Kingdom Investment Q&A Guide (Catholic Edition)

Nov 15, 2026

About this guide: this is the Catholic edition of the Kingdom Investment guide. Anyone is welcome to use it, including members of the Intercessor Church Community Groups. Read it before class or on your own so you come prepared and well versed in the passage. It follows the Discover section of the group outline, section by section. For each question it gathers what the Church Fathers and saints from across the centuries, a few recent popes, and the Catechism of the Catholic Church say, then adds a Summary that pulls it together and a Deep Dive with background and passages to read ahead of time.

About the questions on giving: like the outline, this guide invites honest conversation about stewardship and giving without asking anyone to share personal finances. No question asks for an amount.

How to read this guide: each question is labeled by section and number, so A1 is the first question in section A, A2 is the second, and so on. The questions are written for this guide. Each one covers the ground of the outline question and takes it a step further. The linked passage after each question is the one the outline points to, or a verse inside that section's reading, so you can click it and read it in class. Anything after the word "also" is a wider range or an extra passage this guide adds. Every line under Commentary and Catechism of the Catholic Church is quoted word for word from the source named in parentheses after it. The **Summary** and **Deep Dive** under each question are written for this guide, drawing on those quotes and the other sources listed at the end. Scripture quoted in the summaries and deep dives is from the New American Bible, Revised Edition (NABRE), and CCC numbers are paragraph numbers in the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

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This guide follows the Intercessor Church Community Group outline "Ready for the King, Week 3: Kingdom Investment."

A. What We Have Belongs to the King

A1. The master calls in his servants and "entrusted his possessions to them" before he leaves. Nothing in the story belongs to the servants; they are trusted with what is his. What changes when we look at our time, abilities, relationships, and money as the King's property placed in our care, and how can that view bring both freedom and responsibility? (Matthew 25:14-18; also 1 Corinthians 4:7)

Commentary

- "For as there are two kinds of coins, the one of God, the other of the world, and each of these has its special character stamped upon it" (St. Ignatius of Antioch, Letter to the Magnesians, 5)
- "The unbelieving are of this world; but the believing have, in love, the character of God the Father by Jesus Christ" (St. Ignatius of Antioch, Letter to the Magnesians, 5)
- "For not only are spiritual riches and heavenly gifts received from God, but earthly and material possessions also proceed from His bounty, that He may be justified in requiring an account of those things which He has not so much put in our possession as committed to our stewardship." (St. Leo the Great, Sermon 10, On the Collections)
- "The man in travelling into a far country is our Redeemer, who ascended into heaven in that flesh which He had taken upon Him." (St. Gregory the Great, as quoted in St. Thomas Aquinas, Catena Aurea on Matthew 25)
- "indicating that from Him they received the source of their gain, and they are very thankful, and reckon all to Him." (St. John Chrysostom, Homily 78 on Matthew)
- "Let him regard all the vessels of the monastery and all its substance, as if they were sacred vessels of the altar." (Rule of St. Benedict, Chapter 31)
- "Are not the gardeners of a prince more diligent in cultivating and beautifying the royal gardens than if they were their own? Wherefore? Surely because these gardens are the king's, to whom his gardeners would fain render an acceptable service." (St.

Francis de Sales, Introduction to the Devout Life, Part III, Chapter 15)

- "Faithful use of one's gifts will lead to participation in the fullness of the kingdom, lazy inactivity to exclusion from it." (NABRE note on Matthew 25:14)

Catechism of the Catholic Church

- "The ownership of any property makes its holder a steward of Providence, with the task of making it fruitful and communicating its benefits to others, first of all his family." (CCC 2404)
- "A Christian is a steward of the Lord's goods." (CCC 952)

Summary

The master hands over what is his, not what is theirs. As coins carry the stamp of the one who issued them, believers carry in love the stamp of God the Father through Jesus Christ (Ignatius of Antioch). Every gift we have, spiritual or material, comes from God's bounty, and he can ask for an account because he has not so much placed these things in our possession as entrusted them to our stewardship (Leo the Great). The man who travels far away is our Redeemer, who ascended into heaven (Gregory the Great, quoted in the Catena Aurea). The faithful servants admit that everything they gained came from their master, and they give him the credit (Chrysostom). The monastery's steward was told to treat all its goods as if they were sacred vessels of the altar (Rule of St. Benedict). A prince's gardeners work harder on the royal gardens than they would on their own, because the gardens belong to the king they want to please (Francis de Sales). Faithful use of our gifts leads to the fullness of the kingdom (NABRE note). Owning anything makes us stewards of Providence, called to make it fruitful and share its benefits (CCC 2404), and a Christian is a steward of the Lord's goods (CCC 952). That brings freedom as well as responsibility: an owner carries the weight alone, while a steward answers to a good Master who supplies what his work needs.

Deep Dive

Paul asks, "What do you possess that you have not received?" (1 Corinthians 4:7). He adds, "Now it is of course required of stewards that they be found trustworthy" (1 Corinthians 4:2). The master "called in his servants and entrusted his possessions to them" (Matthew 25:14). The parable belongs to a long discourse of Jesus that ends with the final judgment at his return (NABRE note). The Church reads it at Mass on the Thirty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time, near the end of the liturgical year.

Read before class: Matthew 25:14-18; 1 Corinthians 4:1-7

A2. Even the servant with one talent was trusted with about twenty years of a laborer's wages. When we compare our share with someone else's, why do we tend to shrink what God gave us, and how might comparison have played a part in the third servant's choice to bury his talent? (Matthew 25:15; also verse 18; 1 Corinthians 12:4-7)

Commentary

- "In the five, two, and one talent, we recognise the diversity of gifts wherewith we have been entrusted." (St. Jerome, as quoted in St. Thomas Aquinas, Catena Aurea on Matthew 25)
- "having received no mean endowment, for one talent of such a master is a great thing." (Origen, as quoted in St. Thomas Aquinas, Catena Aurea on Matthew 25)
- "He only who knows what He has given to each, discerns aright how much a man can and how much he cannot do." (St. Leo the Great, Sermon 10, On the Collections)
- "Therefore should every one be humble concerning his talents in proportion as he sees himself tied up with a greater responsibility." (St. Gregory the Great, as quoted in St. Thomas Aquinas, Catena Aurea on Matthew 25)
- "every flower created by Him is beautiful, that the brilliance of the rose and the whiteness of the lily do not lessen the perfume of the violet or the sweet simplicity of the daisy." (St. Therese of Lisieux, Story of a Soul, Chapter 1)
- "I understood that if all the lowly flowers wished to be roses, nature would lose its springtide beauty, and the fields would no longer be enamelled with lovely hues. And so it is in the world of souls, Our Lord's living garden." (St. Therese of Lisieux, Story of a Soul, Chapter 1)

Catechism of the Catholic Church

- "The 'talents' are not distributed equally." (CCC 1936)
- "These differences belong to God's plan, who wills that each receive what he needs from others, and that those endowed with particular 'talents' share the benefits with those who need them." (CCC 1937)
- "I distribute the virtues quite diversely; I do not give all of them to each person, but some to one, some to others" (CCC 1937, quoting St. Catherine of Siena)

Summary

Comparison makes a large gift look small. The five, two, and one talents show the variety of gifts entrusted to us (Jerome, quoted in the Catena Aurea), and even one talent from such a master is a great thing (Origen, quoted in the Catena Aurea). Only God, who knows

what he has given each person, can judge rightly how much each one can and cannot do (Leo the Great). Those who receive more should be all the more humble, because more is asked of them (Gregory the Great, quoted in the Catena Aurea). Every flower God made is beautiful, and the rose and the lily take nothing away from the violet or the daisy (Therese of Lisieux). If every small flower wanted to be a rose, the fields would lose their springtime beauty, and the same is true in the garden of souls (Therese of Lisieux). Measuring his one talent against the others may have helped convince the third servant that his share was not worth the risk. The talents are not distributed equally (CCC 1936), and these differences are part of God's plan so that those with particular gifts share them with those in need (CCC 1937). God gives some virtues to one person and some to another (CCC 1937, quoting St. Catherine of Siena).

