

How does the church spend its resources?

Objective:

One of the most common complaints of non-churchgoers against the church is that the church is always after their money. The complaint is often justified. In many churches, every Sunday the pastor pressures people to give more. Many churches launch campaigns, where members are asked to pledge how much they will give in the coming year. Many TV preachers openly flaunt their lavish lifestyles and promise people that if they will give to their ministries, God will repay them abundantly.

But churches do need money to function. And so, we need to consider what the Bible says about the church and money. If we were to pick two key words that should govern the church's use of money, they would be integrity and stewardship.

Stewardship refers to the fact that all of our resources, both personally and as a church, do not belong to us, but to the Lord. We will give an account to Him of how we used the resources He entrusted to us, both personally and as a church.

The topic of money is not a minor one in the Bible. The Book of Proverbs has much to say about it. Jesus spoke about money and possessions in 16 of his 38 recorded parables. In the Gospels, no less than one out of ten verses (288 in all) deal directly with money. The Bible offers 500 verses on prayer, less than 500 verses on faith, but more than 2,000 verses on money and possessions (Howard L. Dayton, Leadership Journal [Spring, 1981], p. 62).

The Catholic Church has been and continues to be the most powerful force for good in the world, but it is a human institution and thus its spending reviewed to insure the highest and best uses of funds. To sum it up: the church should model godly financial integrity as good stewards of God's resources.

Song Suggestion: Gather Us In (Blue 150, Red 743, Gather 311)

Bible & Catechism Readings:

1 Timothy 6:17-19

"Tell the rich in the present age not to be proud and not to rely on so uncertain a thing as wealth but rather on God, who richly provides us with all things for our enjoyment. Tell them to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous, ready to share thus accumulating as treasure a good foundation for the future, so as to win the life that is true life."

1 John 3:17

"If someone who has worldly means sees a brother in need and refuses him compassion, how can the love of God remain in him?"

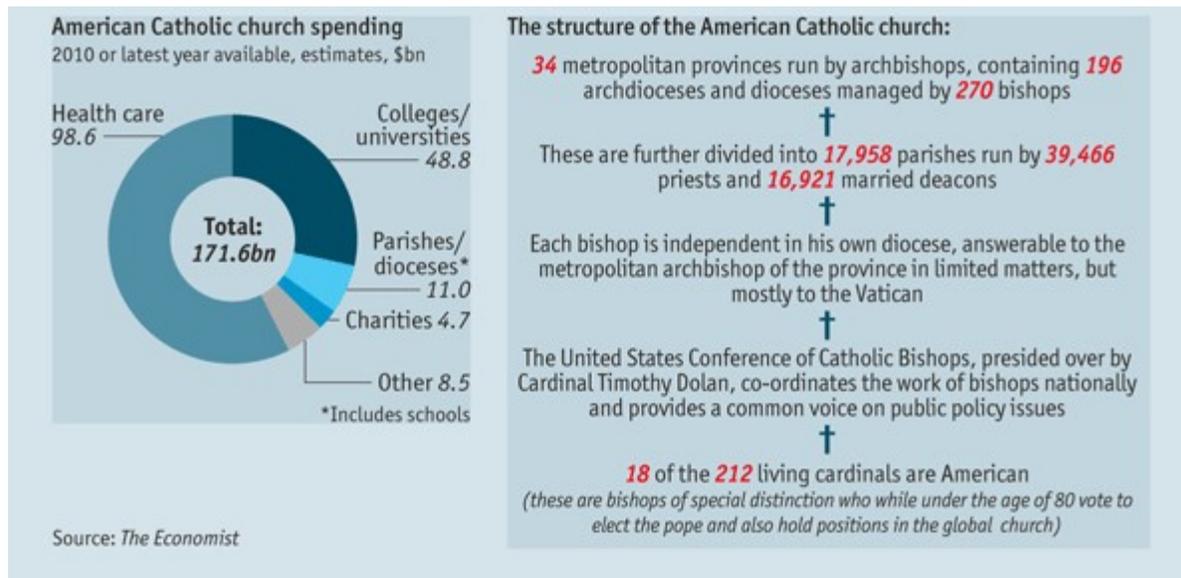
Galatians 6:10

"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."

Catechism 2458:

The Church makes a judgement about economic and social matters when the fundamental rights of the person or the salvation of souls requires it. She is concerned with the temporal common good of men because they are ordered to the sovereign Good, their ultimate end.

American Catholic Church Spending



The Economist estimates that annual spending by the church and entities owned by the church was around \$170 billion in 2010 (the church does not release such figures). We think 57% of this goes on health-care networks, followed by 28% on colleges, with parish and diocesan day-to-day operations accounting for just 6% and national charitable activities just 2.7% (see chart). In total, Catholic institutions employ over 1M people, reckons Fred Gluck, a former McKinsey managing partner and co-founder of the National Leadership Roundtable on Church Management, a lay organization seeking to improve the way the church is run. For purposes of secular comparison, in 2010 General Electric's revenue was \$150 billion and Walmart employed roughly 2m people.

Saint:

St. Matthew was one of the twelve apostles – the first to respond to the call to follow Jesus. He wrote the first Gospel, recording the life, death, and resurrection of Christ. St. Matthew, before he was called by Jesus to become His apostle, was a Jewish tax collector. As such, he was considered to be among the “sinners” due to the unfair practices conducted by tax collectors under Roman rule. It came as a great surprise to many when Jesus called St. Matthew, since the tax collectors were hated by most Jews.

After Jesus' ascension to heaven, the apostles began their mission of going out to all the world to tell the Good News of Christ. It is believed that St. Matthew stayed within the area of Palestine when he first began preaching. Historical record pertaining to his activity does not exist; however, there are traditions that have been passed down through the ages – some suggesting he traveled to Ethiopia to continue his mission, while others state he went to Parthia and Persia. Also unrecorded is his death, which means it is unknown if he died a natural death, or was martyred for his faith.

The Gospel of St. Matthew is the earliest-written of the four Gospels. Since he speaks of Jerusalem and the Temple in present tense, it is believed that the Temple had not been destroyed by the Romans at the time he was writing. The destruction of the Temple took place in 70 AD, which makes historians believe that St. Matthew wrote his Gospel between 42-50 AD, possibly later. In the Gospels of Mark and Luke, St. Matthew is referred to as “Levi.” His feast day is celebrated on September 21.

Patronage of St. Matthew - St. Matthew is the patron saint of accountants, bankers, bookkeepers, security guards, and stockbrokers.

Questions for Large and Small Group Discussion

How can the church meet the needs of the poor without enabling them or creating dependence?

Was it right for the Church to receive Payroll Protection Loans during the coronavirus epidemic?

Should parishes be able to declare bankruptcy to shield themselves from settlements?

Should churches spend more to make facilities attractive?

What are your thoughts on tithing? Is 10% a good standard or should it be of personal significance?

Action Plan

1. Be well informed about how the church generates, spends and invests its money.
2. Review your own finances, are if you are being a good steward of God's investment?
3. Recent reforms have created greater transparency in the use of global church funds, if you are interested in digging in further on the topic.
4. The church is financial entity and worsening economic conditions will impact donations and gifts. When times are toughest is when the church needs to be at its best, so if you are blessed be a blessing.

Additional Resources

Link to the Summary of Finances for IHM:

<https://4.files.edl.io/bde2/08/27/19/133215-fc611d35-4374-4034-bb8a-2b20292650ca.pdf>

Link to the financial statements of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati:

http://www.catholiccincinnati.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/AOC2019_report_FINAL_022820.pdf

Author: Scott Stubbins