

Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America
The Diocese of Eagle River and the Northwest
Antiochian Orthodox Church of the Annunciation

كنيسة البشارة الأرثوذكسية الأنطاكية

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Sunday November 6th, 2016



Saturday Service: Vespers at 6 PM

Sunday Services: Matins 9:30 AM, Divine Liturgy 10:30 AM

St. Isaac the Syrian said: “The one who knows himself, is better than the one who sees the Angels”

الأحد العشرون بعد العنصرة والأحد السابع من لوقا

Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost & Seventh Sunday of Luke

Changes in the Liturgy

تغييرات في القداس

الايصوذيكون

هلم لنسجد ونركع للمسيح ملكنا والهنا، خلصنا يا ابن الله يا من قام من بين الاموات، لنرتل لك هلوليا!

Entrance Hymn

O Come, let us worship and fall down before Christ.

Save us, O Son of God, who art risen from the dead, who sing to Thee: Alleluia!

طروبارية القيامة (بالحن الثالث)

لِنَفْرَحِ السَّمَاوِيَّاتِ وَتَبْتَهِجِ الْأَرْضِيَّاتِ. لِأَنَّ الرَّبَّ صَنَعَ عِزًّا بِسَاعِدِهِ، وَوَطِئَ الْمَوْتَ بِالْمَوْتِ وَصَارَ بِكَرِّ الْأَمْوَاتِ. وَأَنْقَذَنَا مِنْ جَوْفِ الْجَحِيمِ. وَمَنَحَ الْعَالَمَ الرَّحْمَةَ الْعَظْمَى.

Troparion of the Resurrection (Tone Three)

Let the heavens rejoice and the earth be glad, for the Lord hath done a mighty act with His own arm. He hath trampled down death by death, and became the first-born from the dead. He hath delivered us from the depths of Hades, granting the world the Great Mercy.

طروبارية القديس بولس المعترف (بالحن الثالث)

إلى يهتف الكهنة، ودمك في وغيوراً للكنيسة، آخر بولساً جعلك الإلهي، بالإيمان اعترافك إن البار، الأب أيها العظمى الرحمة يمنحنا أن الإله المسيح إلى فابتهل الزكي، زخريا ودم هابيل دم مع الرب

Troparion for St. Paul the Confessor (Tone Three)

Thy confession of the one divine Faith showed thee to the Church to be a new Paul and a zealot among priests, O holy one. The righteous blood both of Abel and Zachary with thee doth cry out together unto the Lord. Righteous Father, intercede with Christ God in our behalf that His great mercy may be granted unto us.

Troparion of the Annunciation – Tone 4

Today is the beginning of our salvation, and the manifestation of the mystery from the ages; for the Son of God becometh the Son of the Virgin, and Gabriel proclaimeth grace. Wherefore, do we shout with him to the Theotokos, Rejoice, O full of grace! The Lord is with thee.

(للبيشارة – بالحن الرابع)

اليوم رأس خلاصنا، وإعلان السر الذي منذ الدهور، لأن ابن الله يصير ابن البتول، وجبرائيل بالنعمة يبشّر، فلذلك ونحن معه لنهتف نحو والدة الإله، إفرحي أيتها الممتلئة نعمة الرب معك.

القنطاق لوالدة الإله (بالحن الثاني)

يا شفيعَةَ المسيحيين غير الخازية، الوسيطة لدى الخالق غير المردودة. لا تُعرضي عن أصواتِ طُلباتنا نحنُ الخطاة، بلْ تدارِكينا بالمعونة بما أنكِ صالحة، نحن الصارخين نحوكِ بإيمان. بادري إلى الشفاعةِ وأسرعِي في الطلْبَةِ يا والدةَ الإله، المتشفعة دائماً في مُكرَميكِ.

Kontakion of the Theotokos (Tone Two)

O protection of Christians that cannot be put to shame, mediation unto the Creator most constant, O despise not the suppliant voices of those who have sinned; but be thou quick, O good one, to come unto our aid, who in faith cry unto thee: Hasten to intercession, and speed thou to make supplication, thou who dost ever protect, O Theotokos, them that honor thee.

