



St. Mary Help of Christians Catholic Church

To: My Dear Fellow Parishioners
 From: Rev. James L. LeBlanc

February 4, 2007

I have mailed to all whose donations are identifiable (collection envelopes or checks) your **2006 Annual Financial Report**, which includes all your gifts to our various collections (excluding only the Bishop's Stewardship Appeal). Compare your gifts with those of the 1960 families who gave during 2006, including all visitors, all who died, and all who moved away. Their gifts to those collections during 2005 and 2006 were as follows:

<u>Year 2005</u>		<u>Gifts Per Year</u>		<u>Year 2006</u>		<u>Gifts Per Year</u>		<u>2006</u>	<u>2006 Per Family</u>
								<u>Total Gifts</u>	<u>Per Weekend</u>
481	families	24%	\$ 1.00 - \$???	503	families	26%	\$ 1.00 - \$???	\$ 88,704.53	\$ 3.53
570	families	30%	\$ 1.00 - \$ 250	555	families	28%	\$ 1.00 - \$ 250	44,168.02	1.59
210	families	11%	\$ 251 - \$ 500	207	families	11%	\$ 251 - \$ 500	74,176.80	7.17
150	families	8%	\$ 501 - \$ 750	156	families	8%	\$ 501 - \$ 750	95,931.30	12.30
<u>90</u>	<u>families</u>	<u>5%</u>	<u>\$ 751 - \$1000</u>	<u>106</u>	<u>families</u>	<u>5%</u>	<u>\$ 751 - \$1000</u>	<u>93,368.08</u>	17.62
1501	families	78%	\$ 1.00 - \$1000	1527	families	78%	\$ 1.00 - \$1000	\$ 396,348.73	26% 5.19
238	families	12%	\$ 1001 - \$2000	242	families	12%	\$ 1001 - \$2000	\$ 340,488.50	28.14
96	families	5%	\$ 2001 - \$3000	99	families	5%	\$ 2001 - \$3000	242,275.75	48.95
37	families	2%	\$ 3001 - \$4000	29	families	2%	\$ 3001 - \$4000	100,786.50	69.50
24	families	1%	\$ 4001 - \$5000	25	families	1%	\$ 4001 - \$5000	111,750.50	89.40
<u>30</u>	<u>families</u>	<u>2%</u>	<u>\$ 5001 - \$???</u>	<u>38</u>	<u>families</u>	<u>2%</u>	<u>\$ 5001 - \$???</u>	<u>323,962.25</u>	170.51
<u>425</u>	<u>families</u>	<u>22%</u>	<u>\$ 1001 - \$???</u>	<u>433</u>	<u>families</u>	<u>22%</u>	<u>\$ 1001 - \$???</u>	<u>1,119,263.50</u>	74% 51.70
<u>1926</u>	<u>families</u>	<u>100%</u>		<u>1960</u>	<u>families</u>	<u>100%</u>		<u>\$1,515,612.23</u>	<u>100%</u>

Christian Discipleship, Good Stewardship, and Tithing Back To God

From the moment we confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, we become His followers, **Disciples of Christ**. The whole Christian life may be described as learning the cost of that discipleship. In the Parable of the Talents (Matthew 25: 14-30), the Lord Jesus explains our solemn duty to use well all the good things God has given to us. This dimension of Christian Discipleship is called **Good Stewardship**. In Genesis (14:17-20), we read of Abraham who has conquered in battle, and who meets the King of Salem, Melchizedek, a priest of God Most High, who in turn offers a thanksgiving sacrifice of bread and wine. Abraham gives Melchizedek a tenth of everything he has – the Scriptural practice of **Tithing - giving ten percent back to God**. We tithe in order to be reminded that nothing we have belongs to us absolutely, so dependent are we on His grace.

Bishop Robert Baker on Tithing: 5%+1%+4%=10%

Our spiritual father, Bishop Robert Baker, asks all of us to tithe as follows: **5% of our income - to our Parish**; and **1% - to our Diocese** in the Bishop's Stewardship Appeal (BSA), and **4% - to all other Charities**. All our households may easily determine the level of support which they should be giving to our Parish, to our Diocese and to all other Charities by consulting the following chart.

How Much Should I Donate?	My Weekly Gift of 5%	My Yearly Gift of 1%	My Yearly Gift of 4%
My Total Annual Gross Income	To the PARISH	To the DIOCESE	To OTHER CHARITIES
\$25,000	at 5% = \$1,250/year div. 50 weeks = \$25.00/week	at 1% = \$250.00/year	at 4% = \$1,000/year (\$20.00/week)
\$35,000	1,750	\$35.00/week	\$1,400/year (\$28.00)
\$45,000	2,250	\$45.00/week	\$1,800/year (\$36.00)
\$55,000	2,750	\$55.00/week	\$2,200/year (\$44.00)
\$65,000	3,250	\$65.00/week	\$2,600/year (\$52.00)
\$75,000	3,750	\$75.00/week	\$3,000/year (\$60.00)
\$95,000	4,750	\$95.00/week	\$3,800/year (\$76.00)
\$100,000	5,000	\$100.00/week	\$4,000/year (\$80.00)

Obviously, circumstances (unemployment, chronic illness, dependents) may lessen the application of this basic principle of 10% tithing. **But even those who can give only “the widow’s mite” are still called upon by the Gospel to give - as far as they are able to do so - as Good Stewards.**

St. Mary’s Is Not Yet a Tithing Parish

St. Mary’s has about 1750 households (not the 1960 shown above, which includes visitors, etc.). **If each family were contributing at the level indicated by Scripture and Bishop Baker**, then, given Aiken’s median family income of \$45,500 (U.S. Census Bureau), one might expect that our **weekly** parish offertory and building fund collections, together, would average about **\$79,600** (\$45,500 at **5%** = \$2,275/year divided by 50 weeks = \$45.50/week x 1750 families = \$79,600/week); and one might expect that our second collections would average **as if weekly** as much as **\$63,700** (\$45,500 at **4%** = \$1,820/year divided by 50 weeks = \$36.40/week x 1750 families = \$63,700/week), for a weekly total in all our collections of **\$143,300**. **Hard to imagine!** Tithing! Good Stewardship! Christian Discipleship!

Instead, St. Mary’s weekly total collections are only \$30,300 - only 21% of that \$143,300. The reason: 503 households (using neither envelopes nor checks) gave \$88,704.53, above, an average of \$3.53 per family per week, and another 555 households gave \$44,168.02, above, an average of \$1.59 per family per week. And 1,527 households, above, gave an average of \$5.19 per family per week. That is far below the \$45.00 per family per week - which would be tithing (at 5+4 = 9%) on an income of only \$25,000 per year per family. It seems that hardly any of our households is tithing.

Our Future: DISCIPLESHIP through STEWARDSHIP through TITHING

And so I challenge everyone who calls St. Mary’s home: **Let us all make plans now for regular, predictable, weekly contributions to our Parish Church. If tithing 5%+1%+4%=10% seems too much, at first, then make a start and progress gradually towards that ideal over time. Please be generous. St. Mary Help of Christians Church needs your help.**

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Rev. James L. LeBlanc