

A letter from an "average" tither...

Dear Father Mangan,

"I'm writing to thank you for suggesting the tithing plan. I am quite happy about it and I pray for its success. Like many people, my husband and I are having financial difficulties and my initial reaction to your letter was mixed feelings, similar, in fact, to the people who shared their experience with us at the Masses. Basically there was a feeling of 'I wish I could, but I just can't!' I approached my husband with the idea and he said, 'No way is it possible!' I could fully understand his position. Without going into the gory details, we don't live 'high off the hog'... usually we have \$5 to last two weeks. So naturally his hesitancy was, well, natural. I do cleaning work and jobs come in dribs and drabs. That money goes toward food and gas for the car.

"But the tithing plan does make beautiful sense! I couldn't sway my husband, though. (Honestly, I didn't pressure too hard, he has worries enough, but I think perhaps I should have.) Anyway, I thought I could tithe on my own! I don't mean to sound like I'm putting down my husband because he's very generous, materially and spiritually... However, he just doesn't feel comfortable (yet!) with the commitment tithing poses. However, I could not deny the strong appeal tithing offers, so I made the decision that any money I make, 10% is to come off the top. Although at the time of my decision all I was making regularly was \$50 a week and \$5 seems a paltry sum. Then a strange thing happened. I've started to get more referrals for work. I don't mean to sound like I think the tithe system is one big slot machine. Definitely not! But I took it as a distinct sign that I made the right decision for me.

"So the past two weeks I've been working like a dog and loving it! The REAL payola was this: intellectually, I always felt everything I have is from God, but now I know it on a whole different level. When I get a call for a job, I now immediately thank God for His kindness to me. Before I get to the job, I thank Him and ask for strength to do the job well and honestly. As trivial as my work is, I can offer my best attempts to Him. I feel a closer contact, almost a partnership. When I get home, again I thank Him for the gift of exhaustion, the fact that He's given me physical gifts to do physical work. The first thing I do when I walk in the door is to set aside His share in my church envelope. And I feel at peace and incredibly happy. Already this plan of giving has made me rich!! It's also opened a channel of prayer that I haven't had before. There is just a real knowledge of Him always at my side.

"I'm so frustrated that I can't express myself more clearly, but I do know that when and if jobs slack off, this feeling won't leave! If I only have my \$5 to tithe or \$25, I've been given an incomparable gift, I guess because I feel I'm giving me.

"So I want to thank you most sincerely for making all this possible by your suggesting the tithing... I do hope others get a chance to experience what I have. It is just so wonderful!

"Good luck and again thanks... I'm not signing my name, not out of disrespect, but because - as you stated - the tithing is between an individual and God. But I did want to let you know how it helped me!

Sincerely and gratefully,
One parishioner

(This humbling letter of love was sent to Rev. Eugene Mangan, pastor of St. Sylvester's Church in Staten Island, NY, who shared it with the program.)