



May 2016

Dear Parishioners,

I am pleased to send you the talks given at the Masses this past weekend. We do this to aid you in your reflection and discussion of the plan of *Tithing* that was presented by Matthew and Sangita Rossano, our Assumption parishioners during this *Tithing Renewal*.

We feel very blessed to have had them here sharing with us their experience of living *God's Plan for Giving*. Truly they have tried the Lord in this 'and He has opened the floodgates of heaven to pour down blessings on them without measure.' As they said, their family has been blessed and our parish has grown in love and unity. Assumption Parish has been blessed by so many who tithe.

It is our hope now that more families in our parish will experience this ever-increasing blessing from God as a greater number of us are moved to trust Him even more fully.

We must pray that the Lord will move us to try Him in this. For the spirit of tithing is truly a gift. It must not be constrained or fearful, for the Lord does not command us to tithe; He ASKS us. He lovingly invites us to share in His abundance. May the Lord give each of us this gift.

I am enclosing a copy of *Frequently Asked Questions About Tithing* in order to help you with your decision. Again, we thank you for all that you are doing to make Assumption the parish community where Almighty God may be met and embraced by all His daughters and sons through Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior.

With warmest regards and prayers for you, I remain

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "J. E. Hart". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Rev. Msgr. John E. Hart  
Pastor

## Msgr. John Hart's Tithing Homily, April 2016

I want to thank Matthew and Sangita Rossano, our parishioners for taking time to share their personal experiences about tithing with us. They have been parishioners here since 2003. It was wonderful to listen to them talk about tithing and see them here with their four year old son, Joshua. I know that you are as grateful to them as I am and I know that you have been inspired by their words. Today, in our country, the Catholic Church depends greatly on bingo, 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." I reintroduced tithing to Assumption Parish in 2011 and the results were dramatic; it was very well accepted. This weekend is our second Tithing Renewal.

**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. In our own diocese of Paterson, Saint Cecilia, Saint Paul, Saint Peter the Apostle, Our Lady Queen of Peace, Sacred Heart, Saint Michael, Our Lady of the Magnificat, Sacred Heart, Our Lady of Fatima, and Saint James, are 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 five percent can be used for the Bishop's Annual 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 because 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 five percent to God's church and five percent to His other works can be explained by an example.

If your income from all sources before taxes is \$500 per week, the 5% Sunday Mass offering would be \$25.00. You might give the other 5% to private charities, parish school tuition, and diocesan special collections. Tithing is really very logical. Everything we have comes from God, and when we give back the first ten percent 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?** Next weekend Assumption Parish recommits ourselves to tithing. In the days ahead I ask you to 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.

Much will happen should you choose to tithe. It's your choice, your option. You will not be asked to sign anything. No one will call on you. There are no meetings or pledges. Remember, God said, "Try me in this." You will find that God will not be outdone in generosity!

We, your priests tithe to the parish. We only tell you this because it is important for you to know that we will never ask you to do anything we will not do ourselves. We humbly ask each one of you to join us in this beautiful act of faith and love of God.

Thank you. God bless you.

**Matthew Rossano**  
**Assumption Parish**

Throughout my life I haven't exactly been a person who tends to say yes to things easily. Somehow I have always felt that I was too busy and have been very reluctant to commit to things. And yet, I remember about 10 years ago when Deacon Mike Hanly was speaking from this pulpit about a new faith sharing program called "Why Catholic." I thought about if I wanted to sign up and I decided, sort of weakly, umm okay I guess. Then at the first meeting they told us it would be basically every Thursday *for four years*. Yikes. It was an excellent group though, and next thing I knew, I was basically saying yes again. At that moment, I didn't realize it, but I was saying yes to the beginning of a spiritual adventure that I really didn't see coming.

The Why Catholic sessions led to conversations about faith with Sangita. She started coming to mass regularly (which was then in the school gym). After that she started asking me about becoming Catholic (she was Methodist). Sure enough, she started RCIA and I agreed to be her sponsor (another yes).

This led to my becoming part of the RCIA team. Then it led to a trip to the Holy Land with our parents (and everyone got along!)

A few years later, seemingly out of nowhere, Assumption started a men's group. This occurred during a particularly difficult period in my life and was exactly what I needed. Yes again.

Peter Zaremba, who founded the group, asked me to help to co-lead it. Yes again.

Catechesis of the Good Shepherd for Josh. Yes.

Assumption School. Yes. You get the picture?

So when Father John spoke a few years ago about tithing, and Sangita was for it, I had a few reservations, but overall it was a very natural yes. We love Assumption Parish. It is our home. Our family. We trust Father John and Father Przemek and the whole staff and we know that our money will be put to good use. As for me personally, Assumption has played a pivotal, crucial role in my ongoing spiritual adventure. My exciting, rewarding, sometimes scary spiritual adventure. Tithing is one significant way in which I can say "I'm in."

I'm not sure exactly where I'm being led and that can be scary. But sometimes I picture myself having a conversation with Jesus up on the cross. And I hear him asking, "Matt, do you trust Me?" And my answer now, more than at any other time in my life, is yes.

Thank you Assumption Parish.

**Sangita Rossano**  
**Assumption Parish**

I was raised in a tithing family. My parents are Christians from the Middle East; my mother was raised as a Christian, and my father converted to Christianity as a young adult. Tithing wasn't discussed very much. It was just a given that it was something you do. At most, a vague "The Lord will provide" was all that was said.

As an adult I never gave tithing much thought. That is until I realized that my parents didn't have a financial plan for their increasing age. I specifically avoid using the word "retirement" because my father's plan was to work forever, unrealistic as that sounds. (He was laid off at the age of 68 - thus my realization.)

I hate to admit this, but at that moment my first thought was "Yeah - the Lord will provide...He provided me and Matt!" I know this does not paint me in the best light, but I was resentful. Maybe not so much toward the concept of tithing, but more toward my father for not being a better planner.

I mentally prepared myself for the painstaking process of examining my parents' finances in detail, and for the multiple conflicts that this would most likely require - and cause.

Then I received a surprising call from my mother. She told me that she got a call from someone saying that my father had earned a pension, and that he could have started accessing it two years ago. They wanted to know why he hadn't accessed the account. There was a simple answer: he didn't know that he had any account.

At that moment another thought went through my head: "Look at that - the Lord DID provide!"

To me this was a miracle. The fact that the money even still existed and had not been lost in the stock market... that someone was actually keeping track of it...that they actually were able to contact my parents...all of it. To me it was like this just fell out of the sky and into my parents' lap.

Please don't think that I am recommending tithing as an investment strategy or retirement plan. I am just relaying my family's experience with tithing.

It was not long after this experience that Father John said during mass that Assumption would become a tithing parish. And we've been tithing ever since.