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Many believe that for centuries the Catholic Church has been, and remains, the biggest financial power on earth. It is an institution that has held people captivated by higher power unlike any other, with millions of loyal followers following the ancient words of the bible to receive their ticket to heaven when their death comes. To attend services, to repent sins, to give back to the community, to lead a moral life, to live according to the bible; this is the way to earn a blissful eternity in heaven. In addition to that, donating to the Catholic Church, whether in large sums, in a will, or even each Sunday on the offering plate during services is considered a part of the role that must be played in order to enjoy an afterlife in heaven. Although many devout Catholics participate in donating weekly many argue that the average church-goer will not be touched by their donation, in other words, the money will have zero effect on them. The church is allowed to continue promising that these donors will receive the love of god, his blessings, and heaven with their donations, and nothing more tangible is needed, not even a receipt.

To begin with, the expenses of the Catholic Church are officially unknown. The ways the Catholic Church spends all of its money is officially unknown. All of the ways the Catholic Church receives its money is officially unknown. The income rates of those who run the Catholic Church are officially unknown. The monetary value of the Catholic Church is unknown. There are many estimates of these numbers and investigations into these numbers, but the Catholic Church is a 501(c) organization. It is a nonprofit organization, classified as a religious institution and it is completely exempt from

reporting the status of its finances. Also, due to its nonprofit status, the Church does not have to pay taxes or any fees to the government. So purely based upon going to church weekly and paying donations, the return for an average catholic would be solely the participation during services, church events, and the actual building itself. Despite being a member of an individual church or parish, its members must also pay to use the venue for events such as weddings. A nonprofit organization is an organization that uses its additional finances that it does not need to pay to the government to further its sole mission and purpose. A Catholic Church's purpose is to spread the word of god and the Catholic belief therefore it does not necessarily have to return it's revenue to those who donate because their donation is substantial proof that they already partake in the Catholic Church's practices. In addition, seeing as a nonprofit organization is tax-exempt, its donations may be tax deductible, which may further incentivize its members to donate larger and larger sums.

To further the argument that such a wealthy institution does not directly give back to its individual donors that donate through offering plates and the many online sites, there have been investigations that have determined the Catholic Church spends about \$170 billion a year, of which the majority, \$150 billion, is then donated from the organization to hospitals and schools (The Catholic Church in America Earthly Concerns). Much of the donations go to schools of higher education that support the Catholic Church's mission of spreading their religious beliefs and practices (The Catholic Church in America Earthly Concerns). While these donations from the church is to further its mission within the communities around the world, it is not necessarily being given back to or benefiting the original donors. A majority of donors believe their gift of

money to their church is a religious act, an expected act, that a higher power will someday thank them for the gift and repay them with a happy life, full of fortune and health, and continue into the afterlife. Sometimes donors simply donate because it is the “right thing to do”, or even from peer pressure.

In addition to spending the church’s money on schools and hospitals many parishes require huge amounts of funding. It is not cheap to operate a church, yet many priests are incredibly wealthy, attaining their money from none other than their members’ donations (The Church, Nonprofits, and Taxes). This brings into question whether it is right or wrong for the institute to be exempt from reporting its finances. Also, the Vatican itself is a massive institution. The Pope travels the world in the name of spreading religion and his thoughts of what is right and moral according to the word of God, but is it right and moral that he travels the world to say these things while dressed in valuable robes and adorned with precious jewels derived from the money of donors? There is an ethical balance that must be addressed among those who compose and run the catholic institution, but it remains unknown to the public and more importantly those who donate for the sake of their beliefs.

Another issue regarding the Catholic Church’s spending of devout member’s donations is the millions of dollars spent worldwide on their legal bills. A large problem of the Catholic institution is the repeated sexual abuse accusations and incidents. If this institution exists to spread the mission of religion and moral living then its own preachers should follow the concept of moral living. The huge number of the leaders of these beliefs that are straying from the values they preach publicly results in member’s money being poured into legal cases that should not exist in the first place. It is somewhat

unethical to spend money meant for something good on something so horrendous. This can be further argued that it is hugely unethical for people of the Catholic Church, who live off of the donations of the people they are meant to guide in a moral direction, to ever need the church's funds in any type of legal case. One week a priest may be in church asking for donations for God, the next week those funds might be used for settling a sexual abuse case. That is not the intentions of member's when they give money for the sake of their devotion and therefore can mean that the Catholic Church is somewhat deceiving when asking its members for donations. According to The Economist, sex abuse cases and scandals have cost the church over 3 billion dollars, "Thousands of claims for damages following sexual-abuse cases, which typically cost the church over \$1 million per victim, according to lawyers involved, have led to a liquidity crisis" (The Catholic Church in America Earthly Concerns). This displays how the church's officials are abusing donors in a different way, financially.

On another note, properties and owning real state is another issue. This is very highly discussed in smaller churches and such as building funds and other goals churches try to meet. This is something that priests try to involve everyone in with fundraisers and bake sales. With the mega churches having such an immense amount of money they do not have to concern the congregation at all. According to Guardian.com it talks about how the Vatican built a secret property empire using Mussolini's millions. This article talks about the many different ways they tried to preserve their secrecy from the public. If these mega churches are so well protected and hold so much prestige why should their affairs be hidden to the public? The article also states "Behind a disguised offshore company structure, the church's international portfolio has been built up over the years,

using cash originally handed over by Mussolini in return for papal recognition of the Italian fascist regime in 1929” (How the Vatican Built a Secret Property Empire Using Mussolini's Millions). This shows how the church secretly put accounts off shore that they did not want anyone asking questions about in Rome.

In addition, the church’s financial management is messy, and difficult to describe. Due to the Catholic Church’s management at local, state, national, and international levels, documentation of its finances, expenses, and budgeting is seriously complex. There have been various levels of the church that have had to file for bankruptcy, which calls into question where the money from members is going. There have been investigations into whether local priests and higher up officials are essentially pocketing money for their own personal use and enjoyment.

Overall, the Catholic Church’s ability to keep their finances and management practices a secret from the public exhibits a lack of respect towards their donors, who truly and deeply believe enough in their faith to donate their hard earned dollars. The donors believe they are contributing to a valid and noble cause, but as you can see, while it cannot be argued that the church does contribute a large sum of the donations they receive to moral causes and the community, an absolutely massive and unjust amount of that very money is used for covering wrong doings that should not be associated with a religious association, nor to cushion the pockets of the people in charge of operating such an operation that regards itself as a moral example for humanity. Such an organization needs to find a middle ground with the Internal Revenue Services to truthfully allow their loyal donors and members to know exactly how their good intentions are being used.

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