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Stewardship Message of
Archbishop Thomas J. Murphy

(podcast) A Good Steward
Cultivates God's Gifts Responsibly



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Mission Advancement

By Patrick O'Meara

In its simplest form, Mission Advancement for the Church is the communications, planning and development work in support of the great commission to go unto all the nations teaching them everything Christ taught us, and baptizing the nations in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

How we engage in these things technically matters both from the standpoint of efficacy for the institutions we serve as well as those who have supported the mission. A focus of the Church on seeking the greatest efficacy of this work in those that support her, is in fact the greatest surety for the efficacy for the institution.

Any program of development in the ideal must seek to bring about broad support of the mission from the laity. This broad support should be seeking the time, talent, treasure and influence of the laity for the mission. The planning and communications work must be in service of this to make it as successful as possible. The natural next step in this process is maturation from support to ownership of the mission itself by the laity. The laity become stewards of the mission – co-workers in the vineyard.

This maturation from supporter to steward is a step of maturation in the role of the laity and of the individual in the Church. It is a process that needs to be understood and discussed in more detail as we seek to integrate the work of stewardship and development into the very core function of the Church, the universal call to holiness.

Much has been written about the methods and methodology of stewardship and development from the institutional perspective. There is much more to be written and developed as we seek a greater integration, but in order to do this it is imperative to develop the understanding of the efficacy of the gift and the giver in the maturation of the individual themselves. Within the Church, more is now being written

about the mode of Christian life that is the Act of Charity.

The Holy Father has alluded to this topic numerous times in his recent encyclicals. Cardinal Cordes, the president of Cor Unum, the dicastery that oversees the charitable work of the Church, is leading much of the writing and thinking on this topic and is in the process of writing on this now. Historically, Cor Unum has overseen the charitable work of the Church as a largely practical matter, but recently there has been additional focus and writing about this mode of the Christian life.

Here in the United States, there are a growing number of development professionals and theologians looking at how the giver grows with the act of gift. In an attempt to add to this discourse O'Meara Ferguson would like to suggest that there are ways in which Catholic institutions raise funds that, while efficacious for the institution, in fact reinforce the most negative trends in secular society. These methods denigrate the giver from supporter to consumer. The value of the Church becomes articulated and then, unfortunately, perceived as derived from this relation to the donor as consumer.

This leads to a radical subjectivism that denigrates the object, the value of the Church, the mission, the gift and, unfortunately, the giver as well. This is juxtaposed to the goal of seeking to have the phenomena of gift be the incarnation of the donor's self-donation to Christ and his Bride.

Se Nosse vs. Se Cogito

In order to understand how forms of Mission Advancement can help or hinder the central mission they are supporting, it is imperative to understand the giver and the act of gift itself. John Paul the Great (Karol Wojtyla) in his early writings while at Lublin wrote about the two types of experiences of man of their own consciousness as subject. Wojtyla writes on this in the early chapters of *The Acting Person*, as man understanding themselves from within as subject or from

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without as object where they look upon themselves. This second manner is reflective as man looks upon himself.

Wojtyla defines these forms of consciousness of self as *se nosse* and *se cogito*. *Se cogito* is reflective upon ourselves as object, such as an examination of conscience. *Se nosse* is where we know ourselves with immediacy, laterally as a subject engaged in act towards an object that has value in and of itself. *Se nosse* is a term that Augustine used and has been developed through the centuries as we talk about looking at how we act and who are as subject. This could be understood using Martin Buber's description of "I-Thou" relationships. We know ourselves more perfectly as I (subject) in relationship with a thou (object). *(This exceptionally short summary does not do justice to Wojtyla's thought but the brevity is needed for this venue.)*

In the world of Mission Advancement we must work to bring the giver to understand

their relationship to Christ and his Bride. The early evolution of this relationship can clearly be *se cogito* where they reflect upon the relationship. However, this is the most immature form of relationship as it leads to an act of Charity. We must work to bring the giver to understand themselves and their relationship with Christ *se nosse*, where they are in fact in a relationship with Christ and His bride. We do not ask them to evaluate the relationship based on the gifts they have received from the Church and the value of the Catholic school, or the gifts others will give, or even their name on a building. Rather they must *first* evaluate the relationship with Christ himself as savior calling them to greater conversion and self-donation. The giver is in a relationship where the object is solely Christ and his Bride, not themselves. Then their gift is in fact incarnation. In this case, the amount becomes inconsequential in that the mission itself has become intertwined with the work of Mission Advancement. This leads to stewardship of the mission itself and ultimately to infinitely more gifts of time,

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