Deep Dive

The talent was a unit of coinage of high value that varied with its metal and place of origin (NABRE note), so even one talent was a large trust. The master gave "to each according to his ability" (Matthew 25:15). Paul writes, "There are different kinds of spiritual gifts but the same Spirit" (1 Corinthians 12:4), and "To each individual the manifestation of the Spirit is given for some benefit" (1 Corinthians 12:7). Comparison asks whether my share is as big as yours; the parable asks what I am doing with mine.

Read before class: Matthew 25:14-18; 1 Corinthians 12:4-11

A3. Name one ability, one opportunity, one relationship, and one resource God has placed in your hands in this season of life. Which of them are you already putting to work, and which has been sitting unused, like a talent buried in the ground? (Matthew 25:16-18; also Romans 12:6-8)

Commentary

- "For the talents here are each person's ability, whether in the way of protection, or in money, or in teaching, or in whatever thing of the kind." (St. John Chrysostom, Homily 78 on Matthew)
- "For this end God gave us speech, and hands, and feet, and strength of body, and mind, and understanding, that we might use all these things, both for our own salvation, and for our neighbor's advantage." (St. John Chrysostom, Homily 78 on Matthew)
- "But do not think that this office of putting out to use does not belong to you also. You cannot execute it indeed from this elevated seat, but you can wherever ye chance to be." (St. Augustine, Sermon 44 on the New Testament)

- "For the very least endowment will be reckoned as a talent entrusted for use." (St. Gregory the Great, as quoted in St. Thomas Aquinas, Catena Aurea on Matthew 25)
- "God has given them to us to cultivate, that we may make them fruitful and profitable in His Service, and so doing we shall please Him." (St. Francis de Sales, Introduction to the Devout Life, Part III, Chapter 15)

Catechism of the Catholic Church

- "each man is established as an 'heir' and receives certain 'talents' that enrich his identity and whose fruits he must develop." (CCC 1880)
- "such as land, factories, practical or artistic skills, oblige their possessors to employ them in ways that will benefit the greatest number." (CCC 2405)

Summary

This is an application question. Common answers: a skill used at work or at home, free time in retirement, a gift for hospitality or encouragement, a friendship with someone far from God, a car, a home, or a steady income. The talents stand for each person's ability, whether in protection, money, teaching, or anything of the kind (Chrysostom). God gave us speech, hands, feet, strength, and understanding to use for our own salvation and for our neighbor's good (Chrysostom). Putting the Lord's gifts to use is not only the work of clergy; each of us can do it wherever we happen to be (Augustine). Even the smallest gift counts as a talent entrusted for use (Gregory the Great, quoted in the Catena Aurea). God has given us what we have to cultivate and make fruitful in his service, and that pleases him (Francis de Sales). Each of us receives talents whose fruits we must develop (CCC 1880), and skills and goods are to be used in ways that benefit as many people as possible (CCC 2405).

Deep Dive

Paul speaks of "gifts that differ according to the grace given to us" and urges us to use them, including "if one contributes, in generosity" and "if one does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness" (Romans 12:6, 8). Peter says, "As each one has received a gift, use it to serve one another" (1 Peter 4:10). Two servants "went and traded" with what they received, while the third "dug a hole in the ground and buried his master's money" (Matthew 25:16, 18). The outline's Practice section suggests naming one gift this week, thanking God for it, and asking how it could bless someone.

Read before class: Matthew 25:14-18; Romans 12:3-8; 1 Peter 4:7-11

B. The King Honors Faithfulness

B1. The servant who turned two talents into four hears, word for word, the same "Well done" as the servant who turned five into ten. What does that identical praise reveal about what the King is looking for, and why would he call five talents "small matters"? (Matthew 25:19-23; also Luke 16:10)

Commentary

- "The servant who of five talents had made ten, and he who of two had made four, are received with equal favour by the Master of the household, who looks not to the largeness of their profit, but to the disposition of their will." (St. Jerome, as quoted in St. Thomas Aquinas, Catena Aurea on Matthew 25)
- "he that had less capacity, but that which he had, he exercised after such manner as he ought, shall have no whit less with God than he who has a greater capacity; for all that is required is that whatever a man has from God, he should use it all to the glory of God." (Origen, as quoted in St. Thomas Aquinas, Catena Aurea on Matthew 25)
- "but here, it is the contrary, and the crown is accordingly equal. For he that received two gave two, and he that had received the five again in like manner" (St. John Chrysostom, Homily 78 on Matthew)
- "because all that we have at present though they seem great and many, yet in comparison of the things to come are little and few." (St. Jerome, as quoted in St. Thomas Aquinas, Catena Aurea on Matthew 25)
- "Although the first two servants have received and doubled large sums, their faithful trading is regarded by the master as fidelity in small matters only, compared with the great responsibilities now to be given to them." (NABRE note on Matthew 25:20-23)

Catechism of the Catholic Church

- "the merit of good works is to be attributed in the first place to the grace of God, then to the faithful." (CCC 2008)
- "In the evening of this life, I shall appear before you with empty hands, for I do not ask you, Lord, to count my works." (CCC 2011, quoting St. Therese of Lisieux)

Summary

The King is looking for faithfulness, not totals. The master receives the servant who made ten and the one who made four with equal favor, because he looks at the will, not the size of the profit (Jerome, quoted in the Catena Aurea). The one with less ability who used it well will have no less with God, since all that is asked is that we use what we have for

God's glory (Origen, quoted in the Catena Aurea). Unlike Luke's parable of the gold coins, this one gives an equal crown, because each servant doubled what he was given (Chrysostom). All we have now, however great it seems, is little compared with what is to come (Jerome, quoted in the Catena Aurea), so even large sums count as small matters next to the great responsibilities that follow (NABRE note). The merit of good works belongs first to the grace of God (CCC 2008), and St. Therese of Lisieux said she would come before the Lord with empty hands, not asking him to count her works (CCC 2011).

Deep Dive

The master returned "After a long time" and "settled accounts" with his servants (Matthew 25:19); the delay shows the Lord's patience (Chrysostom). Both faithful servants hear the same words: "Well done, my good and faithful servant. Since you were faithful in small matters, I will give you great responsibilities" (Matthew 25:21). Jesus says elsewhere, "The person who is trustworthy in very small matters is also trustworthy in great ones" (Luke 16:10). In Luke's parable each servant receives the same amount and the rewards differ; in Matthew the amounts differ and the reward is the same (Chrysostom).