الرسالة للأحد العشرين بعد العنصرة

Epistle for the Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost

Sing praises to our God, sing praises!

Clap your hands, all you nations!

The Reading is from St. Paul's Letter to the Galatians (1:11-19).

Brethren, I would have you know that the gospel which was preached by me is not man's gospel. For I did not receive it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through a revelation of Jesus Christ. For you have heard of my former life in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God violently and tried to destroy it; and I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people, so extremely zealous was I for the traditions of my fathers. But when he who had set me apart before I was born, and had called me through his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son to me, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not confer with flesh and blood, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me, but I went away into Arabia; and again

رَتَّلُوا لِإِلَهِنَا رَتَّلُوا!

يا جميع الأمم صَفِّقُوا بالأيدي!

* (1:11-19) * فصل من رسالة القديس بولس الرسول إلى أهل غلاطية

يا إخوة أعلمكم أن الإنجيل الذي بَشَّرْتُ بِهِ ليسَ بحسبِ الإنسان * لأنني لم أتسَلَّمُهُ أو أتعلَّمُهُ مِنْ إنسانٍ بل بإعلانِ يسوع المسيح * فإنَّكم قد سمعتم بسيرتي قديماً في مِلَّةِ اليهودِ أنِّي كنتُ اضطهدُّ كنيسةَ اللهِ بإفراطٍ وأدَمِّرُها * وأزِيدُ تقدُّماً في مِلَّةِ اليهودِ على كثيرينَ من أترابي في جنسي بكوني أوفرَ منهم غيرَةً على تَقْلِيدَاتِ آبائي * فلَمَّا ارتضى اللهُ الذي أفرزني من جوفِ أُمِّي ودعاني بنعمته * أن يُعلنَ ابنَهُ فيَّ لأبشِّرَ بِهِ بينَ الأممِ لساعتي لم أصغِ إلى لحمٍ ودمٍ * ولا صعدتُ إلى أورشليمَ إلى الرسلِ الذين قبلي بل انطلقتُ إلى ديارِ العَرَبِ وبعدَ ذلكَ رجعتُ إلى دِمَشقَ * ثمَّ إنِّي بعدَ ثلاثِ سنينَ صعدتُ إلى أورشليمَ لأزورَ بطرسَ فأقمتُ عندهُ خمسةَ عَشَرَ يوماً * ولم أرَ غيرهَ مِنَ الرُّسُلِ سوى يعقوبَ أخي الربِّ.

I returned to Damascus. Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas, and remained with him fifteen days. But I saw none of the other apostles except James the Lord's brother.

الإنجيل للأحد السابع من لوقا

Gospel for the Seventh Sunday of St. Luke

The Reading is from the Holy Gospel according to Luke (8:41-56).

At that time, there came to Jesus a man named Jairus, who was a ruler of the synagogue; and falling at Jesus' feet, he besought him to come to his house, for he had an only daughter, about twelve years of age, and she was dying. As Jesus went, the people pressed round him. And a woman who had had a flow of blood for twelve years, and had spent all her living upon physicians, and could not be healed by any one, came up behind him, and touched the fringe of his garment; and immediately her flow of blood ceased. And Jesus said, "Who was it that touched me?" When all denied it, Peter said, "Master, the multitudes surround you and press upon you, and you say, 'Who touched me?'" But Jesus said, "Someone touched me; for I perceive that power has gone forth from me." And when the woman saw that she was not hidden, she

فصل شريف من بشارة القديس لوقا الإنجيلي البشير, التلميذ (8:41-56) الطاهر .

