



# The Joy in Giving is the Hallmark of Living

The holiday season is a time of giving. We give gifts of many kinds, sometimes to people we do not even know, but for whom we have a *prompted* concern.

It can be enlightening for us to examine the *reason* why we give in order to learn something more about ourselves. Hopefully, this might lead us to become more joyful children of God.

Gifts we give to the ones we love and care about reveal how securely we are connected in life. Gifts given to help people in need reflect the quality of our character. Gifts given to cultural and social causes demonstrate a healthy world view.

Consider this: How we feel about taxes says something significant about us as well. Taxes, while often abused and misused, have nevertheless been designed to assist and

protect all people of a nation. Before reacting negatively to the mere thought of taxes, try to think of taxes as a gift for the common good, which was the original intent of our forefathers.

Since gifts are often about the common good and helping others in need, it can be helpful to consider taxes to be gifts for that purpose. Don't allow the word *tax* to become a trigger word. Rather, let it be transformed into a spiritual concern for others. If that can happen it softens the blow. The term can be redeemed in our minds to become a positive one rather than an irritant.

The concern here is that which goes on within us whenever we give gifts of any kind. Ideally, giving should be a spiritual experience as the result of something special and spiritual happening inside us. For our well being we should keep our finger on our spiritual pulse throughout this season of giving.

As always, all spiritual activity includes prayer and staying in close touch with God who knows better than anyone what giving is all about. Try this:

*Holy One, move me to give thankfully and generously during this special season of giving. Direct me so that I consciously give in gratitude for what I have been given in life. Help me to keep that awareness in focus at all times.*

It is an ever present temptation to think that we have what we possess because we have worked hard or cleverly. Such an attitude leads to pride and arrogance even though we might have worked hard. Plenty of people work extremely hard and still have so very little compared to us. Having as much as we have is not necessarily the direct result of our hard work or how clever we have been. Try to remember that after all is said and done everything we possess is ultimately a gift from God who has blessed us so richly.



Therefore, the proper attitude for us is always *gratitude* not *pride*. We should give accordingly. Giving out of sincere gratitude is a profound spiritual experience and is the hallmark of joyful living.