

# *THE LAY CATHOLIC*



## *Season Blessings!*

JOANN MESSINA

The Thanksgiving and Christmas seasons are always a highly anticipated time, perhaps more so this year than any time in recent memory. And there is no time more appropriate than Thanksgiving and Christmas to express our gratitude for the support you have given Laity in Unity during our inaugural year. Amid all the challenges imposed by the pandemic, this is the perfect time to reflect on God's abundant blessings and His love for each of us.

May your Thanksgiving and Christmas season be filled with health, happiness, and many blessings from God!

God Bless!

The Laity in Unity Team

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# Wichita Falls Meeting: *Forward with Passion*

BY: ANDREW KNOBBE

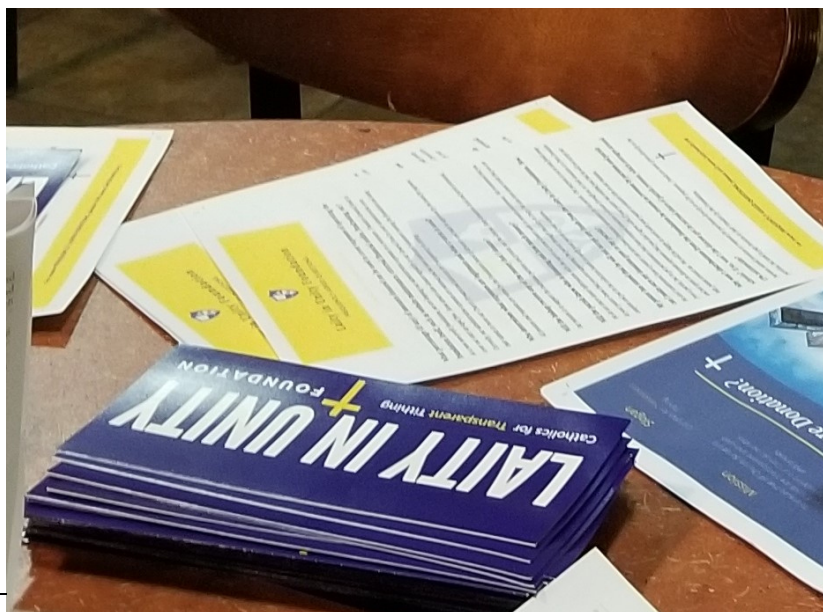


On October 18th, 2020 the Laity in Unity Foundation met in Wichita Falls, Texas. Members of the foundation met Catholics in the area to promote the mission of providing the Church an opportunity to tithe through a Pure Donation. The meeting was a success.

The message to bring transparency to the finances of the Catholic Church was well received and people were left eager to get involved. Emotional testimonies were shared and the Holy Spirit worked through the community to create excitement and passion for the movement.

Philip Gray gave an empowering speech updating the attendees on the status the 2019 petition submitted to Rome in support of the Catholic faithful of Fort Worth. Members of the Wichita Falls area discussed a future strategy in promoting the cause of the Laity in unity Foundation.

This meeting was the second of many more outreaches planned by the Laity in Unity Foundation around the diocese of Fort Worth.



## Success!

After the Wichita Falls meeting,  
monthly donations to the Laity in  
Unity Foundation increased by nearly  
40%.

Thank you Wichita Falls!





# MERRY CHRISTMAS!



Merry Christmas to all our supporters!

The team at the Laity in Unity Foundation hopes that you and your family have many blessings and a Christmas season full of happiness and cheer! Most importantly we hope that everyone is provided that opportunity to reflect on the birth of Christ and the coming of our Lord.



The Laity in Unity Foundation believes prayer is the building block of faith. Members of our team will be praying for all our supporters, the Diocese of Fort Worth, and for our Holy Church in the coming weeks.



## END OF THE YEAR GIVING TAX DEDUCTIBLE CONTRIBUTION †

We would like to encourage all our supporters to make an end of the year, tax deductible contribution to your parish, priest, or diocesan cause through the Laity in Unity Foundation.