في ذلك الزمان دنا إلى يسوع إنسان اسمه يائيرس وهو رئيس للمجمع وخر عند قدمي يسوع وطلب إليه أن يدخل إلى بيته* لأن له ابنة وحيدة لها نحو اثنتي عشرة سنة قد أشرقت على الموت. وبينما هو منطلق كان الجموع يزحمونه* وإن امرأة بها نزف دم منذ اثنتي عشرة سنة وكانت قد أنفقت معيشتها كلها على الأطباء ولم يستطع أحد أن يشفيها* دنت من خلفه ومستت هذب ثوبه وللوقت وقف نزف دمها* فقال يسوع من لمسني. وإذ أنكر جميعهم قال بطرس والذين معه يا معلم إن الجموع يضايقونك ويزحمونك وتقول من لمسني* فقال يسوع إنه قد لمسني واحد. لأني علمت أن قوة قد خرجت مني* فلما رأت المرأة أنها لم تخف جاءت مرتعدة وخرت له وأخبرت أمم كل الشعب لأية علة لمسته وكيف برئت للوقت* فقال لها ثقي يا ابنة. إيمانك أبرأك فاذهبي بسلام* وفيما هو يتكلم جاء واحد من ذوي رئيس المجمع وقال له إن ابنتك قد ماتت فلا تتبع المعلم* فسمع يسوع فأجابته قائلاً لا تخف. أمن فقط فنبراً هي* ولما دخل البيت لم يدع أحداً يدخل إلا بطرس ويعقوب ويوحنا وأبا الصبية وأمها* وكان الجميع يبنكون ويلطمون عليها. فقال لهم لا تبكوا. إنها لم تمت ولكنها نائمة* فضحكوا عليه لعلمهم بأنها قد ماتت* فأمسك بيدها ونادى قائلاً يا صبية قومي* فرجعت روحها وقامت في الحال فأمر أن تعطى لتأكل. فدهش أبواها فأوصاهما أن لا يقولوا لأحد ما جرى.

came trembling, and falling down before him declared in the presence of all the people why she had touched him, and how she had been immediately healed. And Jesus said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace." While Jesus was speaking, a man from the ruler's house came and said, "Your daughter is dead; do not trouble the Teacher anymore." But Jesus on hearing this answered him, "Do not fear; only believe, and she shall be well." And when Jesus came to the house, he permitted no one to enter with him, except Peter and James and John, and the father and mother of the child. And all were weeping and bewailing her; but Jesus said, "Do not weep; for she is not dead but sleeping." And they laughed at him, knowing that she was dead. But taking her by the hand Jesus called, saying, "Child, arise." And her spirit returned, and she got up at once; and Jesus directed that something should be given her to eat. And her parents were amazed; but he charged them to tell no one what had happened.

"If you give something to one in need, let the cheerfulness of your face precede your gift, and comfort his sorrow with kind words. When you do this, by your gift the gladness of his mind surpasses even the needs of his body. On the day when you open your mouth and speak ill of someone, even though your thought urged you to say something that seemed correct and for

edification, reckon yourself as dead to God and void of all your works. For what need has a man to demolish his own house and set aright that of his companion?" St. Isaac the Syrian, Ascetical Homilies.

When you are in despair, God will send you something you don't expect. It is enough that you believe in Him and love Him. St. Porphyrios

- **We need to attend the Liturgy from the beginning. Try to be at church at 10:30 AM. Those who partake of Holy Communion should be at church before the epistle is read, stay until the final blessing and say the thanks giving prayers after Holy Communion. Liturgy starts with "Blessed is the Kingdom", and ends with the final blessing and kissing of the cross.**

❖ Church Announcements

- **Artisan Market at St. Peter Orthodox Church:** Friday November 4th 7pm-9pm - Mediterranean Homemade Cuisine sold in Art/Music Cafe. Saturday November 5th 10am-4pm- Romanian Homemade Cuisine sold in Art/Music Cafe. 1802-33rd Ave. Sw, in Marda Loop. \$2.00 Entrance and you get to enjoy live music while feasting on a great meal. Fabulous Silent Auction items. Let us support our sister church.



