

# Diocese of San Joaquin

16 February 2012



Over the past month I've been writing to you about the Duties of the Laity as laid out in the Constitution and Canons of the Anglican Church in North America. Today I would like to share with you the fifth of the duties and one of the most difficult for many of us.

## ***#5. To give regular financial support to the Church, with the biblical tithe as the minimum standard of giving;***

At first glance one might argue that this fifth duty isn't very "spiritual" especially in light of the previous four which dealt with worship, living out our baptismal vows and evangelism. I, on the other hand, would argue that, in fact, the fifth of the duties is very spiritual. You see we often try to separate our finances from our "spiritual lives" but you really can not do that. I once had a friend who said, "Show me a person's check book and day timer and I will tell you the state of their spiritual health." Well, that makes sense to me - how we spend the time and money that God has given us is a reflection of our spiritual lives.

For many of us the first part of the duty will not be difficult - we give regularly to the church and not an insignificant amount either. The average giving across-the-board in the USA a few years ago was \$1,000 a year for the active church goer. \$1,000 is a lot of money and is the biblical tithe . . . if our income is \$10,000 a year. The difficult part comes with the qualifier . . . "the biblical tithe as the minimum standard of giving." Now some will argue that when scripture speaks of the tithe in Leviticus and Deuteronomy it speaks to a different time and era not a universal standard. Well, what do you think? God says in Leviticus: "***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.***" (Leviticus 27:30-32) I don't think God is speaking only of produce in terms of harvest but produce in the sense of the fruit of our labor. The interesting aspect to this scripture comes when you look at the last portion . . . "***belongs to the Lord.***" You see that is where the problem lies . . . we mix up who the "produce" belongs to. We have the notion that

everything we have is ours!

However, when we come to the table with the understanding that everything we have is a gift from the Lord then what we are doing in the tithe is not giving a gift to God, but rightly returning to him 10% of what He has already given us.

Another aspect to think of comes from the New Testament. Jesus acknowledges the tithe as he rebukes the Pharisees for giving the tithe but ignoring justice. (Luke 11:42) Jesus also praises the widow who gives beyond the tithe while in the Temple. (Luke 21:1-4) The spiritual discipline of the tithe requires us to rely upon God the way that this poor widow did. And here is the big picture . . . THE TITHE IS FOR OUR GOOD NOT GOD'S. God wants us to be generous and loving people and the way that we do that is by giving away, not taking in or holding onto. We give regularly to the church so that we may practice generosity as a response to God's generosity to us!

Bishop Eric

### **Diocesan Calendar**

**February 18th** - Diocesan Council

**February 20th** - Diocesan Office Closed

**February 25th** - Diocesan Altar Guild Board @St. James Cathedral, 10 a.m.

**February 26th** - Bishop @Jesus the Good Shepherd, Henderson

**March 10th** - Standing Committee

**March 11th** - Bishop @ San Pedro y Pablo, Arvin

**March 13th** -Rural Deans

**March 17th** - Diocesan Council and Ordination of Jonathan Canary @St. Columba, Fresno, 2 p.m.

**March 18th** - Bishop @ St. Clement's, Woodlake

**March 25th** - Bishop @ St. James, Sonora

**March 29th** - Mass of Chrism, 11am

**April 1st** - Palm Sunday - Bishop at the Cathedral

**April 8th** - Easter Sunday - Bishop at the Cathedral

**April 28th** - Daughters of the Holy Cross Spring Gathering

**April 30th - May 2nd** - Clergy Conference @ ECCO

**August 9-10** - Provincial Hispanic Ministry Conference. at the Cathedral, "Caminemos Juntos"