This is a great opportunity to give back to the causes you care about in your Church. You can make a donation via Faith Direct, Paypal, or mail.

For more information, please visit:  
<https://laityinunity.org/donate>



## *Diocesan Tithing - Direction from a Canon Lawyer*

BY PHILIP GRAY, CANON LAWYER

“Grace to you, and peace from Him  
Who is, Who was, and Who is to come”  
(Rev. 1:4).

In a recent discussion with the Board  
of Directors of the Laity in Unity  
Foundation (LIU), they asked that I explain  
the ideology and mission of a lay  
organization devoted to the support of the  
Church. It was my suggestion that led to  
the formation of LIU, and I am happy to  
explain why I encourage these  
organizations.

Generally speaking, the Faithful have  
an obligation to pay tithes. It is a precept  
binding in conscience. The precept is  
general in nature and does not specify the  
manner (how) or amount (how much) to  
give. Here, I am concerned about the  
"how"; the manner in which the Faithful  
pay tithes.

Popes, bishops, priests, religious, and  
laity have published their thoughts on this  
for centuries. It was an opinion on this that  
encouraged the Faithful in Germany to pay  
tithes and receive indulgences in return.  
We all know the outcome of that. In our  
modern era, we often hear the obligation  
of tithing associated with three expressions  
of “time, talent, and treasure.” This is  
usually connected to the Gospel  
admonition to give our whole selves to God  
and to tithe from our whole and not our  
surplus, just as the widow who gave her  
two last pennies to the Temple treasury  
(Mk.12:41-44; Lk. 21:1-4). In short, most  
opinions do not discuss the how of giving,  
or even the how much. Most Catholics  
simply emphasize the obligation to give.

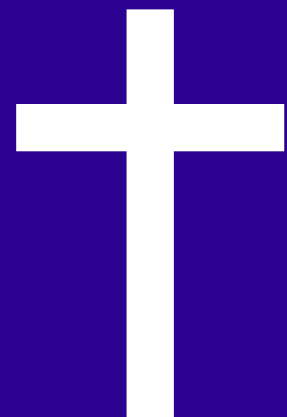
Regrettably, many people believe  
that only tithes given to a parish or  
diocese fulfill their precept to tithe. That  
is simply not true. In fact, in the Gospel of  
Mark, Jesus condemns the religious  
leaders of His day for claiming that  
support of God does not include support  
of their parents; that by giving their tithe  
to God by supporting the Temple and the  
priests, they do not have an obligation  
needs of their parents (Mk. 7:10-13). He  
will go on to condemn similar attitudes  
about the emphasis on tithing while  
ignoring “the more important precepts”  
of charity and good works. It is clear from  
the words of Jesus in the Gospel that  
tithing is not fulfilled simply because  
money is given to religious leaders for use  
in the Church. Money given to a family  
member in need, food given to a stranger,  
paying for a car repair when a friend  
cannot are all examples of tithing. Put  
another way, Jesus makes clear that how  
we tithe—the manner of our giving-cannot  
be limited to those gifts given into the  
hands of priests. It is not who controls the  
money that fulfills the precept of tithing,  
it is willingness to use our treasures as an  
act of charity and help someone in need  
that makes it a tithe.

We are human, not animals. A critical  
element of being human is that we have  
the power to be self determining. Each  
person has a free will that should be  
influenced by a properly formed  
conscience. To form the conscience, we  
are expected to seek out sufficient  
knowledge about situations we encounter  
and make prudent decisions based on the  
Gospel.