- **The Nativity Fast (Christmas Fast)**: Has two parts: First part: Starts November 15th until December 19th. During this time we refrain from parties, alcohol on Wednesday and Friday, we also refrain from eating meat, poultry, cheese (dairy products), fish is permitted except on Wednesdays and Fridays. Second Part: from December 20th to the 24th at midnight, all the above plus fish is not permitted during this time. If you can't fast, please talk to Father.
- **When we Fast**: We Orthodox prepare for a Feast of the Church by fasting, attending extra services of the Church, go to confession, read spiritual books including the Bible, refrain from sinning and help the poor.
- **Christmas Party**: Would you like to have a Christmas Party after Liturgy on Christmas Day? or in the evening of December 25th? Let Father know what you think. If you like to help organize one, see Father.
- **Paraklesis during the Nativity Fast**: Every Wednesday during the Nativity Fast at 7 PM instead of Vespers we will have Paraklesis to the Mother of God.
- **Feasts celebrated in November: Monday** November 7th at 7 PM Vespers Liturgy for the Synaxis of the Holy Archangels which is on Tuesday November 8th.
- **A Gentle reminder**: No chewing gum in church please. We Orthodox Fast before Holy Communion from mid-night without food and coffee until after Holy Communion. All children starting at 7/8 should be trained on fasting by the time they are 10 should be fasting completely.
- **The Altar**: The Altar is the Holiest of all Holy places on earth. When we enter or leave we need to approach with all great trepidation and respect. No one should enter the altar, not even the priest unless he is going to serve the services of the Church. It is not a place to carry a conversation, talk on the phone or just go through it. Anyone who needs to give Father a message during the Liturgy please, see Khalil from the side door. Altar boys and men, when you enter the altar to help serving, must make three matanias/bows to the altar, if it is after the consecration of the Gifts, then a full prostration if possible. It is not necessary to have all of the candles, cross, and fans in all the little or great entrances. One candle is more than enough. We need to approach the Altar with the greatest awe and the Fear of God, it is on it that the Holy Spirit descends and make the Gifts into the Body and Blood of Christ.
- **Father to visit you**: Would you like Fr. George Dahdouh to visit you? Talk to Father or call him to schedule an appointment. Father loves to visit families and individuals.
- **World Food Day 2016: Canned Food Drive** requested by the Archdiocese from October to December. Please bring a nonperishable food and body hygiene items to donate to Inn from the Cold

and other needy people. [Thank you for your generosity, Father delivered the food to Inn from Cold. Please feel free to bring more.](#)

- **Sponsors are needed for the following Sundays:** Holy Bread sponsors are needed for the following Sundays: November 27th, December 11th, 18th and Christmas on the 25th.
- **Votive Candles:** we need votive candles for the altar, if anyone would like to donate them.
- **Fr. Joseph Purpora:** will be visiting our parish for youth activities on the weekend of November 18th. Fr. Joseph is the Director of the Youth Department for the Archdiocese. **Tentative schedule:** Young Adults meeting on November 18th at 7 PM, the Theme: Living an Orthodox Christian life in a modern world. Saturday November 19th: meeting with the teens at the church at 4:30 pm. Sunday November 20th meeting with the parents after Liturgy.
- **Upcoming Young Adults Activities:** please come and be a part of the fun!

Date	Activity	النشاط
Nov 05 th Plan A (depending on weather conditions)	Spend a day together in Banff.	قضاء يوم مع بعض في بانف. إذا سمحت الظروف الجوية
Nov 04 th Plan B (depending on weather conditions)	Go to a restaurant and chill out.	الذهاب إلى مطعم والترفيه عن النفس. إذا لم تسمح الظروف بالذهاب إلى بانف.
Nov 11 th	Arabic Breakfast in the church	فطور حمص وفول وتسقية في الكنيسة
Nov 18 th	Fr. Purpura Visit, we will meet and discuss "How to live a Christian life in the modern world and its challenges"	الاجتماع مع أبونا باريورا ومناقشة " كيف نعيش حياة مسيحية في العالم المعاصر وتحدياته"
Dec 02 nd	We will discuss "Church Schism" in history and present with Abouna George.	مناقشة موضوع "انشقاق الكنيسة" في التاريخ والحاضر مع أبونا جورج
Dec 16 th	Help Sunday school preparing for the Christmas play.	مساعدة مدارس الأحد بالتحضير لمسرحية الميلاد

