

I came to Holy Trinity Church as an infant. I was three months old when our rented house in Sturbridge burned down. Our family had only moved here three months before my birth and had no social support network to speak of. My mother who was originally from Chicago described the house that burned down as having been in the sticks. She did not drive a car and was isolated in the woods.

When the house burned down our father was driving his truck on his long distance route. Our mom with four girls 5 and under, was utterly alone. The story ran in the local paper of the hospitalized family and one priest and his parish responded. That was this congregation of Christians.

Perhaps the money came from the Parretti fund or some other special fund but by the time we got out of the hospital, there was a small apartment on Canal Street just a block from here and within a stone's throw of a grocery store, schools and a department store. This must have felt like salvation for our mom. The most important proximity for me, was Holy Trinity Church.

I have never known anything without this church and God being mixed into it.

Later on another child, a boy, was added to our family, our father departed and eventually our lives became very difficult. For the majority of our childhoods we lived in poverty. In the 8th grade I recall having only one pair of pants for about half of the year and those I purchased with my paper route money. But I did not feel bad for myself, because I had this place.

I knew that the poor were considered to be blessed by God. I knew that Jesus himself was so poor that when he was presented at the temple that two pigeons were sacrificed for him, the offering reserved for the impoverished. I knew that when people teased me for being shabby that God could see the real me. It was because of people like the Sunday school teachers, the choir directors, all of the ministers that I had known and all the people that I saw each week who repeated these messages to me, that I did not even realize that I was poor. I knew that whatever I offered to God he would take and multiply and that the important part of the giving was that I was honest with God about giving it with my whole heart. I did not have all of the things that I wanted but for the most part, I had what I needed.

All that I did was keep coming here to worship God, no matter what was happening in my life, I just kept coming here. I was baptized here, confirmed here, married here...twice, all of my children were baptized here, and I have buried my mom, my niece and a sister from here. I have been coming here now for

53 years. No matter what fiscal shape my life took, I have come here and honestly for most of that time, I have struggled with the concept of the Tithe.

Into my adult hood as fiscal realities hit me I have always had a hard time reconciling my checking account with the economy of God. I had one period in my adulthood that I still call “four jobs and four kids”. I have experienced a very long struggle with the contrast between the messages of this world and the economy of God.

God says: The more that you give, the more I will multiply your resources.

The world says: My bank account does not magically refill because I want to have more money.

God says: Trust in me and I will fill your cup to overflowing.

The world says: You don't have enough, look at what everyone else has.

God says: I will never ask you to do anything that I will not provide all that you need to do it.

The world says: God? What is God?

Many years ago, when I realized that this was one of my struggles on my path with God I said a simple prayer, “God help me with this please. Even if I do not want to acknowledge it, let me see what I need to that will help me to give freely”.

It is really only within the last five years that I have finally “arrived at this prayer”. It was really because I came to understand in real and tangible ways that God was constantly intervening in my life. In response to this startling information I began for the first time in my life to trust God with everything. Every prayer, every concern, every difficulty and even my checking account.

The first tangible demonstration of this was the kneelers in front of each of you. I was internally responding to God’s call for me. I was standing in the church when I looked down at the kneelers and noticed that if I were wearing panty hose they would tear on the ripped vinyl that was there. So I said to God in my head, “Father, if you want me to help with these I will. I know that you can make this simple and affordable for me so I will wait for you to let me know what to do”.

A few weeks later I inadvertently attended a meeting where church repairs were being discussed (and I am serious, I did not intend to be there) and I related the story of my discussion with God with my table discussion counterpart. My spontaneous table partner Anphony announced to the congregation that I had offered to fix the kneelers. I was shocked at how quickly that happened! But said to God in my head, “Ok Lord, that was pretty direct, I’ll await further instructions”. I was reeling and knew that this was the ok from from God to “decorate his house”! I knew that I needed to

work with my sister Ellen and the following day she prompted me to look for fabric in a certain store. That is where I found two full bolts of the very durable upholstery fabric that you have been kneeling on for \$1.99 a yard. All of the people that we needed were provided. For six weeks this large band of crazy ad-hoc upholsters in this church pulled and tugged and scratched ourselves and laughed and groaned but by Easter, the day that we all thought would be impossible for such a large job to be completed by, the kneelers were done and no one had tears in their panty hose! I can see some that need a bit of a nip and tuck now that it has been a couple of years and when God wants me to do this I know that he will provide me with all that I need to complete it. This much I am certain of.

Because of that experience and the others that were the catalyst for that leap of faith, everything changed for me. God said he would provide and God did provide. We had all that we needed.

Now when I am asked to do something, or I feel compelled to do something, like write my check out every week, I do it with confidence knowing that God will provide me all that I need. I write out my pledge now not with foreboding or feeling that I am losing something but with so much Joy that I am almost dancing inside because God has allowed me the opportunity to thank him, by letting go of this world of want and buying into his economy, that really makes no sense, and

yet is the only thing that really does make sense. Sometimes still, I will have momentary doubts when it comes to money but I now recognize those as the evil one trying to get me to doubt and I just set my eyes and heart upon God and his promises and the fears melt away.

I can't tell you whether you will come to this realization slowly as I did, or quickly but I can assure that God does not waste words and if he wants us all to let go of the economy of this world and buy into the economy of his world, then we will, with his help, we all will.

This place has saved me. I have not always been a good steward but now is my time to be one. God has seen me through all of the terrible things this life has thrown at me and I was able to handle it, because he was with me, and I knew about him because of this place.

I do want to keep the lights on here. I do know that God has great plans for us all in this place and I know that I do not now, nor have I ever been doing it by myself. It is only possible with God, so trust me, if you ask him and believe, he will provide all that you need. We don't have to do it all alone, God is with us!

I give to God out of gratitude for all of the people of Holy Trinity Church who took a leap of faith and responded when God told them of a woman with four little girls who were

hospitalized and had lost everything. I give out of gratitude for God who let me know how much I was worth, that he could see, but that the economy of this world could not see. I give out of thanks for all of the people who took the time to teach me all of the things that I knew of God that made me know that I was never alone. I give out of thanks for this wonderful place, where I have come my whole life, to worship God. I give also for the future that God has in store for us and for all of the people that he will bring to his love through us here at Holy Trinity Church. He can do it! He already has, for a woman in a hospital with four little girls, fifty three years ago.

Hope Wilson