

DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION  
 ORTHODOX CHURCH IN AMERICA

JOHN 10

*Jesus the good shepherd*



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and leaves the sheep and flees; and the  
 wolf snatches them and scatters them.  
 13 He flees because he is a hireling and  
 cares nothing for the sheep. 14 I am  
 the good shepherd; I know my sheep,  
 and my own know me, 15 as the Father  
 knows me and I know the Father and  
 lay down my life for the sheep. 16  
 If I have other sheep, these are not  
 of my fold; I must bring them also, and  
 they will heed my voice. So there shall be  
 one flock, one shepherd. 17 My Father  
 loves me, because I lay down my life  
 for it; no one takes it from me, but  
 I lay it down of my own accord. I have  
 power to lay it down, and I have power  
 to take it again; this charge I have re-  
 ceived from my Father."

There was again a division among  
 the Jews because of these sayings.  
 20 Many of them said, "This man is  
 mad, and he is mad; why are you  
 listening to him?" 21 Others said, "These  
 are not the sayings of one who has a demon.  
 If a demon open the eyes of the blind,  
 how can he say these things?"

It was the feast of the Dedication in  
 Jerusalem; 23 it was winter, and Jesus  
 was walking in the temple in the  
 porch of Solomon. 24 So the Jews  
 encircled him and said, "How long  
 will you keep us in suspense? If you  
 are the Christ, tell us plainly." 25  
 Jesus answered them, "I testify to you,  
 and you do not believe. The works that  
 I do in my Father's name, these you  
 do not believe, because you do not be-  
 long to my sheep. 27 My sheep hear  
 my voice, and I know them, and they  
 follow me; 28 and I give them eternal

stewardship



**STEWARDSHIP: AN ORTHODOX PERSPECTIVE**

**Prepared by the Department of Religious Education  
Orthodox Church in America**

**New York  
1977**

## STEWARDSHIP DISCUSSION GUIDEBOOK

This packet contains two booklets: one, a pictorial guide to introduce the theme of Christian stewardship (green booklet), and two, a larger booklet of six lessons for the basis of an adult discussion group on the theme. This latter booklet also contains an Appendix which includes the background papers prepared for the 5th All-American Council of the Orthodox Church in America, which focused on the theme of Stewardship in the Church.

### **Procedure:**

It is recommended that all members of the group first read and discuss briefly the green picture booklet which introduces the theme. The main ideas in this book provide the basic outline for the lessons which follow. The group may wish to refer back to this book while discussing the following lessons.

Two procedures may be used for conducting the class through the lesson booklet:

1. The six lessons may be taken in order and discussed first without reference to the additional material in the Appendix. The Appendix can then be studied afterward.
2. Suggestions are made at the end of several lessons for dividing up the material in the Appendix and interspersing it between lessons.

In either case, it is recommended that the members of the group read the necessary lesson material before coming together for the discussion.

Bibles should be made available for all members of the class if they do not have their own.

Projects for implementing the ideas in the lessons should be undertaken by the class in order to begin the work of stewardship in the parish. Possibly, other study groups can be formed with teams of persons from the original group leading the discussions in homes of parishioners who live in different parts of the city. The purpose of the study is to sensitize persons to utilize their own talents for the mission of the Church.

## Session I WHAT IS STEWARDSHIP?

“For it will be as when a man going on a journey called his servants and entrusted to them his property; to one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability....” *Matthew 25:14-15*

Just about everyone owns some property — a home, a car, money, or clothes. Some people own more than others, but everyone is **responsible** for caring for some property, no matter how small. Those who are wealthier sometimes employ others to manage their properties. These persons are called “stewards.” Check a dictionary and write the definition it gives of a “steward.”

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This idea of an owner who employs a manager or steward to care for his properties is not limited to the world of the wealthy or to businessmen. If we look at the Bible, we find that all Christians are called Christ’s stewards (1 Cor. 4:1-2). How can this be? Well, first, we know that God created the whole heavens and the earth and so it “belongs” to Him (Ps. 24:1). Even we “belong” to God. But, God has entrusted us with His property — He has given us the ability to administer the affairs of this earth, His property (Gen. 1:26-28). We are God’s stewards; we care for His earth.

But we are not just hired stewards of God, because we also are called His friends, who know what our Master is doing (Jn. 15:15), and even His children through Jesus Christ (Jn. 1:12). God not only gives us our lives and this world, but He even makes us His friends and children. It is in our baptism that we become God’s children, that we join His household. And it is by Chrismation that we are given talents from the Holy Spirit to be God’s faithful servants—to be His stewards. We care for God’s world, not as hired servants, but rather as children caring for our own household.

Think about this: through baptism and chrismation, we are made into God’s children, and He has made us **responsible** for His household. Being a Christian is a great **responsibility**. Think about some of the things we are responsible for: e.g. children, homes, jobs, etc. These belong to God. How can we use them to serve God?