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PHILLIP GRAY, CANNON  
LAWYER FOR THE  
CATHOLIC CHURCH





# *Diocesan Tithing - Direction from a Canon Lawyer... Continued*

BY PHILIP GRAY



At the end of our life, God will judge each of us individually. While our religious leaders will be judged on how they teach and lead, each of us will be judged on whether we used our God-given freedom to make proper choices for the right reasons. We are not animals, and we should not act like them. We are made in the image and likeness of God, made for Him, heirs to Heaven, and we should act like it. For this reason, all our actions should have a purpose to advance the Kingdom of Heaven. And, we should recognize how our actions do that. When we tithe, we should understand how our gift will be used and whether that use will advance the Kingdom of God. Regrettably, many scandals have rocked our Church in this generation. They include the priests sexual abuse scandal, the Vatican bank scandal, and the misuse of large sums of money by bishops and organizations associated with bishops. These scandals are ongoing and continue to plague the media reports on a regular basis. Specific to the Diocese of Fort Worth, the Bishop has hurt a very large number of people, both Catholic and non-Catholic alike. The hurt is so great, an unprecedented number of people have called for his removal publicly, and a recent survey indicates that the majority of priests in the Diocese want him removed. When these scandals occur, three common consequences of the mistrust that develops are: 1. People stop attending Mass and the sacraments; 2. People stop giving money to the Church; 3. Souls are lost.

Those of you who have heard me speak on issues in the Church know that I am deeply concerned over the loss of souls. I strongly urge people to remain in the Church, and I am always open to helping them find acceptable ways to participate in Mass and the sacraments when their hurt discourages them from participating. I am also concerned over the loss of funding for our parishes and dioceses. When scandals rock the Church and people stop giving to their parish or diocese, the Mission of the Church is stunted. It's exactly what the devil wants. It seems like a lose-lose. If people give during a time of scandal, they support those who cause scandal. If people don't give, the Mission of the Church suffers. There is a win-win situation. Give to a lay controlled foundation; target your gift with a purpose. When a lay controlled foundation, like the LIU, is formed, it must submit to higher standards of government oversight and regulations than a church-controlled fund. In the United States, churches have no obligation to file a tax return and report their income or assets. All other non-profits must file an annual tax return and report income and assets if their income exceeds \$50,000.00. That's a pretty low threshold. And, the tax-returns for a non-profit are public domain. Anyone can see them. Those returns list key employee salaries, as well as the names of all directors and officers of the corporation. Not so for a church. This oversight and public scrutiny of a non-profit help keep them honest. Those safeguards are not present for churches, and it's why the financial scandals are so difficult to expose and address in the Catholic Church.

Funds like the LIU are recognized in Canon Law. In fact, there are dozens of them operating in the USA, and hundreds operating world-wide. They provide essential funding for shrines, historic cathedrals, parishes, schools, religious orders, and virtually every kind of Catholic organization.

I did not want the scandals and upset in the Diocese of Fort Worth to discourage people from paying their tithes. I also recognize that the lack of trust in leadership is a good reason not to give tithes directly to institutions controlled by the offending Bishop. So, I encouraged the formation of LIU. By giving to LIU, you can fulfill your obligation to pay tithes while also directing what parish or Catholic organization would benefit and how. This allows for essential bills to be paid in a receiving parish, or special purchases to be made that benefit the parish. This allows the Faithful to make purposeful gifts.

# *Diocesan Tithing - Direction from a Canon Lawyer... Continued*

BY PHILIP GRAY

I have helped many organizations do what the LIU Foundation is doing. I can tell you, it works. In most cases, Church authorities refuse to allow such foundations to help financially. They usually claim some sort of need for control, or claim that the existence of the foundation is disrespectful to the bishop or pastor involved. As I pointed out above, there is no foundation for this kind of thinking. Both Sacred Scripture and Canon Law encourage the existence of these foundations. They benefit the Faithful by giving them a way to pay tithes without supporting scandal, and they allow the Church to pay its bills. It's a win-win. As I have encouraged this kind of foundation in many other places, I encourage its use in the Diocese of Fort Worth. I hope and pray for the success of the LIU, and I hope you will contribute to its success.

God bless you; St. Joseph keep you.

Peace,

*Phillip C. L. Gray*



Philip C. L. Gray, JCL