- **Bake Sale:** will be on December 3rd and 4th. Please see Sara for more information.
- **Church School this Saturday November 5th at 4:30 PM.**
- **Christmas Play:** the children's Christmas Play will be on December 18th at the Greek Church in the afternoon. If you want your children to participate, see Kr. Manal.

- **Wednesday Vespers** : Every Wednesday at 7 PM. After November 15th during the Fast, we will have Paraklesis on Wednesdays at 7 PM.
- **Giving back to God**: Our church depends on your generous giving back to God for all His blessings in your life. **Please, give generously and regularly and God will bless you back a 100 times.** **Give a percentage of your income**. Write your name on the envelope for a receipt.
- **University Students**: We are forming an Orthodox chaplaincy on the University of Calgary campus.
- **Youth Trip to Edmonton**: Tentatively on Saturday November 12th, if you like to go, talk to Mary.
- **Don't forget to visit**: www.ancientfaith.com www.myocf.net
- **University Students**: Every year in December university students from all over the US and Canada get together for a retreat at three different locations. Also, for Spring Break 2017, please visit **www.OCF.net/realbreak2017 see below for places**. Father is trying to start one here in Calgary.

+++The Lionheart: COMING SOON TO A CHURCH NEAR YOUR HEART! "The Lionheart"

The challenges of Fatherhood and becoming a great role-model to your children are immense. What about the value of being a loving and caring husband to your wife? Sicknes OR health, remember that? Men, you will gain appreciation from your family, by engaging in a most meaningful course as the "Lionheart". This is a "Pursuit of God" put together by the Orthodox faith. For ages 18+, as you may be a husband or father, so prepare for it. Society is at times, suffocating with social problems: drugs, depression and lack of Leadership in our homes and place of worship. Within a short 4 week term, you will likely find many problem-solving techniques to becoming a better man. We can learn from the DVD or from each others experiences, hopefully in confidence. We can communicate our feeling, or we can just listen and learn. After this program you will thank our Lord for the experience! **Lou Salloum** is assisting Father in forming a Christian men group. Please, signup with Lou Salloum.

- **Missing Sunday Liturgy**: Attending Sunday Liturgy should be part of our regular life as a family, we should not miss church unless we are really sick. Make attending church every Sunday an important part of your family life. **The family that worships together, stays together.**

What is Christian Stewardship? Christian Stewardship is : learning how to be a responsible and concerned caretaker of Christ's Church; it is learning how to enjoy Church life and be happy in Church work., for in Her dwells the fullness of the Spirit of God. ...our active commitment to use all our **time, talent and treasure** for the benefit of humankind in grateful acknowledgment of Christ's redeeming love. ...caring for the needs of others. ...offering one's self to God as He offered Himself to us. ...what a person does after saying "I believe...", as proof of that belief. ...devotion and service to God and His Church as persons, as families, as diocese, as national Church and as Church universal. (Williams & McKibben in Oriented Leadership) Christian Stewardship is about becoming good caretakers of all that God

has given us. God has given each of us special and unique gifts. And through Holy Scripture He teaches us all that what we have is a loan. He lends everything to us, and reminds us that one day He will ask us to give a detailed accounting of what we have done with the gifts He has given us. Archbishop Anastasios of Albania has noted that “we find ourselves by offering ourselves.” Have we learned the blessedness of generously giving to others of all we have? Everything we have is temporal. We don’t know for how long we have it. The fundamental question, though, is how will we use all that we have for the glory of God?

Forgiveness – 12 Prescriptions for Healing and Hope (written by one of our parishioners).

