



A leap into the abyss of God

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Jesus' detractors tried to catch him with the twin traps of rules and money. Is it lawful or not to pay taxes to the evil Empire? We use rules and money to keep us safe. Follow the rules and hang on to the money. Manipulate the rules so we can keep more money. If we get enough money, we get to make the rules. Then we can get even more money. It isn't that we're greedy. It's that we are afraid. Rules and money keep us safe.

But Jesus broke through the small-minded consciousness traps. If Caesar's image is on the coin, give him the silly thing. What matters is giving to God what is God's, that which is formed in God's image — ourselves. St. Ignatius prayed, "All that I am and all that I have You have given me. I give it all back." Whoa! "I give it all back." All?

That is taking a flying leap into the abyss of God. That is breathing out trusting that the air will still be there for us to breathe back in. Jesus invites us to give ourselves to the God of infinitely generous grace trusting that God will give us back ourselves again blessed with more life than we had before. It is an act of trust and love.

We miss the point if we give to the Church, Christ's Earthly Body, just to fund a mission of which we approve. No, giving is a vital act of faith. In olden days, the legal process for conveying a parcel of land was to hand the other person a clod of the dirt. When we give a portion of our money — don't get hung up on rules about percentages — it represents giving our whole lives to God. If we feel a hesitation, a reluctance to let go of our money, that's fear (the chosen tool of all oppression) clutching at our souls. A flying leap into God is a scary thing. Rules and money are so much easier to calculate, more manageable, than the awesome living God who loves a cosmos into being, who loves us into being.

We get free to give from trusting God who loves us. When we dare to trust, God shows his love inviting us to trust more and live more freely. Life springs out of the consciousness traps like a jailbreak. That launches the adventure.

For reflection...

- What are the earliest experiences you can remember of learning you needed to follow the rules and have enough money to be safe?
- When you are asked to give — by a beggar on the street, by the Church, by a charity — do you feel any tension or discomfort? Describe the feeling in both its emotional and physical forms.
- Can you recall a positive experience of giving anything — time, money, work? How would you describe that experience? What was positive about it?



Dan Edwards was a layperson in Idaho, then a priest in Georgia, and now serves as bishop of Nevada. His missional priorities are community organizing, multicultural ministries, relational spirituality, and stewardship.