

Last year, I stood up here and told the tale of my journey towards Christ and how pivotal a role St. Clement's played in that journey.

This year, I want to take a few minutes to confirm my belief in giving back to the church and how important it has been and will continue to be for my family and me.

Earlier this year, I was presented with a career opportunity that (on the surface) seemed too good to be true. It would provide my family with the financial security that some of us are fortunate enough to experience.

After what I considered to be a rather thorough due diligence process (coupled with faith), I resigned from a 20 year career in an industry I had always been familiar and comfortable with. I was ready to embark on this new adventure and as long as my daily prayers were answered, I wasn't worried at all.

Upon receiving my offer letter, the first thing that came into my head was "What do I responsibly do with this form of income?" I knew I wanted to be settled with my family in a house we can grow in. I knew I wanted to provide for my siblings and in-laws and first and foremost, I wanted to provide for my church.

St. Clement's is in need of air conditioning units for both the parish hall and sanctuary. We need an upgrade to our sound system so that both the choir and congregation can clearly hear the word of the Lord. We need curtains or shades for the parish hall to help minimize the lights shining into our neighbor's homes during our many meetings and events that our church hosts. We need to repair a leaking roof so we can remove the temporary tarp in place. And ultimately, we need to decrease or eliminate our deficit of over \$10,000 dollars. All of these things were on my list of things to responsibly do with my newly blessed income.

Fast forward to over two months without being paid, having to unexpectedly move out of the home we were renting (which resulted in our entire savings account being depleted) and having to make the

decision to walk away from this “too good to be true” opportunity, we were in dire straights financially.

During this entire ordeal, we continued to honor our pledges to St. Clement’s, while being able to provide a loving home with fresh food to eat, clean clothes for the children to wear and safe vehicles to drive. For the first time in our parental lives, my wife and I were without an income, but somehow able to make ends meet. We were even blessed with a wonderful two-week vacation in Hawaii in the midst of this journey and thankfully the trip was paid for in full while I was still employed; another piece of evidence that God is looking out for us. Believe me when I tell you, that vacation saved our sanity.

From the very beginning of this “journey”, I have asked God to guide me in the direction he feels best for my family and me. I would not question his guidance and I would put all of my worry on his shoulders to bear.

Having never been a sound sleeper, after I let go and let God, I have been able to soundly sleep each night knowing that something great is around the corner. As we heard in a sermon a few months ago, it is not enough to believe IN God. We have to believe God.

I asked for guidance, he granted me guidance. I asked for patience, he granted me patience. I asked to keep my family safe and healthy and he granted us safety and health. I attribute these to God for not only listening to and answering my prayers, but largely due to us believing him. Believing that giving back to the church not only allows the church to function, but also because it has been returned in more bountiful ways than either of us could imagine.

The world we live in relies on financial support and our great church is no different. The guidance, love and fellowship we all experience each week from St. Clement’s is because we have a wonderful congregation, but also because we love our God and church enough to give back. Trust me when I tell you, giving back works.