

one

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, “When you give alms, your left hand must not know what your right is doing; your almsgiving must be secret, and your Father who sees all that is done in secret will reward you.”

Jesus has taught us to pray, to fast and to give alms.

The primary reason we pray is not to have peace and happiness; the primary reason we fast is not to lose weight or have good health; the primary reason we give alms is not to bring about a better world or a better life for people. No.

The primary reason we pray, fast and give alms is for the love of Jesus, to give ourselves to Him in return for all He has given to us.

We miss the whole point. We think we give our money to bring about some good in the Church, the world or for some people. That is not the primary reason we give.

We give our money because it represents ourselves and we give it to Jesus.

The primary reason to pray, fast and give alms is to give yourself to Jesus.

two

How do we give it to Jesus – by giving to the Church and to the poor – the two groups Jesus has identified himself with.

When Jesus confronted Paul before his conversion, he said to Paul “Saul, Saul why are you persecuting me.” The Church is the body of Christ and he is its head. Jesus identifies himself with the Church. When we give money to the Church we give to Jesus.

In the teaching on the sheep and the goats in Matthew 25 Jesus said, whatever you do for the least of my brethren, whatever you do for the poor you do for me and what you fail to do for the poor you fail to do for me. Jesus identifies himself with the poor. We give to the poor because it is giving to Jesus.

three

There are two potential problems with giving to the Church or to the poor – they may waste the money or use it for bad purposes. A poor drunkard or drug addict might use it for their addiction or to continue in their irresponsibility and we fear being an enabler. The same could be said of the Church as we’ve seen with cases of abuse. (However, I can tell you the evil use of money in the Church is far outweighed by the good it does throughout the world.)

There is no reason to believe on the natural level the poor or the Church will do any long term good for the world. In the book of Leviticus, when the people brought sacrificial offerings to the priests, the priest either burned the sacrifice or ate them themselves.

We don't give to the poor or the Church because they will be the best stewards of the funds. We give to the poor and the Church because Jesus identifies himself with both and when we give to them we give to Him; and if we refuse to give to them then we refuse to give to Jesus.

four

There is nothing like money that gives a person the misconception that they have the right to see their own will done.

Scripture says, the love of money is the root of all evil because it feeds our sense that *our will* must be implemented.

When you give your money, it is to save your soul from the diabolical temptation to be in charge.

We give our money to Jesus through the Church and the poor because Jesus identifies himself with these two groups. Therefore, the code of canon law says this about almsgiving: The Christian faithful are obliged to assist with the needs of the Church so that the Church has what is necessary for divine worship, for the works of the apostolate and of charity, and for the decent support of ministers. They are also obliged to promote social justice and, mindful of the precept of the Lord, to assist the poor from their own resources.

Jesus has identified himself with the Church and the poor. For this reason, we give to the Church, to different apostolates and to the poor because to give to them is to give to Him.

five

Let me suggest a practical resolution.

We could be tempted to *not* give to the poor or the Church because we fear they might waste the money. Consider taking the time to assess where you are wasting your money. Go through all the ways you spend money habitually without thinking about it, all the auto-pays, all the subscriptions, and see what is really necessary to live your life and what is just for comfort, pleasure and entertainment. Honestly examine which things are an absolute need and which are excess. Then cancel some of those these that are purely for comfort and pleasure and give that money to the Church, to good organizations that are helping people grow closer to Jesus and give to the poor.