Read before class: Matthew 25:19-23; Luke 16:10-13; Luke 19:11-27

B2. The master praises his servants as "good and faithful," not as gifted, successful, or impressive. If the King measures a life by faithfulness rather than by results, how might that change the way you judge your own week, your service, and the people around you? (Matthew 25:21; also 1 Corinthians 4:2)

Commentary

- "this he means of that goodness which is shewn towards our neighbour." (St. John Chrysostom, as quoted in St. Thomas Aquinas, Catena Aurea on Matthew 25)
- "'Faithful,' because he appropriated to himself none of those things which were his lord's." (the Gloss, as quoted in St. Thomas Aquinas, Catena Aurea on Matthew 25)
- "But how has such small expenditure deserved to be valued so highly except because our works are weighed in the balance of love, and when a man loves what God loves, he is deservedly raised into His kingdom, whose attribute of love has in part become his?" (St. Leo the Great, Sermon 9, On the Collections)
- "He has also created lesser ones, who must be content to be daisies or simple violets flowering at His Feet, and whose mission it is to gladden His Divine Eyes when He deigns to look down on them. And the more gladly they do His Will the greater is their perfection." (St. Therese of Lisieux, Story of a Soul, Chapter 1)

Catechism of the Catholic Church

- "The practice of all the virtues is animated and inspired by charity" (CCC 1827)
- "By loving one another, the disciples imitate the love of Jesus which they themselves receive." (CCC 1823)

Summary

This is an application question. Common answers: we would stop measuring ourselves by visible results, stop comparing our service with others', value small and hidden work, and be gentler with people who have less to show. The goodness the master praises is goodness shown toward our neighbor (Chrysostom, quoted in the Catena Aurea), and the servant is faithful because he kept none of his lord's goods for himself (the Gloss, quoted in the Catena Aurea). Small acts of mercy count for so much because our works are weighed in the balance of love, and whoever loves what God loves is raised into his kingdom (Leo the Great). God made great saints like the lily and the rose, but also little ones like daisies and violets, and the more gladly they do his will, the greater their perfection (Therese of Lisieux). Charity animates and inspires every virtue (CCC 1827), and in loving one another the disciples imitate the love of Jesus they have received (CCC 1823).

Deep Dive

Paul writes, "do not make any judgment before the appointed time, until the Lord comes," and "then everyone will receive praise from God" (1 Corinthians 4:5). In the parable "good" stands against "wicked" and "faithful" against "lazy" (Matthew 25:21, 26). The present life is the time for sowing, and the day of judgment is the time of harvest (Leo the Great). Faithfulness is measured over a lifetime, not in a single week.

Read before class: Matthew 25:19-23; 1 Corinthians 4:1-5

B3. The first two servants "went and traded" right away, and their reward was to "share your master's joy." What is one way you could join God's purposes with what you already have, instead of waiting until you feel more ready, and how is sharing his joy different from earning a prize? (Matthew 25:23; also verses 16-17; Psalm 90:17)

Commentary

- "Jesus does not ask us to store his grace in a safe!" (Pope Francis, Angelus, November 16, 2014)

- "while there is yet time, and we are still in the flesh, and are able during the present life to fulfil all these things, we must make haste to do now what will profit us forever." (Rule of St. Benedict, Prologue)
- "'Well done' is an interjection of joy; the Lord shewing us therein the joy with which He invites the servant who labours well to eternal bliss" (Rabanus Maurus, as quoted in St. Thomas Aquinas, Catena Aurea on Matthew 25)
- "What greater thing can be given to a faithful servant than to be with his Lord, and to see his Lord's joy?" (St. Jerome, as quoted in St. Thomas Aquinas, Catena Aurea on Matthew 25)
- "This will be our perfect joy, than which is none greater, to have fruition of that Divine Trinity in whose image we were made." (St. Augustine, as quoted in St. Thomas Aquinas, Catena Aurea on Matthew 25)
- "Share your master's joy: probably the joy of the banquet of the kingdom" (NABRE note on Matthew 25:20-23)

Catechism of the Catholic Church

- "But grace also includes the gifts that the Spirit grants us to associate us with his work, to enable us to collaborate in the salvation of others and in the growth of the Body of Christ, the Church." (CCC 2003)
- "each one of us should hope, with the grace of God, to persevere 'to the end' and to obtain the joy of heaven, as God's eternal reward for the good works accomplished with the grace of Christ." (CCC 1821)

Summary

This is an application question. Common answers: helping with religious education or children's ministry, visiting someone who is homebound, using a work skill to serve the church, inviting a neighbor to dinner, or starting to pray each day for someone by name. Jesus does not ask us to lock his grace in a safe (Pope Francis). While there is still time in this life, we must hurry to do now what will profit us forever (Rule of St. Benedict). "Well done" is a cry of joy that invites the hardworking servant into eternal happiness (Rabanus Maurus, quoted in the Catena Aurea). Nothing greater can be given to a faithful servant than to be with his Lord and see his joy (Jerome, quoted in the Catena Aurea), and our perfect joy will be to enjoy the Trinity in whose image we were made (Augustine, quoted in the Catena Aurea). The master's joy probably points to the banquet of the kingdom (NABRE note). Grace includes gifts that let us work with the Spirit for the salvation of others (CCC 2003), and we hope to reach the joy of heaven as God's reward for good works done with the grace of Christ (CCC 1821).

Deep Dive

"Immediately the one who received five talents went and traded with them" (Matthew 25:15-16). The reward is "great responsibilities" and an invitation: "Come, share your master's joy" (Matthew 25:21). By the word joy the Lord means complete blessedness (Chrysostom, quoted in the Catena Aurea). Psalm 90, one of the outline's readings, prays, "Prosper the work of our hands!" (Psalm 90:17). Jesus told his disciples, "I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and your joy may be complete" (John 15:11).

Read before class: Matthew 25:14-23; Psalm 90; John 15:9-11

C. Fear Can Keep Us from Responding

C1. The third servant tells his master, "I knew you were a demanding person," and then admits he acted "out of fear." Where might that picture of the master have come from, and how did it lead straight to a hole in the ground? How can a distorted picture of God shape what we do, or what we never get around to doing? (Matthew 25:24-25; also Zephaniah 1:12)

Commentary

- "Observe also that the Lord does not require the reckoning immediately, that you may learn His long suffering." (St. John Chrysostom, as quoted in St. Thomas Aquinas, Catena Aurea on Matthew 25)
- "To hide one's talent in the earth is to devote the ability we have received to worldly business." (St. Gregory the Great, as quoted in St. Thomas Aquinas, Catena Aurea on Matthew 25)
- "But what he thought would be his excuse is turned into his condemnation." (St. Jerome, as quoted in St. Thomas Aquinas, Catena Aurea on Matthew 25)
- "They who are such seem to me to have a fear of God, and to regard Him as austere and implacable." (Origen, as quoted in St. Thomas Aquinas, Catena Aurea on Matthew 25)
- "The Lord did not allow that He was 'a hard man' as the servant supposed" (Origen, as quoted in St. Thomas Aquinas, Catena Aurea on Matthew 25)
- "those who are overconfident because, like the sediment that settles to the bottom of a bottle of wine, they have remained at peace and undisturbed for a long time." (NABRE note on Zephaniah 1:12)

Catechism of the Catholic Church

- "we must humbly cleanse our hearts of certain false images drawn 'from this world.'" (CCC 2779)
- "The purification of our hearts has to do with paternal or maternal images, stemming from our personal and cultural history, and influencing our relationship with God." (CCC 2779)

Summary

His picture of the master was false, and it shaped everything he did. The Lord does not demand the reckoning right away, which teaches us his patience (Chrysostom, quoted in the Catena Aurea), yet the servant saw only a hard master. Some believers regard God as harsh and unforgiving and so hide their faith (Origen, quoted in the Catena Aurea), but the Lord never agreed that he was a hard man (Origen, quoted in the Catena Aurea). What the servant offered as his excuse became the reason for his condemnation (Jerome, quoted in the Catena Aurea). To bury a talent in the ground is to spend the abilities God gave us on worldly business (Gregory the Great, quoted in the Catena Aurea). Zephaniah speaks of people who settle like dregs in wine, undisturbed so long that they grow overconfident (NABRE note). Before we pray to God as Father we must cleanse our hearts of false images drawn from this world (CCC 2779), including images from our own family and culture that shape how we relate to God (CCC 2779).

