

A Sufficient Sacrifice

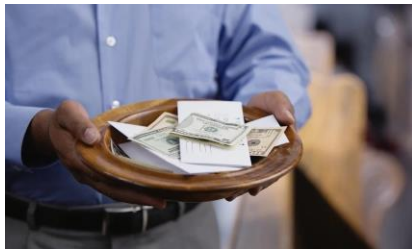
11/03/2019 Andy Figueroa

Be merciful after thy power. If thou hast much, give plenteously; if thou hast little, do thy diligence gladly to give of that little: for so gatherest thou thyself a good reward in the day of necessity. Tobit iv. 8, 9. (One of the Offertory sentences, 1928 Book of Common Prayer, page 72)

What is a *sufficient sacrifice*? How do I know when I have **done** enough, **given** enough, **sacrificed** enough? The meaning of *sufficient* is reflected in the word *enough*; enough for the needs of both the giver and receiver to be **satisfied**. It's also complicated and personal.

Christ's sacrifice on the cross was **sufficient** to be a **satisfaction** for the sins of the whole world. We want our sacrifices to be **sufficient** in the manner reflected in the prayer, "*AND we earnestly desire thy fatherly goodness, mercifully to accept this our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving;*" and a little further on, "*here we offer and present unto thee, O Lord, our selves, our souls and bodies, to be a reasonable [sufficient], holy, and living sacrifice unto thee;*" (BCP page 81)

Our sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving includes attendance at



worship, active participation, and the giving of money at the offertory. We must not minimize our enthusiasm for the offertory. In the offertory, we get to participate by making a personal, material sacrifice which becomes a tangible part of the feast wherein we receive the Body and

Blood of Jesus Christ. It's one of my personal favorite parts of worship.

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Although at this time of the year we only ask for a non-binding estimate of giving on a 3x5 card, it is also an act of worship. In completing an estimated giving card, the doer submits to what the church has requested and contemplates the actual giving of money in worship in the year to come. We are a small, relatively young parish of 14 years, which means that the operating and maintenance expenses are actually paid day-by-day by the offerings of the people.

The treasurer, the vestry, and the rector, thoughtfully attend to the careful spending of your offerings to meet expenses, which for the last four years run decently over \$200,000, increasing annually as ordinary expenses and maintenance needs go up. The parish budget is a lot like a household budget with expenses like utilities, insurance, and repairs, plus payroll expenses which most households do not have. Our tithes and offerings are truly necessary to keep a balanced budget. From that perspective, when tithes and offerings meet expenses, they could be said to be *sufficient*.

Note, also, that the parish and school maintain separate accounts and books. Our tithes and offerings do not pay the operating and maintenance expenses of the school, except where school activity may affect parish utilities and maintenance needs, although the school will soon move into its own buildings. That said, some of you do regularly contribute directly to the school in support of expenses and scholarships, for which we are truly grateful.

He that soweth little shall reap little; and he that soweth plenteously shall reap plenteously. Let every man do according as he is disposed in his heart, not grudgingly, or of necessity; for God loveth a cheerful giver. 2 Cor. ix. 6, 7. (BCP, page 72)

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