List some of the things you are responsible for. How can you serve God through these?

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Jesus Christ commanded that we should “follow Him” (Matt. 4:19), and that we should **love** one another as He loves us (Jn. 15:12). Now read the parable of the “talents” (Matt. 25:14-30). What is the nature of the good servant or steward? The good steward uses his talents to enrich his master. It doesn’t matter how many talents are received in order to serve God. In the parable, both the two and five-talented persons are rewarded. What happens to the person who is afraid to use his talent, or thinks he doesn’t have enough “talents” to do or to offer anything?

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The Master expects that His stewards will be fruitful. How can we become fruitful stewards for God?

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Think about your own life. Do you have any material property? Do you have any special talents to offer? (e.g. cooking, cleaning, carpentry, sewing, driving a car, teaching, etc.) Do you ever offer them to God through His Church? Why or why not? Do we need more ideas how to use our properties or God-given abilities? Try to think up a few (e.g. cleaning and caring for church properties or for the old and sick, driving people to visit the sick, giving money to the missions, etc.) List here what you think you **personally** could do:

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When we become God's children, God becomes the Father of our **whole** life, and we become responsible (stewards) for His world and His gifts to us. If we consider that **all** we have (life, property, salvation, friends, etc.) is from God, then is it any great thing to offer back to God what He has given us?

God holds nothing back from us; He even gave His own Son to die for us (Jn. 3:16-17). What does this mean that God gave His Son for us? Read also Matt. 1:21; Gal. 4:4-7; John 3:35-36; and Col. 1:11-14, 21-22 and tell in your own words what this means to you:

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Do we think about all that we have as belonging to God? Why or why not? How do the attitudes of greed and love, possession and sharing affect our actions? What does the Bible teach us about these things? (cf. Matt. 6:25-33; Lk. 3:8-14)

Read section I of the Appendix: "The Orthodox Idea of Stewardship." What is the role of money in the Church?

Notes:

*For Discussion Leaders:*

### A Project with an Obvious Goal

The person who is leading the discussion should prepare a tray of something to distribute to the group members (cookies or drinks, but make sure it is obvious that they are to be served to the group). When you are ready to do the project, take the prepared tray and give it to one unsuspecting group member. Tell them "this tray is for you." Wait a few minutes until the person has time to react. Begin a discussion on what the person does with the tray of food.

Example 1 – If they distribute the food or drinks, make a comparison with using the gifts or talents God gives each of us. Sharing one's time, self, or skills with others is part of Christian giving and love. Compare this with I Cor. 1:12 – striving to work for all the members of the Church.

Example 2 – If the person gives the tray back to you, then talk about offering back to God all the things He has given you— your life, wealth, talents, etc.

Example 3 – If the person does nothing with the tray, or asks you what to do with it, then lead a discussion in whether or not people hide their talents (remember the parable of the talents), in Christian sharing and giving (Matt. 25:31-46), and in the responsibility of all Christians to help one another share their gifts.

## Session II OF WHAT ARE WE STEWARDS?

*"As each has received a gift, employ it for one another as good stewards of God's varied grace." 1 Peter 4:10*

As Christians, each of us is called to share what God has given us, and we have seen how God has given us everything – this world, our families, our possessions, His Son, and our own lives. We know also, that as Christians, we belong to God's own household – we are His family. We came into this family through our experience of God's Son – Jesus Christ – in Baptism and Chrismation. We know that Christ gave Himself for us, and in effect we belong to Him. By His death, He has bought us (ransomed us) from death (I Cor. 6:19-20).

But we also know that we are **responsible** children of God. He has given us the authority to be stewards (managers) of His household, the Church, and of His property, which is



the whole world! This means that we must as good stewards wisely use the material property He has given us, as well as the special talents He has given us. In order to do this, however, we have to know exactly what we have in our control — of what are we stewards? We need to know this, because just as in the parable of the “talents” (Matt. 25), we are going to be expected to be fruitful servants or stewards. We are going to be asked what we did with what God gave us. Did we enrich His household, such as by bringing in new members, supporting the poor, bringing back those who have strayed, etc.? Did we glorify **Him** or did we squander the wealth He has given us?

We need to establish priorities in our lives in order for us to be better stewards. We have to decide what is important and where, when and how to “invest” our time, talents, and possessions. We need to decide how we best serve God in our prayer, work, study and in enjoying fellowship.

Think about your daily life. What special skills or vocations do you have? (e.g. teacher, banker, lawyer, craftsman, mechanic) \_\_\_\_\_ Do you have a special talent or vocation in the Church? (e.g. priest, teacher, singer, reader, warden, etc.) \_\_\_\_\_

Now, think about your family. How is parenthood a vocation? \_\_\_\_\_

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How can we teach values at home? How can we live a Christian way of life? \_\_\_\_\_

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Now, of what are we stewards?