Deep Dive

The servant calls his master "a demanding person, harvesting where you did not plant" (Matthew 25:24). The master turns the servant's own words back on him as a question: "So you knew that I harvest where I did not plant and gather where I did not scatter?" (Matthew 25:26). Zephaniah, one of the outline's readings, describes people "Who say in their hearts, 'The Lord will not do good, nor will he do harm'" (Zephaniah 1:12). God revealed himself to Moses as "a God gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in love and fidelity" (Exodus 34:6). The question for us is whether we will trust what Jesus has shown us of the Father, or the picture our fear paints.

Read before class: Matthew 25:24-30; Zephaniah 1:7, 12-18

C2. Fear of failing, of looking foolish, of not having enough, or of being asked for more can all keep our gifts in the ground. Which fears tend to hold you back from serving, giving, or responding to God, and what would it look like to bring them to the Father instead of letting them decide for you? Share only what you are comfortable sharing. (Matthew 25:25; also 2 Timothy 1:7; Romans 8:15)

Commentary

- "If you dread and fear, lest, if you begin to act thus abundantly, your patrimony being exhausted with your liberal dealing, you may perchance be reduced to poverty; be of good courage in this respect, be free from care" (St. Cyprian of Carthage, On Works and Alms, 9)
- "Greater charity, less fear; less charity, greater fear." (St. Augustine, Homily 9 on the First Epistle of John)
- "Do not forget this: trust frees, always; fear paralyses." (Pope Francis, Angelus, November 19, 2023)
- "But there are many within the Church of whom this servant is a type, who fear to set out on the path of a better life, and yet are not afraid to continue in carnal indolence" (St. Gregory the Great, as quoted in St. Thomas Aquinas, Catena Aurea on Matthew 25)
- "the love of God is calm, peaceful, and tranquil, and so the work done for its sake, even in worldly things, is gentle, trustful, and quiet." (St. Francis de Sales, Introduction to the Devout Life, Part III, Chapter 15)

Catechism of the Catholic Church

- "He no longer stands before God as a slave, in servile fear, or as a mercenary looking for wages, but as a son responding to the love of him who 'first loved us'" (CCC 1828)
- "The New Law is called a law of love because it makes us act out of the love infused by the Holy Spirit, rather than from fear" (CCC 1972)

Summary

This is an application question. Common answers: fear of failing in front of others, fear of not having enough later, fear of being asked to do more than we can, fear of rejection when sharing our faith, and fear that God is disappointed in us. To anyone afraid that generosity will leave them poor, the answer is to take courage and be free from care (Cyprian). The more love grows, the less fear there is, and the less love, the more fear (Augustine). Many in the Church are afraid to set out on a better life and yet not afraid to stay comfortable in their sins (Gregory the Great, quoted in the Catena Aurea). The love of God is calm and peaceful, and work done for its sake, even in worldly things, is gentle, trustful, and quiet (Francis de Sales). Trust frees, while fear paralyzes (Pope Francis). A Christian no longer stands before God as a fearful slave or a hired hand, but as a son answering the love of the one who first loved us (CCC 1828), and the New Law moves us to act from love rather than fear (CCC 1972).

Deep Dive

Paul reminded Timothy "to stir into flame the gift of God that you have," because "God did not give us a spirit of cowardice but rather of power and love and self-control" (2 Timothy 1:6-7). He tells the Romans, "you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you received a spirit of adoption, through which we cry, 'Abba, Father'" (Romans 8:15). The servant's words, "so out of fear I went off and buried your talent in the ground" (Matthew 25:25), show how quickly fear turns into hiding. Naming a fear aloud in prayer is often the first step in handing it to the Father.

Read before class: Matthew 25:24-30; 2 Timothy 1:6-7; Romans 8:14-17

C3. The third servant did not lose or waste the money; he simply did nothing with it, and the master still calls him a "wicked, lazy servant." Why does Jesus treat holding back so seriously, and what does the master's remark about putting the money "in the bank" say about how small a first step can be? (Matthew 25:26-30; also James 4:17)

Commentary

- "And the whole wickedness of that servant who was reprobate and severely condemned, was that he would not put out his money to use. He kept the entire sum he had received; but the Lord looked for profit from it." (St. Augustine, Sermon 44 on the New Testament)
- "Observe that not only he who robs others, or who works evil, is punished with extreme punishment, but he also who does not good works." (St. John Chrysostom, as quoted in St. Thomas Aquinas, Catena Aurea on Matthew 25)
- "Vainly, then, do those suppose themselves innocent, who claim to their own private use the common gift of God" (St. Gregory the Great, Pastoral Rule, Book III, Chapter 21)
- "You ought to have done that which is easier, and to have left to me what is more difficult." (St. John Chrysostom, Homily 78 on Matthew)
- "Idleness is the enemy of the soul" (Rule of St. Benedict, Chapter 48)
- "Wicked, lazy servant: this man's inactivity is not negligible but seriously culpable." (NABRE note on Matthew 25:26-28)

Catechism of the Catholic Church

- "The Last Judgment will reveal even to its furthest consequences the good each person has done or failed to do during his earthly life" (CCC 1039)

- "But 'faith apart from works is dead': when it is deprived of hope and love, faith does not fully unite the believer to Christ and does not make him a living member of his Body." (CCC 1815)

Summary

Doing nothing with a trust is itself a failure of the trust. The servant's whole wickedness was that he would not put the money to use; he kept the full sum, but the Lord was looking for a return (Augustine). Not only the one who steals or does evil is punished, but also the one who does no good works (Chrysostom, quoted in the Catena Aurea). Those who keep God's common gifts for their own private use are wrong to think themselves innocent (Gregory the Great). The master asked only for the easier task and kept the harder part for himself (Chrysostom), which shows how small a faithful first step can be. An idle life is dangerous for the soul (Rule of St. Benedict). The servant's inactivity was not a small thing but seriously culpable (NABRE note). The Last Judgment will reveal the good each person has done or failed to do (CCC 1039), and faith without works is dead (CCC 1815).

Deep Dive

The master asks, "Should you not then have put my money in the bank so that I could have got it back with interest on my return?" (Matthew 25:27). As punishment the servant loses the gift he had received, and it goes to the first servant (NABRE note). James writes, "So for one who knows the right thing to do and does not do it, it is a sin" (James 4:17). Paul reminds believers, "For all of you are children of the light and children of the day," so "let us not sleep as the rest do, but let us stay alert and sober" (1 Thessalonians 5:5-6). That passage is the second reading at Mass this Sunday.

