

## **Building a Culture of Generosity**

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I was recently recommended the book *A Manifesto of Hope* by Steve Chalke from one of our most inspirational clergy. The title of the first chapter stayed with me: **“An ounce of practice is worth a ton of theory.”** It is a simple phrase, but it carries a profound challenge. It reminds us that good ideas, worthy intentions, and inspiring words only truly matter when they are lived out.

As you read these words, we will have just celebrated Mothering Sunday. Of all the Christian festivals, it may still be the one that most clearly reflects generosity and gratitude. If we are trying to create a culture of generosity, it must not only begin with thanksgiving—it must embody it. Generosity that lacks gratitude is shallow; generosity rooted in thanksgiving is transformative.

Many of our other great celebrations have gradually changed in meaning. Christmas, Easter, and even Harvest Festival are no longer primarily about giving thanks. For many people they have become occasions for parties, enjoyment, and receiving things—cards, flowers, chocolates, and gifts. These are not wrong in themselves, but they can sometimes obscure the deeper purpose of gratitude.

Mothering Sunday, however, still touches something fundamental within us: the human desire to say **thank you**. In the small acts embodied in homes and churches across the country gratitude is demonstrated and celebrated. For those of us who live by faith, it is a moment to give thanks to God and to the Church. For all of us, it is an opportunity to thank those who have been mothers to us—whether biologically or socially. It is a reminder that gratitude is one of the most powerful forces for shaping a generous community.

This simple but fundamental desire to say thank you feels increasingly precious. In a world full of theories about fairness, justice, and generosity—many of them worthwhile and admirable—we sometimes forget that gratitude is where generosity truly begins. Without thanksgiving, generosity becomes abstract. With thanksgiving, it becomes personal and practical.

There is an observation often made about wealth: **the wealth of a society is not measured by the number of millionaires it produces, but by the number of people trapped in poverty.** If that is true, then building a culture of generosity cannot depend on the generosity of the few alone. While we may be inspired by those who give abundantly, generosity must become a shared habit within the whole community, a shared habit that brings life everyone.

For Christians, we see powerful examples of this in the lives of the saints and particularly in the martyrs—those who gave their lives out of love and gratitude for Jesus

Christ. Their sacrifice reminds us that generosity is not simply about money; it is about love expressed in action.

Yet money does matter. Financial giving is one tangible way that generosity takes shape. The challenges facing a diocese or a church budget are rarely the result of one person's failure. Instead, they may reflect a collective hesitation—a shared struggle to live generously and to recognise with gratitude the grace of God and the life of the Church that brings hope, transformation, and community through the power of the Spirit.

If responsibility belongs to everyone, then so does the opportunity to act. Each of us can offer that **ounce of practice**. In this we might remember the example of the widow in the temple, praised by Jesus for giving all she had. Her small coin seemed insignificant beside the wealth of others, yet it revealed a depth of gratitude and trust that shamed the actions of the rich and powerful.

Perhaps her simple act—the dropping of a coin into the temple treasury—can inspire us today as we seek to create a culture of generosity. Her generosity might challenge us to be gentler with each other, to highlight the good rather than focus on the bad, to seek the best in the other rather than seek to show our own goodness to the world. These small acts, the words we use, the text of an email or comment on social media, the caring and safe touch to the distressed and broken all contribute to the building of a culture of generosity.

As we seek to build a culture of generosity in our shared life and work in the Church, it may be that our small, faithful actions matter far more than we realise. After all, an ounce of practice may truly be worth a ton of theory.