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# TOUGH TALK

■ Of all the topics that we might talk about in the church, our relationship with money is the one that will raise the most comment and resistance! We do not talk about money. We talk about other people's money and how they spend it, but we see our own wealth—or lack of it—as a matter of privacy. Many a cleric has balked at the task of asking for funds for a new ministry or renovation, or has groaned when a stewardship sermon is needed.

Yet Jesus said more about money and its use than about almost any other topic in Scripture. From the story of the widow's mite (Mark 12:41-44) to the parable of the talents (Matt 25:14-30) to the question of the rich young man (Mark 10:17-27), we hear Jesus teaching about the power of money and the dangers of being seduced by its power or enslaved by its accumulation (Luke 12:16-21).

As a young parish priest during a diocesan fundraising campaign, I struggled with how to talk about the money being requested to strengthen ministry.

The greatest help to me was a small booklet by Henri Nouwen: *A Spirituality of Fundraising*. I was surprised to find Nouwen, known for his spiritual reflections on Christian vocation, writing about fundraising! He reminded me that we are not asking for money, we are inviting others to join us in the mission of God. Whether they join, or how much they are able to contribute is not our concern. Our part is to share the joy and passion of the work of God's kingdom and invite others to participate.

Money is a resource for ministry, not to be accumulated for its own sake as a protection or as the primary foundation of one's hope and future. We do need to talk about money and the economy and ask whether they are serving God's work or have been diverted to serving other purposes. For it is eminently true: "...where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." (Matthew 6:21). ■