Read before class: Matthew 25:26-30; James 4:17; 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

D. Trusting the Giver and Serving in Love

D1. Jesus says, "without me you can do nothing." What is the difference between using a gift on our own strength and using it while remaining in him, and what daily habits keep you connected to the vine so that your service bears lasting fruit? (John 15:5; also verses 4-8)

Commentary

- "For there is not now a demand for mere profession, but that a man be found continuing in the power of faith to the end." (St. Ignatius of Antioch, Letter to the Ephesians, 14)
- "For just to keep any from supposing that the branch can bear at least some little fruit of itself, after saying, the same brings forth much fruit, His next words are not, Without me you can do but little, but ye can do nothing." (St. Augustine, Tractate 81 on the Gospel of John)
- "Whether then it be little or much, without Him it is impracticable; for without Him nothing can be done." (St. Augustine, Tractate 81 on the Gospel of John)
- "The abiding in the root is that which makes the branches to be fruit-bearing." (St. John Chrysostom, Homily 76 on John)
- "To refer what good one sees in himself, not to self, but to God." (Rule of St. Benedict, Chapter 4)
- "To prefer nothing to the love of Christ." (Rule of St. Benedict, Chapter 4)
- "There may be secondary eucharistic symbolism here; cf. Mk 14:25, 'the fruit of the vine.'" (NABRE note on John 15:1-17)

Catechism of the Catholic Church

- "The fruit referred to in this saying is the holiness of a life made fruitful by union with Christ." (CCC 2074)
- "When we believe in Jesus Christ, partake of his mysteries, and keep his commandments, the Savior himself comes to love, in us, his Father and his brethren, our Father and our brethren." (CCC 2074)

Summary

Gifts can be used apart from Jesus, but they bear lasting fruit only when we stay united to him. Jesus did not say that without him we can do little, but that we can do nothing (Augustine), and whether the fruit is small or great, nothing can be done without him (Augustine). What is asked of us is not a bare profession of faith but continuing in the power of faith to the end (Ignatius of Antioch). Remaining in the root is what makes the branches fruitful (Chrysostom). Whatever good we see in ourselves we should credit to God, not to ourselves (Rule of St. Benedict), and we should prefer nothing to the love of Christ (Rule of St. Benedict). The image of the vine may also point to the Eucharist, the fruit of the vine (NABRE note). Common habits that help: daily prayer and Scripture, Sunday Mass and frequent Communion, confession, and asking for his help before we

serve. The fruit Jesus means is the holiness of a life made fruitful by union with him (CCC 2074), and when we keep his commandments the Savior himself loves the Father and our neighbors in us (CCC 2074).

Deep Dive

Jesus spoke these words at the Last Supper: "Remain in me, as I remain in you. Just as a branch cannot bear fruit on its own unless it remains on the vine, so neither can you unless you remain in me" (John 15:4). He adds, "By this is my Father glorified, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples" (John 15:8). In the Old Testament Israel is often pictured as God's vine or vineyard (NABRE note). The Gospel acclamation at this Sunday's Mass is "Whoever remains in me bears much fruit." Branches cut from the vine were dried on the vineyard wall and later used as fuel (NABRE note).

Read before class: John 15:1-11

D2. Peter calls us "good stewards of God's varied grace." Think of a time when someone's gift, such as a meal, a skill, a word of encouragement, or a prayer, carried God's grace to you. How might God want to pass his grace to someone else this week through what you have? (1 Peter 4:10; also verse 11)

Commentary

- "It is better to be rich for others than for oneself." (St. Ambrose, On the Duties of the Clergy, Book II, Chapter 4)
- "let him who has affluence not be dead to mercy; let him who has the art of guiding life communicate its use with his neighbour; and him who has the faculty of eloquence intercede with the rich for the poor." (St. Gregory the Great, as quoted in St. Thomas Aquinas, Catena Aurea on Matthew 25)
- "This parable is delivered against those who will not assist their neighbours either with money, or words, or in any other way, but hide all that they have." (St. John Chrysostom, as quoted in St. Thomas Aquinas, Catena Aurea on Matthew 25)
- "Let no man say, I have but one talent, and can do nothing; for you can even by one approve yourself." (St. John Chrysostom, Homily 78 on Matthew)

Catechism of the Catholic Church

- "Whether extraordinary or simple and humble, charisms are graces of the Holy Spirit which directly or indirectly benefit the Church, ordered as they are to her building up, to the good of men, and to the needs of the world." (CCC 799)
- "in keeping with charity, the true measure of all charisms." (CCC 800)

Summary

This is an application question. Common answers: a meal after surgery or a loss, a ride to an appointment, a call or card at just the right time, a skill shared freely, or someone who stopped to pray with us. It is better to be rich for others than for oneself (Ambrose). Those with wealth should not be dead to mercy, and those with wisdom or eloquence should use them for others, even pleading with the rich for the poor (Gregory the Great, quoted in the Catena Aurea). The parable warns those who hide what they have instead of helping their neighbors with money, words, or anything else (Chrysostom, quoted in the Catena Aurea). No one should say that one talent is too little to do anything (Chrysostom). Charisms, simple or extraordinary, are graces of the Spirit for building up the Church and serving the world (CCC 799), and charity is the true measure of every charism (CCC 800).

Deep Dive

Peter writes, "As each one has received a gift, use it to serve one another as good stewards of God's varied grace" (1 Peter 4:10). He continues, "whoever serves, let it be with the strength that God supplies, so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 4:11). Just before this he writes, "Be hospitable to one another without complaining" (1 Peter 4:9), a reminder that ordinary hospitality is one of the ways grace travels. His saying that "love covers a multitude of sins" (1 Peter 4:8) draws on Proverbs 10:12 (NABRE note).

Read before class: 1 Peter 4:7-11

D3. The third servant hid from a master he believed was harsh. How does the love the Father has shown us in Jesus give us a truer picture of God, and how does that picture free us to bring our fears and failures to him instead of hiding them? (also Romans 8:15, 32; 1 John 4:18-19)

Commentary

- "my own way is all confidence and love, and I cannot understand those souls who are afraid of so affectionate a Friend." (St. Therese of Lisieux, Letter VI to Her Brother Missionaries, 1897)
- "As we see in sewing, the thread is introduced by means of the bristle; the bristle first enters, but except it come out the thread does not come into its place: so fear first occupies the mind, but the fear does not remain there, because it enters only in order to introduce charity." (St. Augustine, Homily 9 on the First Epistle of John)

- "never be afraid of God! Awe, yes; fear, no" (Pope Francis, Angelus, November 19, 2023)
- "For that they might not be separated from Him by timidity, He fastens and glues to Himself their souls slackened through fear, and holds out to them good hopes for the future." (St. John Chrysostom, Homily 76 on John)
- "And never to despair of God's mercy." (Rule of St. Benedict, Chapter 4)

Catechism of the Catholic Church

- "As an 'adopted son' he can henceforth call God 'Father,' in union with the only Son." (CCC 1997)
- "parrhesia, straightforward simplicity, filial trust, joyous assurance, humble boldness, the certainty of being loved." (CCC 2778)

Summary

The servant's fear grew from a false picture of the master; the Father's love in Jesus corrects that picture. Our way to God can be all confidence and love, with no reason to be afraid of so affectionate a Friend (Therese of Lisieux). Fear may enter first, like the point that draws a thread through cloth, but it goes out again so that love can take its place (Augustine). Before God we should feel awe, but never fear (Pope Francis). Jesus held his frightened disciples close so that fear would not separate them from him, and he gave them good hope for the future (Chrysostom). One of the tools of the spiritual life is never to despair of God's mercy (Rule of St. Benedict). As adopted children we can call God Father, in union with his only Son (CCC 1997), and we pray to him with filial trust, humble boldness, and the certainty of being loved (CCC 2778).

