



WHAT TO DO WITH OUR STIMULUS MONEY? A letter to the Church

This will not be a difficult question or even a moral issue for the millions of unemployed or employed low-wage workers. This pandemic has been much harder on them and their children than for most of us.

Amounts of up to \$1,200 for an individual or \$2,400 per family (plus an additional \$500 per dependent child) may be deposited in bank accounts or mailed over the weeks to come for many U.S. taxpayers as a result of recent decisions by Congress and the President to release \$2.2 trillion from the U.S. Treasury in response to conditions brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. Those who already earn enough to make a comfortable living may not need this stimulus and will have the opportunity to make choices. What will those of us who follow Jesus and are not in significant need of a stimulus do with it?

140 million – two out of every five of us – live every day at or below the poverty line here in the richest, most powerful nation in the history of the world. For too many, their suffering is not mere inconvenience; it is painful, constant, and deadly. Many are still working where people congregate during this pandemic, exposed to those who may be infected. Each one has a name, a story, a hope. Each one is of no less value to God than any of us.

Jesus is remembered to have said, *“For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life?”* (Mark 8:36) He also said, *“For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”* (Matthew 6:21). We will soon receive parts of a \$250 billion loan that we have no intention of repaying to the grandchildren who will inherit our growing, crushing national debt. For those in genuine need, stimulus money (if they qualify) may be of some small help at this critical time. It will not, however, be a “get-out-of-poverty” ticket. Building a more just society requires the whole community which may be one reason why Jesus gave his disciples the Great Commission to make more disciples, more people invested in making life truly good for all people everywhere.

What are we, Church, called by God to do in this moment? If the future to which God calls is to be different, how are we to collaborate in God’s work together? What will we do with stimulus money that would refocus and energize us as disciples of Jesus Christ?

Written in hope, Eastertide, 2020,

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