

*(Dan)* Thank you Father Jim and good morning! We've been members of St. Clare since moving here in June 2012. We'd like to start off by telling you a little about how we heard a call to tithe regularly. First, a little background. I'm a cradle-Catholic who comes from a blended Catholic-Presbyterian tradition of guilt and obligation. There was never a question of whether my family would tithe; my parents saw it as a responsibility. Lauren, on the other hand, was raised Episcopalian and completed RCIA shortly after college. Her immediate family was not very involved in their faith or church past her elementary school years. Nevertheless, she became an acolyte and attended Sunday service as much as possible; often by herself. Despite the differences in our upbringing, we made a decision early on in our courtship to keep our relationship God-centered which included attending mass regularly. However, the idea of tithing was still something of an afterthought. We were single and it was up to someone else to fill the need. We gave to the collection basket, but our donations were usually limited to whatever cash we had in our wallet at the time. After we were married, we decided to make tithing a family commitment. However, we wrote the check only after bills were paid and our personal interests satisfied. As a military family, we moved every two to three years and attended a new Church at every duty station. We never really established a connection to any parish, and didn't feel obligated or compelled to make tithing a priority. When we moved to O'Fallon with two little ones in tow, we decided it was time to finally get more involved by joining a parish, and we found St. Clare to be exceptional. The congregation seemed

so involved; there was a wide variety of ministries with active participation to which we felt welcome from the start!

*(Lauren)* As our oldest began school at St Clare and I began volunteering at the school we began to recognize an even greater connection with the church. Our priorities began to change greatly and we began to see our financial well-being for what it was – a blessing we had done nothing to deserve – and we felt obligated to share it. God has graced us with a comfortable life, and we think he expects us to pass those blessings on as much as possible. I can't tell you regular tithing has been an easy decision, or even one we've followed perfectly. Like any family, we'd like newer cars; a bigger TV; a more lavish vacation; some renovations to our house. We believe God expects some sacrifice as a demonstration of faith in his providence and mercy. For us, continuing to live within our comfort zone when others need so much help is to ignore God's call to discipleship, something we will eventually be asked to answer for.

On behalf of Fr. Jim, we thank our fellow parishioners who routinely make sacrifices to help support this beautiful church, our parish ministries and outreach, and the costs of supporting a growing Catholic community. For those of us who are still contemplating the decision to tithe regularly, we invite you to join us in making this spiritual commitment. Tithing is an act of faith, and a realization that everything we have comes to us solely because of God's mercy. Thank you!