Deep Dive

Paul asks, "He who did not spare his own Son but handed him over for us all, how will he not also give us everything else along with him?" (Romans 8:32). John writes, "There is no fear in love, but perfect love drives out fear" (1 John 4:18), and "We love because he first loved us" (1 John 4:19). Through the spirit of adoption we "cry, 'Abba, Father'" (Romans 8:15). Psalm 90, one of the outline's readings, begins, "Lord, you have been our refuge through all generations" (Psalm 90:1). Among the tools for good works, the Rule counts confessing our past sins to God each day in prayer and amending them for the future (Rule of St. Benedict).

Read before class: Romans 8:14-17; Romans 8:31-39; 1 John 4:16-19

E. Trusting God with Our Finances

E1. Paul says we are saved "by grace" and "not from works," yet we are "created in Christ Jesus for the good works." How does giving that flows from gratitude for grace differ from giving out of guilt, pressure, or a wish to pay God back? (Ephesians 2:8-10; also 2 Corinthians 8:9)

Commentary

- "He did not reject us as having works, but as abandoned of works He has saved us by grace; so that no man henceforth may have whereof to boast." (St. John Chrysostom, Homily 4 on Ephesians)
- "It will be here to ask for interior knowledge of so great good received, in order that being entirely grateful, I may be able in all to love and serve His Divine Majesty." (St. Ignatius of Loyola, Spiritual Exercises, Contemplation to Gain Love)
- "Thou gavest it to me: to Thee, Lord, I return it! All is Thine, dispose of it according to all Thy will. Give me Thy love and grace, for this is enough for me." (St. Ignatius of Loyola, Spiritual Exercises, Contemplation to Gain Love)
- "Paul challenges them to godlike generosity and reminds them of the fundamental motive for encouragement: God himself cannot be outdone." (NABRE note on 2 Corinthians 9:8-10)
- "on its deepest level their attitude is one of self-giving." (NABRE note on 2 Corinthians 8:5)

Catechism of the Catholic Church

- "Grace is favor, the free and undeserved help that God gives us to respond to his call to become children of God, adoptive sons, partakers of the divine nature and of eternal life." (CCC 1996)
- "This custom of the collection, ever appropriate, is inspired by the example of Christ who became poor to make us rich" (CCC 1351)

Summary

Grace comes first, and good works and generosity follow. God saved us by grace when we had no works to offer, so that no one can boast (Chrysostom). We can ask for a deep knowledge of all the good we have received, so that, being fully grateful, we can love and serve God in everything (Ignatius of Loyola). The prayer that follows hands everything back to God: all of it came from him, all of it is returned to him, and his love and grace are enough (Ignatius of Loyola). Paul calls believers to godlike generosity, reminding them

that God himself cannot be outdone (NABRE note), and the Macedonians' giving was at heart a gift of themselves (NABRE note). Giving out of guilt or pressure tries to settle a debt; giving out of gratitude answers a gift. Grace is the free and undeserved help God gives us to respond to his call (CCC 1996), and the custom of the collection at Mass follows the example of Christ, who became poor to make us rich (CCC 1351).

Deep Dive

Paul writes, "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not from you; it is the gift of God; it is not from works, so no one may boast" (Ephesians 2:8-9). Then he adds, "For we are his handiwork, created in Christ Jesus for the good works that God has prepared in advance, that we should live in them" (Ephesians 2:10). Paul grounds generosity in Christ: "for your sake he became poor although he was rich, so that by his poverty you might become rich" (2 Corinthians 8:9). In these chapters Paul's word for grace, charis, is linked to eucharistia, thanksgiving (NABRE note). The Macedonians "gave themselves first to the Lord" (2 Corinthians 8:5).

Read before class: Ephesians 2:4-10; 2 Corinthians 8:1-9

E2. Tight budgets, debt, an uncertain job, or the habit of giving only what is left over can all make regular giving hard. Without naming any amounts, how can we bring our real circumstances honestly to the Father, and what does Paul's word that "if the eagerness is there, it is acceptable according to what one has" say to someone who feels they have little to give? (Ephesians 2:8; also 2 Corinthians 8:12; Philippians 4:19)

Commentary

- "so that they need not fear being short. He will provide in abundance, both supplying their natural needs and increasing their righteousness." (NABRE note on 2 Corinthians 9:8-10)
- "Paul introduces the principle of equality into the discussion. The goal is not impoverishment but sharing of resources; balance is achieved at least over the course of time." (NABRE note on 2 Corinthians 8:12-15)
- "For the Lord is not exacting to demand the utmost. Blessed, indeed, is he who forsakes all and follows Him, but blessed also is he who does what he can to the best of his powers with what he has." (St. Ambrose, On the Duties of the Clergy, Book I, Chapter 30)

- "it is the heart's intentions rather than the sums expended that will be reckoned up. And little sums from little means shall produce as much as great sums from great means." (St. Leo the Great, Sermon 10, On the Collections)
- "if you are really poor, my daughter, for God's Sake be so in spirit; make a virtue of necessity, and turn that precious stone poverty to its true value." (St. Francis de Sales, Introduction to the Devout Life, Part III, Chapter 16)
- "To put one's trust in God." (Rule of St. Benedict, Chapter 4)
- "Above all things, let him be humble; and if he hath not the things to give, let him answer with a kind word" (Rule of St. Benedict, Chapter 31)

Catechism of the Catholic Church

- "'Give us': the trust of children who look to their Father for everything is beautiful." (CCC 2828)
- "When we share in God's saving love, we understand that every need can become the object of petition." (CCC 2633)

Summary

This is an application question. Common answers: an unexpected expense, debt, caring for family, an uncertain job, or simply never planning ahead to give. These can be brought honestly to the Father in prayer, without pretending and without comparing. Paul assures the Corinthians that they need not fear running short, because God supplies their needs (NABRE note). His goal is not to impoverish anyone but to share resources fairly over time (NABRE note). The Lord does not demand the utmost; blessed is the one who leaves everything to follow him, but blessed too is the one who does what he can with what he has (Ambrose). God weighs the intentions of the heart rather than the sums given, and small gifts from small means count as much as great gifts from great means (Leo the Great). Those who really are poor can make a virtue of necessity and be poor in spirit as well, which turns their poverty into something precious (Francis de Sales). We put our trust in God (Rule of St. Benedict), and even the monastery's steward, when he had nothing to give, was told to answer with a kind word (Rule of St. Benedict). Children look to their Father for everything (CCC 2828), and every need can become the object of prayer (CCC 2633).

Deep Dive

Paul writes, "For if the eagerness is there, it is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what one does not have" (2 Corinthians 8:12). He adds that he does not mean "that others should have relief while you are burdened" (2 Corinthians 8:13). The

Macedonians gave "in a severe test of affliction," out of "profound poverty," with "the abundance of their joy" (2 Corinthians 8:2). Paul told the Philippians, "My God will fully supply whatever you need, in accord with his glorious riches in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:19). Honest prayer about money is not a lack of faith; it is how this part of life comes under the Father's care.