1. Forgive those who are negligent in giving encouragement to others, for encouraging others is one of the greatest, loving and most powerful things one can do.
2. Forgive those who cannot show affection, for they were never taught. Often, growing up in a one-parent home is detrimental to a child’s stability, and inability to communicate or understand the meaning of love, especially if witnessing abuse between parents.
3. Forgive those who are callous and have disregard for others feelings, for they have never experienced empathy, sympathy or “how to feel”.
4. Forgive those who take but do not give. Many people are like this, but be careful not to emulate them. Give to the poor and hungry, who may have sincere reasons for their misfortunes.
5. Forgive the man who does harm to you but keep in mind that love is stronger than hate, and the unforgiving heart will suffer more than the person who has been hurt. Forgiveness comes from the heart, so even forgive people before they bring harm to you.
6. Forgive the boring and ignorant, for they have not seen the world, nor have they read about it. Teach them to love themselves, then perhaps they will have the confidence to express their thoughts and be resourceful with their words.
7. Forgive those who lack grace and gratitude, they will never change. Keep your distance from them.
Commit your time elsewhere.
8. Forgive those who use you or others for personal benefit. They know better but it becomes habitual for them. Saying NO will free you from their grip of reliance.
9. Forgive parents who walk away from their responsibility, as they may be suffering in the clutches of addiction or plain ignorance. The cycle of dependence could be repeated as a parent abandons a child in search of the next fix. History, unfortunately, will likely repeat itself.
10. Forgive the leaders of the world for their corruption and indecisiveness and dreams of personal glory, for eventually the People will win.

11. Forgive those who testify lies in the court of justice to condemn others, for their just reward will be well-deserved entry into the gates of hell!

12. Forgiveness is for the wise, the mature and the loving. It is one of the most difficult things one can do. But it is the only thing that can set your mind and heart free to continue a happy and fulfilling life. Cherish life, appreciate family and love your God. (Copy Written 2016)

Standing For Worship: The Orthodox practice of standing for worship

Standing for worship has been the only acceptable posture for Orthodox Christians from the earliest of times. Through the discipline of standing we act as the faithful servants of the Lord, worshiping before the Throne. We recognize that the temple is not a place of entertainment, where we relax and take in a show, but the very place where we encounter our God. The Holy Apostle Paul tells us, “Watch ye, stand fast in the faith” (I Cor. 16:13); and, “Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with truth (Ephesians 6:14).

Christians should always be spiritually on guard, and even more so when attending the divine services. When we stand for worship, we subject our bodies to the attention needed to properly and fully worship God with all our body, mind and soul. We offer ourselves to God as His humble servants, giving Him all our attention. When we become fatigued during long services we become living offerings to the very God we worship.

Saint Paul says, “Present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service” (Romans 12:1), and the words of the Lord Himself, “...whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses (Mark 11:25).” With love in Christ, Abbot Tryphon

Our Patterns of Giving



by Ron Nicola

*from **The Word, February 2004***

Patterns of giving in Orthodox parishes tend to be influenced by three key factors. The first one is custom and tradition. For many people, especially those who are Orthodox by birth, their approach to giving to the

church is often influenced most by practices their families and their parishes have followed for years. For long-established parishes, systems of giving may have been in place for generations within the community. As much as parish councils talk about encouraging people to give more, the customs and traditions of the past work to perpetuate an ongoing mind-set. The faithful of the community become locked in to giving what they have always given, often without thinking much about the amount in relation to other considerations.

Second, giving is often influenced by parish needs. The parish council builds a budget for the coming year, publicizes the information to parishioners, and encourages the faithful to offer their “fair share” for the coming year. In this same vein, a parish building program or some other special parish project can inspire parish members to give a one-time donation or a multi-year pledge toward the advertised campaign. This kind of need-based giving is a very common guideline used by individuals to decide how much to offer at a specific point in time.

