

The Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time August 10, 2025

If there is one hard and fast law of the spiritual life it is that the more we give, the more we receive in return. The Catholic preacher, Bishop Robert Barron calls this “the loop of grace” and we see it play out time and time again in the Bible.

One example from the Old Testament is the widow of Zarephath. During a drought, She and her son are down to their last bit of flour and oil. But when Elijah asks her to make him a cake, she agrees, even at the risk of going hungry herself. Because of her generosity, God works a miracle for her. Her bag of flour and jar of oil filled back up and she was able to draw from them without them ever going empty.

Another example from the New Testament is the story of the multiplication of loaves and fish. Even though the disciples had only a small amount of food themselves, by offering it to the crowd, Jesus multiplied it miraculously so that it fed over 5000.

This spiritual law does not only apply to material goods but spiritual ones as well. For example, Jesus tells us that if we want to receive mercy and forgiveness, we have to be willing to give that same mercy and forgiveness to everyone who has hurt us. So He taught us to pray, “forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us”

The greatest example of this spiritual principle is the cross. Because Jesus was willing to give His life as a sacrifice for us and our sins, the Father raised Him with a glorified body that can never suffer or die again. And because of the cross, we can be assured that if we give our lives for others, it will be given back to us in a way that will make our suffering look like nothing in comparison.

So the truth is that we can only keep what we give away. And whatever we hold on to and refuse to share with others shrivels up in our hands.

So now, can I use this principle to make myself rich? If I give \$100, can I expect God to give me \$200 in return?

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Now, it's a curious thing when we apply this spiritual law to money. When we give money away, we don't necessarily get it back with interest. In fact, we might not get back any money at all. What we do get is the thing that we thought money could give us but that it never really could.

This is what I mean. Money makes us a lot of promises. It promises to give us security for the future. It promises to give us status in society. It promises to give us self-esteem and the respect of others. It promises to give us power and comfort. But money alone cannot deliver on all those promises. If it did, we wouldn't keep thinking we need more and more of it. The fact is that we are never satisfied no matter how much money we have because all its promises are just illusions.

So when we sell our possessions and give the money to the poor - as Jesus invites us to do in today's gospel - we break free of the illusion that money can give us comfort, security, and power. And once we are free of that illusion, we can set our sights on what can really meet those needs.

What money promises but fails to give can be found in God and in His Kingdom. So Jesus tells us, "your Father is pleased to give you the kingdom." Whoever possesses God possesses everything. There is nothing greater than God. There is no one who loves us more than God does. So to live in relationship with Him means that we have everything we need. It means having complete and utter confidence that God will provide for us and never abandon us.

That does not mean that we don't work. It doesn't mean that we don't save money and plan for the future. But we do that without fear or anxiety. We can lose our ability to work. We can lose everything we've saved. But we can trust that God will see us through it all.

The other lesson in all this is that all the blessings that God showers on us - both the material and spiritual ones - are not meant for us alone. They are meant to be shared. God enriches us so that we can enrich others. He blesses us so that we can bless others. As Jesus tells us in today's gospel, "Much will be required of the person entrusted with

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much.”

Is there a possession you are holding onto tightly because you are afraid of losing it? What is keeping you from being more generous with what you have? When we hold on too tightly we only get more anxious and bitter. When we are generous and give, even when it hurts, we become more grateful and make space for God to shower us with even more blessings.

The truth is that everything in this world is passing. Only the things of heaven are what lasts. Whatever we earn in this life will soon be spent or handed on to others. What we give away joyfully out of love for others becomes a heavenly treasure that we can never lose. St Ephrem the Syrian said “If you give your life to the earth, the earth will give you a tomb; But if you give your life to heaven, heaven will give you a throne” So, as we read in the second reading, let us live in this world ever mindful of our heavenly destiny and invest in our eternal future by sharing what we have with others.