Read before class: 2 Corinthians 8:1-15; Philippians 4:10-19

E3. Paul says each one should give "as already determined, without sadness or compulsion." What would help you prayerfully settle, in private, on an amount and a rhythm of regular giving through our church that you can keep faithfully in the coming year, and why might deciding ahead of time be better than giving on impulse? No one needs to share an amount. (Ephesians 2:10; also 2 Corinthians 9:7; 1 Corinthians 16:2)

Commentary

- "Not merely that we should begin, but that we should walk in them, for we need a virtue which shall last throughout, and be extended on to our dying day." (St. John Chrysostom, Homily 4 on Ephesians)
- "let all prepare themselves to give willingly, that every one according to his ability may join in this most sacred offering." (St. Leo the Great, Sermon 10, On the Collections)
- "The Lord does not want us to give away all our goods at once, but to impart them little by little" (St. Ambrose, On the Duties of the Clergy, Book I, Chapter 30)
- "always dispose of a part of your means by giving them heartily to the poor; you impoverish yourself by whatever you give away." (St. Francis de Sales, Introduction to the Devout Life, Part III, Chapter 15)
- "Paul emphasizes the spontaneity of the Macedonians and the nature of their action." (NABRE note on 2 Corinthians 8:3-4)
- "Let him neglect nothing and let him not give way to avarice, nor let him be wasteful and a squanderer of the goods of the monastery; but let him do all things in due measure" (Rule of St. Benedict, Chapter 31)

Catechism of the Catholic Church

- "The faithful also have the duty of providing for the material needs of the Church, each according to his abilities." (CCC 2043)
- "Those who are well off, and who are also willing, give as each chooses." (CCC 1351, quoting St. Justin Martyr)

Summary

This is an application question. Common answers: praying about it before payday, talking it over with a spouse, giving at the start of the month instead of from what is left, setting up automatic giving, or starting small and growing over time. The amount stays private. God calls us not only to begin good works but to keep walking in them to the end of our lives (Chrysostom). Before the Sunday collection, the faithful were asked to prepare themselves to give willingly, each according to his ability (Leo the Great). The Lord does not ask us to give everything away at once, but to share little by little (Ambrose). Giving away part of our means as a regular habit, and doing it heartily, keeps a proper care for our goods from turning into greed (Francis de Sales). The Macedonians gave freely and spontaneously (NABRE note). The monastery's steward was told to neglect nothing, to avoid both greed and waste, and to do all things in due measure (Rule of St. Benedict). The faithful have a duty to provide for the material needs of the Church, each according to his abilities (CCC 2043), and from the earliest days those who were able gave as each one chose (CCC 1351, quoting St. Justin Martyr).

Deep Dive

Paul writes, "Each must do as already determined, without sadness or compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver" (2 Corinthians 9:7). To the Corinthians he gave a rhythm: "On the first day of the week each of you should set aside and save whatever he can afford" (1 Corinthians 16:2). He promises, "God is able to make every grace abundant for you" (2 Corinthians 9:8). The Church counts providing for her material needs among the duties of the faithful (CCC 2043). The outline's Practice section suggests keeping the amount private, deciding together if you share finances with a spouse, and setting a date this week to begin.

Read before class: 2 Corinthians 9:6-11; 1 Corinthians 16:1-2

F. Making Room for Someone Else

F1. The first believers "devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles and to the communal life, to the breaking of the bread and to the prayers," and they shared "according to each one's need." How does the steady, regular giving of many people keep worship, discipleship, outreach, and care going in our church week after week? (also Acts 2:42-47; Philippians 4:15-18)

Commentary

- "Labour together with one another; strive in company together; run together; suffer together; sleep together; and awake together, as the stewards, and associates, and servants of God." (St. Ignatius of Antioch, Letter to Polycarp, 6)
- "This was an angelic commonwealth, not to call anything of theirs their own. Forthwith the root of evils was cut out." (St. John Chrysostom, Homily 7 on Acts)
- "And what so suitable to faith, what so much in harmony with godliness as to assist the poverty of the needy, to undertake the care of the weak, to succour the needs of the brethren, and to remember one's own condition in the toils of others." (St. Leo the Great, Sermon 10, On the Collections)
- "adherence to the teachings of the Twelve and the centering of its religious life in the eucharistic liturgy" (NABRE note on Acts 2:42-47)
- "The collection for the church at Jerusalem was a symbol in his mind for the unity of Jewish and Gentile Christianity." (NABRE note on 1 Corinthians 16:1-4)

Catechism of the Catholic Church

- "From the very beginning Christians have brought, along with the bread and wine for the Eucharist, gifts to share with those in need." (CCC 1351)
- "What is gathered is given to him who presides to assist orphans and widows, those whom illness or any other cause has deprived of resources, prisoners, immigrants and, in a word, all who are in need." (CCC 1351, quoting St. Justin Martyr)

Summary

This is an application question. Common answers: regular giving supports the Mass and the sacraments each week, pays clergy and staff, funds religious education and small groups, keeps the building open, makes outreach possible, and lets the church help people in a crisis. Christians are urged to work, struggle, suffer, rest, and rise together as God's stewards, associates, and servants (Ignatius of Antioch). The first believers shared so fully that no one called anything his own, and the root of evils was cut out (Chrysostom). Nothing fits faith and godliness better than helping the needy, caring for the weak, meeting the needs of fellow believers, and remembering our own condition in the struggles of others (Leo the Great). The Jerusalem community held to the apostles' teaching and centered its life on the Eucharist (NABRE note). Paul's collection was a sign of unity between Jewish and Gentile Christians (NABRE note). From the beginning Christians have brought gifts for those in need along with the bread and wine (CCC 1351), and what was gathered went to orphans, widows, the sick, prisoners, immigrants, and all in need (CCC 1351, quoting St. Justin Martyr).

Deep Dive

Luke describes the first church: "They devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles and to the communal life, to the breaking of the bread and to the prayers" (Acts 2:42), and they divided their goods "among all according to each one's need" (Acts 2:45). This is the first of three summaries in Acts that describe the life of the Jerusalem community (NABRE note). Paul thanked the Philippians because "not a single church shared with me in an account of giving and receiving, except you alone" (Philippians 4:15), and he called their gift "an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God" (Philippians 4:18). The outline names the church's mission: encounter God, discover purpose, transform lives.

Read before class: Acts 2:42-47; Philippians 4:14-19

F2. Think of someone whose time, skill, or generosity helped you or someone you love encounter Jesus. What did they give, what might it have cost them, and what does their example show about how God uses ordinary gifts? (also Acts 9:36-39)

Commentary

- "For nothing is so pleasing to God, as to live for the common advantage." (St. John Chrysostom, Homily 78 on Matthew)
- "For you are not poorer than that widow; you are not more uninstructed than Peter and John, who were both unlearned and ignorant men" (St. John Chrysostom, Homily 78 on Matthew)
- "Do not neglect then the least of those belonging to you, look after the salvation of all your household with all vigilance." (St. Augustine, Sermon 44 on the New Testament)
- "there are some who by their understanding and their actions preach to others, and thence gain as it were a twofold profit in such merchandize." (St. Gregory the Great, as quoted in St. Thomas Aquinas, Catena Aurea on Matthew 25)

Catechism of the Catholic Church

- "Lay people also fulfill their prophetic mission by evangelization, 'that is, the proclamation of Christ by word and the testimony of life.'" (CCC 905)
- "The works of mercy are charitable actions by which we come to the aid of our neighbor in his spiritual and bodily necessities." (CCC 2447)

Summary

This is an application question. Common answers: a parent or grandparent who prayed, a catechist or Sunday school teacher, a friend who invited us to church, someone who brought meals in a hard season, or a mentor who gave time week after week. Nothing

pleases God more than living for the common good (Chrysostom). We are not poorer than the widow or less educated than Peter and John (Chrysostom). Each home should watch over the faith of every member, even the least (Augustine). Some preach to others through both understanding and action, and so gain a double profit (Gregory the Great, quoted in the Catena Aurea). Lay people proclaim Christ by word and by the witness of their lives (CCC 905), and the works of mercy meet our neighbor's spiritual and bodily needs (CCC 2447).