A third factor comes into play when giving is guided by faith, by Holy Scripture, and by the witness of the Holy Orthodox Church. Recognition by an individual that God has blessed them with everything they have results in an offering of thanksgiving for all of these precious gifts. Giving which stems from this third factor is what can motivate Orthodox Christians to give sacrificially and proportionally in relation to all the ways God has blessed them in their lives. This is also the basis upon which some give through the principles and practices commonly known as tithing. All three factors, custom and tradition, parish need, and faith-based giving, are at work to varying degrees in parishes throughout North America.

In many communities with long established parishes, a dues system of some sort was used in the early days of the community to guide member giving. Each adult member or each family was asked to give a specified amount to the church per year in order to be considered a member. This system, in one form or another, became entrenched in most parishes and is still used by some to this day. It is still referred to by some as the “member dues system,” while other communities have evolved into referring to these annual offerings as “pledges.” By whatever name, if the parish advertises a specific amount it expects each adult member or each family to give per year, this is usually all it receives. To give beyond this amount is often not even considered by families and individuals. If the parish has a special need, they may solicit additional donations for this purpose, but the basic amount expected from each parishioner becomes a matter of routine repetition from year to year.

Many Orthodox communities have tried to move beyond this traditional system of making an annual offering to the church based on an announced dues amount or a prescribed minimum pledge. In these cases, parishioners are asked to make their own decision about how much to give to the church each year. While this system can result in some movement toward a truly proportional or sacrificial gift, more often than not, individuals and families still give based on what they have always given and/or on what they feel the church needs. Even when parish leaders and stewardship committees produce programs that talk about the need to give based on how much we have been blessed by God, people tend to give not much beyond what they have always given. It becomes quite difficult to break these trends, so parishes are forced to rely on yet another long-standing tradition when it comes to generating the funds needed to operate the parish and to underwrite identified parish projects. Fund-raising is the other mainstay of parish life that is so entrenched that we view it as a standard and accepted part of parish operations.

The fact that member giving programs have not traditionally generated enough money to cover the cost of parish operations and special projects has led to reliance on fund-raisers to make up the difference. Communities have, over the years, proved to be very creative, resourceful, and imaginative when it comes to planning and implementing fund-raising projects. Everything from festivals, dinners, luncheons, dances,

fashion shows, cotillions, and merchandise and food sales of all types have been used to raise money for the church. Script sales, rummage sales, bake sales, toy sales, and sales of just about anything people might buy have been tried at one time or another. In recent years, it has become quite common for parishes to utilize their facilities during the weekdays for day care centers and preschool programs. These not only generate significant revenue for churches, they also give parishes a positive presence in the surrounding community by providing a much-needed service to families in the immediate vicinity of the church. There are even communities who own real estate that generates revenue in some fashion. Senior citizen housing and even businesses of one sort or another on these parcels become major and ongoing stems of income for parishes. In addition to the financial assistance parishes realize from the myriad of fund-raising endeavors they sponsor, there is a certain amount of fellowship which comes along with the planning and implementation of these projects. Members of the parish enjoy working together to make these events successful. This offering of time and talents is part of a faithful Orthodox Christian's stewardship. After all, the giving of time, talents, and resources is what Christian stewardship means.

So, this combination of giving through dues, pledges, and fund-raisers has brought parishes to where they are today. Many are doing very well by following these practices. They have solid membership cores, beautiful church buildings, social halls, and classroom facilities, and out-reach programs of various types. While some parishes struggle under the burden of financial limitations, we seldom hear, thank God, of parishes failing due to lack of funds. The dedication of our clergy and the commitment of our faithful laity give our communities throughout North America a vibrant presence in cities, states, and provinces in the north, south, east, and west.

