



Tithing has long been a subject of reflection, controversy, and discernment within the Church. Some view it as an obsolete obligation of the Old Testament, while others see it as a relevant and necessary practice. But what is tithing really? Is it merely a legalistic mandate, or is it an expression of love and gratitude to God? In this article, we will explore its origins, historical development, and relevance in the Christian life today.

1. Biblical Origins of Tithing

Tithing, which literally means “the tenth part,” has its roots in the Old Testament. The first mention appears in **Genesis 14:18-20**, when Abraham, after defeating several kings, encounters Melchizedek, the king of Salem and priest of the Most High God, and gives him a tenth of all he had won.

“And he blessed Abram, saying: Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth. And blessed be God Most High, who delivered your enemies into your hand. Then Abram gave him a tenth of everything” (Genesis 14:19-20).

This act by Abraham was not an imposition but a voluntary offering of gratitude. Later, in the Mosaic Law, tithing was institutionalized as a command for the people of Israel.

In **Leviticus 27:30**, God commands:

“A tithe of everything from the land, whether grain from the soil or fruit from the trees, belongs to the Lord; it is holy to the Lord.”

Here, tithing becomes an obligation, a divine mandate that ensured the sustenance of the Levites (the priestly tribe that owned no land), the maintenance of the temple, and assistance to the needy.



2. The Historical Evolution of Tithing in the Church

With the arrival of the New Testament, many wonder: is tithing still mandatory? Christ does not mention tithing as an essential requirement for salvation but emphasizes the spirit behind it: justice, mercy, and faithfulness.

In **Matthew 23:23**, Jesus rebukes the Pharisees for meticulously following the law of tithing while neglecting more important matters:

“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices—mint, dill, and cumin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy, and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter without neglecting the former.”

Saint Paul, for his part, does not mention tithing as a mandate but strongly encourages generosity and the support of the Church. In **2 Corinthians 9:7**, he writes:

“Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.”

In the early centuries of Christianity, tithing was not a rigid rule, but material support for the community was strongly encouraged. Over time, the Church institutionalized tithing to ensure the sustenance of the clergy and charitable works. During the Middle Ages, it became a legally mandated practice in many Christian territories. However, as the centuries passed, its legal obligation gradually diminished in most countries.



3. Tithing in the Catholic Church Today

Unlike some Protestant churches that strictly require tithing, the Catholic Church does not impose it as a universal legal requirement. Instead, the **Code of Canon Law** establishes in **canon 222** that the faithful have a duty to contribute to the support of the Church according to their means:

“The Christian faithful are obliged to assist with the needs of the Church so that the Church has what is necessary for divine worship, for apostolic works, and for works of charity and for the decent support of ministers.”

Today, the Church encourages the faithful to be generous and to support their parishes and dioceses, but without a fixed percentage. Each Christian is encouraged to discern their contribution in conscience and according to their means.

4. Is Tithing an Act of Love?

Here is where tithing ceases to be merely a financial act and becomes a manifestation of love. More than an obligation, giving generously is a reflection of love for God and neighbor. Charity, gratitude, and detachment are essential virtues in the Christian life.

Reasons Why Tithing Can Be an Act of Love:

1. **Expression of Gratitude:** Recognizing that everything we have comes from God and giving back as a sign of thanksgiving.
2. **Support for the Church:** Ensuring that Christ’s message reaches more people and that churches remain places of evangelization and service.
3. **Helping the Needy:** Many parishes and dioceses allocate part of donations to charity.
4. **Material Detachment:** Helping us to set our hearts on God rather than on material wealth.

An inspiring testimony is that of a farmer who, despite having limited resources, always gave



generously to his parish. When someone asked him why he did it, he replied: “I only give back to God what is His. He has never left me without what I need.” This kind of faith reminds us that trusting in God and sharing with others is a blessing.

5. How to Live Out Tithing Today?

For those who wish to practice tithing as an act of love rather than as an obligation, here are some suggestions:

- **Pray and Discern:** Before deciding how much to give, ask God to guide you in your generosity.
 - **Focus on the Heart, Not the Amount:** It is not about an exact percentage but about giving with love and joy.
 - **Be Consistent:** Generosity should not be sporadic but a habit in our faith journey.
 - **Support Various Causes:** Not only the maintenance of the church but also missions, the poor, Christian education, and more.
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Conclusion: A Call to Generosity

Tithing should not be seen as a burden or a tax but as an opportunity to show love to God and our brothers and sisters. In Christianity, what matters most is not the percentage we give, but the disposition of our hearts.

Today's invitation is to rediscover the meaning of tithing from the perspective of love. Giving generously is a way to place our trust in God and to be instruments of His providence for others. As Saint Paul said:

| *“It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35).*

Are we willing to live out generosity as an act of love?