
How Much Should I Pledge?

**An article from the *Cathedral Times*
by the Very Reverend Samuel G. Candler,
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I enjoy talking with all sorts of parishioners, from the most adoring to the most critical. Even the most critical are used by God to say something to me. But last week, I received a surprising compliment. "People look up to you, Sam," the guy said, "You look like you've got it all worked out. You've got a strong faith. You've got a steady and satisfying job. You seem to have enough money. Your family is doing well. You've got it worked out."

I was speechless for a second. Then I was quick to respond. Strange as it may seem, even though I am a priest, I do not have it all worked out. I probably struggle with vocation and faith more than most people. I sometimes believe God called me to be a priest because this was the only place in which I might be saved, because I did not have things all worked out otherwise. It is certainly the only place where I can genuinely serve the world.

As for job and money, I have as many concerns about finances as the next man does. I am still paying college tuitions and making ends meet. My cute wife is making and selling dresses. There's always an unexpected cost somewhere, and in some months our income and expense balance does not come out right; but we keep on going.

But whatever income we make, my wife and I are committed to one important principle. It is this principle that I encourage people to emulate. We tithe. Tithe means "ten per cent." We give ten percent of our income to God and to God's Church.

We do not pledge simply a portion of our income to the Church. We pledge, specifically, ten percent of our earnings to the Church. So, if someone wants to discover how much I pledge to the Cathedral, that someone can simply look up my salary and divide it by ten; that tenth is my pledge. That amount actually puts my wife and me in the ranks of the top givers of the Church, but I do not think we are among the Church's top earners! Many tithing priests in Episcopal churches across the country find themselves in that category.

Do we give to other charities and organizations? We certainly do. I have income from financial investments, too. Last year, we gave fifteen percent of that income to organizations which we believe inspire and continue the work of God in the world. They included other religious organizations, poverty groups, schools, and cultural projects.

I do not say all this to pat myself on the back. Rather, I say all this because I encourage Cathedral parishioners, and all Christians, to follow that pattern. Not every pattern in my personal life is worth emulating, but this one is. I encourage each of you to tithe your income to the Church.

That tithe is just as critical as saying your daily prayers, reciting the Nicene Creed each week, serving dinner to your family each evening, washing the dishes, volunteering in some outreach project. None of these practices saves us on its own; but they do lead us to a life of true happiness and joy, even holiness. Those are disciplines of the Christian life, habits which keep us connected to God and to each other. When we are connected to God and to each other, we know true joy.

I realize that none of us has it all worked out. But God has provided. God has provided habits for holiness. They are prayer, and service, and generosity. I urge you to stretch your generosity this year and to grow in joy. Yes, I actually enjoy giving money away. I would love for you to share that joy with me.

Sam Candler signature



The Very Rev. Sam Candler

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