Yet, there is a major flaw in this picture. Of the three factors that influence our patterns of giving, only one is founded in scriptural teachings. Furthermore, while there is nothing inherently wrong with fundraisers, relying on their revenue to allow individual members to give less is not consistent with Church teachings. **The only method of giving that is consistent with Church teachings and traditions is that which comes from the belief that all we have is a gift from God. Our offering to the church is in thanksgiving for those blessings.** Through baptism we are Orthodox Christians. Paying dues or minimum pledges are not needed to establish that commitment. What is needed is to offer our time, our talents, and our resources in recognition of the fact that they are gifts from God. Looking to the money generated from fund-raisers to help cover the obligations of parish operations is not consistent with Church teachings. The Bible is clear in its guidance about how faithful Christians should give of their resources to the church. In 1 Corinthians 4:1-2 we read, "This is how one should regard us, as stewards of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found trustworthy." It is not easy to be a good steward. God holds us to a high standard because He has given us so much by virtue of His faith in our ability to utilize those gifts to glorify His name. Stewardship begins with our profession of faith in God and in His teachings. Following this expression of faith, we are required to be trustworthy. This means the giving of our time, talents, and resources. Not two of the three, not a lot of our time but very little of our talent and resources, not a lot of money but none of our time. We must give generously of all three to be true to our expressed belief in God and faith in His teachings.

In Genesis 2:15, it is written, "The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to till it and keep it." It is our responsibility to care for our churches, not the responsibility of others to fulfill our obligations. Our offerings must be sufficient to cover parish operations. Fund-raising revenue has its place, but it must never be thought of as a way of reducing the commitment God expects from us in terms of the giving of our resources to the glory of God. "Honor the Lord with your substance and with the first fruits of all your produce; then your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will be bursting with wine." This message from Proverbs 3:9-10 reminds us that our offering to God must come first in our yearly, our monthly, or our weekly financial planning. Considering all of the blessings we have received from God and

determining how to show our thanks through the offering of our time, our talent, and our resources takes careful planning and serious prayer. In terms of our resources, thinking about how we spend our money and how we allocate our resources is required. First we must decide how much we should offer the Lord to truly show our thanks and appreciation. Then we need to put our financial house in order to meet our needs and those of our family while we offer to God what we feel is right and necessary.

Scriptural-based giving is very different from the practices of paying annual dues and pledges, deciding how much to give based on parish needs, and fund-raising to help pay the church's bills. Sacrificial giving and giving in proportion to what we have received from God leads us toward the concept of tithing. In the minds of most, this means offering ten percent of our gross revenue to the glory of God. Parishes and individual Orthodox Christians who commit to begin this journey need not focus too heavily on the word "tithing" or on the ten percent level of giving right from the start. While it is clear to many that this is what the Bible and Church tradition dictates, thinking in terms of a percentage and giving 1% or 2% or 5% as a first step will mark an important break from the patterns of giving so common in many parishes. Examining the patterns of giving at work in our parishes is something parish councils and stewardship committees should do as they make plans to move their community forward toward the goal of proportional or sacrificial giving. Encouraging parishioners to give as a measure of their faith and not according to set minimums, the amounts of past pledges, or parish needs will take time to implement fully. The first step in this process, however, must be to recognize that faith-based giving is the desired goal. The patterns of giving followed by so many for years and years, while well-intentioned and based on faithful devotion, need to be changed if our churches are to grow and progress to their full potential. The time to start is now and the way to start is to launch an open-minded, patient, and loving look at what has motivated our past practices. Comparing these findings to what is really prescribed in the Bible will reveal the path we need to begin following. May God be with you on your journey.

Ron Nicola is Chairman of the Archdiocese Department of Stewardship.

REAL
break

THESSALONIKI I
FEBRUARY 17-25, 2017

PROJECT MEXICO
MARCH 4-8, 2017

ROMANIA
MARCH 10-18, 2017

THESSALONIKI II
MARCH 10-18, 2017

ALASKA
MARCH 11-18, 2017

CLEVELAND
MARCH 13-16, 2017

JERUSALEM
MARCH 17-25, 2017

NEW ORLEANS
MARCH 20-25, 2017

LET YOUR LIGHT SHINE BEFORE OTHERS
THAT THEY MAY SEE YOUR GOOD DEEDS
AND GLORIFY YOUR FATHER IN HEAVEN.
MATTHEW 5:16

OCF