Deep Dive

At Joppa a disciple named Tabitha, also called Dorcas, "was completely occupied with good deeds and almsgiving" (Acts 9:36). When she died, the widows came to Peter "weeping and showing him the tunics and cloaks that Dorcas had made while she was with them" (Acts 9:39). After Peter raised her, "many came to believe in the Lord" (Acts 9:42), so her sewing became part of a story that led many to faith. Hebrews says, "We must consider how to rouse one another to love and good works" (Hebrews 10:24). Thanking the person God used, even years later, is one way to honor what they gave.

Read before class: Acts 9:36-42; Hebrews 10:23-25

F3. When many put their gifts together, a church can do what no one person could do alone. Where could our church's shared faithfulness make a difference for a person or family in the coming year, and what part might you or this group play? (also Galatians 6:10; Matthew 25:40)

Commentary

- "Let not widows be neglected. Be, after the Lord, their protector and friend." (St. Ignatius of Antioch, Letter to Polycarp, 4)
- "When asked where the treasures were which he had promised, he pointed to the poor, saying: These are the treasures of the Church. And truly they were treasures, in whom Christ lives, in whom there is faith in Him." (St. Ambrose, On the Duties of the Clergy, Book II, Chapter 28)
- "For there are those who blush openly to ask for what they want and prefer to suffer privation without speaking rather than to be put to shame by a public appeal. These are they whom we ought to consider and relieve from their hidden straits" (St. Leo the Great, Sermon 9, On the Collections)
- "when we administer necessaries of any kind to the indigent, we do not bestow our own, but render them what is theirs; we rather pay a debt of justice than accomplish works of mercy." (St. Gregory the Great, Pastoral Rule, Book III, Chapter 21)

- "Let him provide for the sick, the children, the guests, and the poor, with all care, knowing that, without doubt, he will have to give an account of all these things on judgment day." (Rule of St. Benedict, Chapter 31)
- "And if you love the poor, seek them out, take pleasure in bringing them to your home, and in going to theirs, talk freely with them, and be ready to meet them, whether in Church or elsewhere. Let your tongue be poor with them in converse, but let your hands be rich to distribute out of your abundance." (St. Francis de Sales, Introduction to the Devout Life, Part III, Chapter 15)
- "Doing good has a universal object (to all), but the local community makes specific the reality of those to be served." (NABRE note on Galatians 6:10)

Catechism of the Catholic Church

- "In the Beatitudes 'poverty' is the virtue of sharing: it calls us to communicate and share both material and spiritual goods, not by coercion but out of love, so that the abundance of some may remedy the needs of others." (CCC 2833)
- "Since, like all the faithful, lay Christians are entrusted by God with the apostolate by virtue of their Baptism and Confirmation, they have the right and duty, individually or grouped in associations, to work so that the divine message of salvation may be known and accepted by all men throughout the earth." (CCC 900)

Summary

This is an application question. Common answers: a family facing illness or job loss, a widow who needs help at home, children who need mentors, newcomers who need a meal and a welcome, or a neighbor in crisis. Widows must never be neglected, and after the Lord the church's shepherds are to be their protector and friend (Ignatius of Antioch). When the martyr Lawrence was told to hand over the treasures of the Church, he pointed to the poor, in whom Christ lives (Ambrose). Some of the poor are too ashamed to ask for help, and these are the ones we should seek out and relieve in their hidden needs (Leo the Great). When we give the needy what they need, we are not giving away what is ours but returning what is theirs, paying a debt of justice more than doing a work of mercy (Gregory the Great). Love for the poor means seeking them out, welcoming them into our homes and visiting theirs, and being generous with our hands (Francis de Sales). The monastery's steward was to care for the sick, the children, the guests, and the poor, knowing he would give an account on judgment day (Rule of St. Benedict). Doing good reaches everyone, but the local community gives it a face (NABRE note). Christian

poverty is the virtue of sharing, so that the abundance of some meets the needs of others (CCC 2833), and every baptized person shares in the mission of making salvation known (CCC 900).

Deep Dive

Paul writes, "So then, while we have the opportunity, let us do good to all, but especially to those who belong to the family of the faith" (Galatians 6:10), right after "Let us not grow tired of doing good, for in due time we shall reap our harvest, if we do not give up" (Galatians 6:9). In the scene that follows the parable, the king says, "whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me" (Matthew 25:40). In the fifth century the church of Rome took up regular collections for the poor, a custom kept in obedience to the tradition of the apostles (Leo the Great). The outline's closing prayer asks God to bless the shared work of the church so that people encounter God, discover purpose, and experience transformed lives.

Read before class: Galatians 6:9-10; Matthew 25:31-40

Sources

Source	Where to find it
Catechism of the Catholic Church, cited by paragraph number (CCC)	vatican.va
St. Thomas Aquinas, Catena Aurea on Matthew 25 (quotes St. Gregory the Great, St. Jerome, St. Augustine, St. John Chrysostom, Origen, Rabanus Maurus, and the Gloss)	CCEL
St. Ignatius of Antioch, Letters to the Ephesians, the Magnesians, and Polycarp	Ephesians, Magnesians, Polycarp
St. Cyprian of Carthage, On Works and Alms	New Advent
St. Ambrose, On the Duties of the Clergy, Books I and II	Book I, Book II
St. John Chrysostom, Homily 78 on Matthew, Homily 76 on John, Homily 4 on Ephesians, and Homily 7 on Acts	Homily 78, Homily 76, Homily 4, Homily 7

Source	Where to find it
St. Augustine, Tractate 81 on the Gospel of John, Sermon 44 on the New Testament, and Homily 9 on the First Epistle of John	Tractate 81, Sermon 44, Homily 9
St. Leo the Great, Sermons 9 and 10, On the Collections	Sermon 9, Sermon 10
Rule of St. Benedict, Prologue and Chapters 4, 31, and 48	CCEL
St. Gregory the Great, Pastoral Rule, Book III	New Advent
St. Ignatius of Loyola, Spiritual Exercises, Contemplation to Gain Love	CCEL
St. Francis de Sales, Introduction to the Devout Life, Part III, Chapters 15 and 16	CCEL
St. Therese of Lisieux, Story of a Soul, Chapter 1 and Letter VI to Her Brother Missionaries	CCEL
Pope Francis, Angelus on Matthew 25:14-30, November 16, 2014, and November 19, 2023	2014, 2023
New American Bible, Revised Edition (NABRE), text and footnotes	Bible Gateway, USCCB
USCCB Mass readings, Thirty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time, November 15, 2026	USCCB