



"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)

As Thanksgiving, Advent, and the Christmas season quickly approach, it's the giving time of year again. Between wanting to spread hope, love, and good cheer (and those last minute end of year donations for tax deductions), it's hard to know who to give to. The U.S. Catholic Bishops, in the 1998 *Summary Report of the Task Force on Catholic Social Teaching and Catholic Education*, said ***"Catholic social teaching is based on and inseparable from our understanding of human life and human dignity. Every human being is created in the image of God and redeemed by Jesus Christ, and therefore is invaluable and worthy of respect as a member of the human family. Every person, from the moment of conception to natural death, has inherent dignity and a right to life consistent with that dignity. Human dignity comes from God, not from any human quality or accomplishment."***

For Catholics concerned about innocent human life and other moral principles that should govern our charitable giving, we need to make sure that we are asking ourselves if our charitable giving is a form of formal cooperation or material cooperation. Formal cooperation with evil is always wrong because we freely make our act one, as it were, with the principal moral agent who has initiated the immoral activity. We intend the immoral act. But material cooperation is another story; at times it can be justified when there is a serious reason for doing so. With material cooperation in another's wrongdoing, one provides some assistance but intends (and does) only the good, not the bad.

And in this day and age of social media, online charity campaigns, such as the popular ASL 'Ice Bucket Challenge' from this summer, have become the norm. But we have to remember that simply because we give to a "good cause" and it makes us "feel good", it doesn't absolve us of moral responsibility if, for example, the means used by the organization to further its cause are in some way morally tainted.

A similar phenomenon occurred a few years ago (and it often recurs) with the controversy over Susan G. Komen's affiliation with Planned Parenthood. All of us want to see diseases such as breast cancer and ALS eliminated, but not at the cost of supporting abortion providers or contributing to the killing of innocent human lives — however small our financial contribution might be or however tenuous the connection between the charity we give to and its support of other organizations at odds with our moral values.

Given all of this, we as Catholics have a moral obligation to educate ourselves on how our hard-earned money can play a role, however unintentional, in funding the "culture of death." We have a responsibility to do our homework in researching where a charity stands on the human life issues before writing a check to them or clicking on the "donate" button. And not just on the life issues: There are other moral issues — such as same-sex marriage and pornography — that we should attend to. The Internet, for all its negatives, can be a valuable tool in investigating a charity's vision and values.

But as some of us know all too well, the issue of whether to give or not to give can be very emotionally charged. We have family and friends who, having been affected by some of these terrible diseases, see nothing wrong with supporting charities that may not be in accord with Catholic teaching. It's especially difficult when the fundraiser is a fun activity or event such as the ice bucket challenge. We don't want to appear as killjoys or overly judgmental. Thus, we should patiently explain why we have not only moral objections, but why we are substituting some other charity or event to take its place.

So, if the ice bucket challenge pops up again next summer, feel free to participate. But make it known why your donation will be going to an organization that is in line with Church teaching. This effort will help build a culture of life.

(the above contains information and excerpts from both *Sharing Catholic Social Teaching: Challenges And Directions from the USCCB* and *When donating to charity, here's what to keep in mind* by Mark S. Latkovic, S.T.D from OSV)

How can we, as Catholics, make sure our money is going to organizations that will not only make sure the money goes to those who really need it or to fund ethical research and social projects, but will also make sure that in doing so, it will respect the inherent dignity and right to life that every human being has?

Questions that should come to mind when thinking about whether to donate money to a charity:

- ◆ What is the aim of the organization? Is it one that we can support in good conscience - in other words, is it truly a good cause?
- ◆ What means do they employ to achieve their end? Specifically, do they engage in any immoral activity? If so, what is the nature of this activity? Does it, in fact, involve intrinsically evil actions such as abortion or embryo experimentation?
- ◆ Am I able to meet other basic responsibilities pertaining to my personal vocation if I give money to this charity?
- ◆ Is information about what the charity does with the donations they receive easily accessible to the public? Or are they trying to hide something?
- ◆ Is there the possibility of scandal if I contribute to this particular charity - one that I in good conscience deem morally legitimate but that others might have trouble with?
- ◆ Has the Catholic Church or my diocese taught or said anything about the matter?
- ◆ Are there alternative organizations - ones that possibly support the same cause - I can help fund?

“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others.”
(Matthew 23:23)

Stewardship Prayer

Almighty and ever-faithful Lord,
gratefully acknowledging Your mercy
and humbly admitting our need,
we pledge our trust in You and each other.

Filled with desire,
we respond to Your call for discipleship
by shaping our lives in imitation of Christ.
We profess that the call requires us
to be stewards of Your gifts.
As stewards, we receive Your gifts gratefully,
cherish and tend them in a responsible
manner, share them in practice and love with
others, and return them with increase to the
Lord.

We pledge to our ongoing formation as
stewards and our responsibility to call others
to that same endeavor. Almighty and
ever-faithful God, it is our
fervent hope and prayer that You who have
begun this good work in us will bring it to
fulfillment in Jesus Christ,
our Lord.

Amen

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- Nov 15 - Helpers of God's Precious Infants Prayer Vigils - Indianapolis (Contact Peggy Geis at peggygeis@att.net for more info)
- Nov 19 - Respect Life Mass - Terre Haute (For more info, message Connie Kehl Fitch: [email drmeathead@yahoo.com](mailto:drmeathead@yahoo.com) or call (812) 232-6517)
- Nov 22 - Faithful Citizens Rosary Procession (For more information, contact Eric at faithful.citizens2016@gmail.com)

Resources & Information

- National Catholic Bioethics Center - FAQ: Guidelines on Giving to Charitable Organizations (<http://dft.ba/-ncbcfaq>)
- NCBC Response to Ice Bucket Challenge - (<http://dft.ba/-ncbcicebucket>)
- American Life League - Charitable Organizations and their Positions on the Life Issues (all.org/charities/?page=6)
- Susan G. Komen's Moral Dilemma - (<http://dft.ba/-nckomen>)
- Life Decisions International - Fight Planned Parenthood (<http://fightpp.org/>)
- Archdiocese of Indianapolis - Catholic Charities (archindy.org/cc/index.html)
- Social Media Users Are More Charitable Than You Might Think - (<http://mashable.com/2014/09/18/social-media-charity/>)
- Pope decrees: Catholic charities must always act in accordance with Catholic teaching - (<http://dft.ba/-popedecrees>)
- USCCB on Stewardship - (<http://dft.ba/-usccbstewardship>)

Our Lady, Queen of the Most Holy Rosary, pray for us.

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