when they feel like it."

Ouch! The truth hurts!

As so often happens in the spiritual life, we find ourselves in similar situations over and over until we've learned our lesson. And it's no different for me as a priest. Clearly the Lord needs to teach *me* some additional lessons about trusting **Him** because once again, I've been assigned to a parish with precarious finances and no easy **financial** solution in sight! Clearly, the Lord expects me to take yet another leap of faith...and he wants all of you to take it with me!

So sharpen your pencils and get out your calculators *and Rosary Beads*...because we've got some serious *spiritual* work ahead of us.