1. **Life** — God has given us life. How are we a steward of life? We are stewards of life when we use our own life to glorify God in charity, worship, speech, etc. Also, when we protect the lives of the poor, the old, the sick, the unborn? And, when we try to bring all men to Christ and eternal life in preaching, the sacraments, etc.

2. **Time** — How are we stewards of time? We are stewards of time when we establish priorities in order to make time to

pray, read the Bible, glorify God, go to Church, visit the sick, talk with our family and friends to show our concern for them, when we share our own knowledge and ideas with those who are in need or have a problem.

3. **Health** — what is a stewardship of health? It is when we care for our own selves and those around us, by fasting, avoiding gluttony, excessive alcohol, drugs, by giving ourselves sufficient rest and exercise, by not engaging in immoral acts, by holding a good, wholesome mental attitude about others — seeing others as good and worth loving. Our bodies are to be temples of the Holy Spirit (I Cor. 6:12-19). We should use them always to glorify God, to receive His Body and Blood, to pray and worship and witness. Christians are called to be holy — that means to be **united** to God. God becomes united to our body and our mind in baptism, communion, marriage — all of the sacraments. Our bodies are not separate from our minds and it is this wholeness of life that we should strive to attain.

Read Mark 12:30-31. What are some of the ways in which we can in our parish love God with our heart, mind and strength, and in which we can love our neighbor? How can we become involved as parents trying to raise children as Christians, teaching, visiting the sick, praying, fasting, helping in nursing homes, meals-on-wheels programs, missions, etc? What can **YOU** do to express your love and concern for others? List three specific things you will try to do this coming week:

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Read James 1:17. This verse is included in every liturgy in the prayer of dismissal. What is the connection between God giving us everything and the Liturgy? (In the Liturgy, we thank God for all that He has given us, and we offer everything — the bread, the wine, money, ourselves and each other back to God.) What is the connection between liturgy and our daily life? (In the Liturgy we offer all our life in prayer, thanksgiving and praise. In daily life, we should live out what we offered in liturgy. We should offer our time, our health, our bodies to care for one another, to teach one another, to pray for one another, etc.)

How can you try to live the liturgy in your own life? Write here one thing you will try to focus on in your own life during this coming month:

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### Session III HOW DO WE SERVE OTHERS AS STEWARDS?

“Let us not love in word or speech but in deed and in truth.” *1 John 3:18*

Christ gave a command that His followers should preach the gospel and baptize all people, making them disciples of His (Matt. 28:18-20). This was part of His command that we love one another (John 13:34-35), and this is how we are to recognize who are the true followers of Christ. We, as God’s stewards, must serve each other and all of the people of the world by preaching about Christ and by living as an **example** of Christ. This is part of **responsible stewardship**. God has entrusted us with His message to all men and we must bring that message to all people. But, we don’t have to do it alone. The whole body of believers, the Church, is set up to help each of us to witness to Christ.

Read 1 Cor. 12:4-27. St. Paul talks about the Church as if we were just one human body. He draws that analogy very carefully, showing how the whole body cannot be an eye, or a foot. Each body part is needed for the whole body to function properly. Now think about your parish. How does the parish show different body parts functioning? What should be the relationship between each of the following: priest, choir, readers, teachers, laity, youth, children, etc. What is the **mutual** responsibility of each to the others?

Now, think about the Church at large; does the national Church offer more for the Body? How do seminaries, missions, monasteries, charities, church school commissions, bishops, etc. affect and contribute to the local church, i.e. the parish, deanery or diocese? Now look into your own parish again. What else is there that belongs to the local church? (e.g. families, parenthood, visitation of the sick, caring for the parish’s financial needs, the church council,

etc.) How do each of these parts interrelate? Where can you see that improvement is needed?

In fact, we see how our entire lives, in every aspect, belong to the service of the Church. Once we are baptized into Christ (Gal. 3:27) our whole lives belong to the service of God and our brethren in the Church. St. Paul calls the Church, "Christ's Body" (Eph. 1:22-23). When we go to communion, we receive the Body of Christ. The Body of Christ we receive in Communion helps make us into the Body of Christ which is the Church. It is in this community of believers – the Church, Christ's Body – that we experience God's love for us, His presence on earth, His salvation. It is also in the Church that we must begin to put that love to work in us. We must learn to love one another.

Read Ephesians 4:4-12. Think again about St. Paul's comparison of the body to the Church. Why are so many different functions needed? They are needed in order to upbuild the whole body, to help other body parts to live, to make up for what other body parts lack, e.g. the eye cannot digest food, but it needs food to live, so the stomach helps the eye. Think about yourself and your parish. Which of these talents can you offer the Church: raising children as believing Christians, visiting the sick, maintaining church buildings, raising money for the missions, donating to the poor and handicapped, helping to bring back those who have fallen away, organizing a youth group, offering your time, car, attending the church services. What can you do at home? \_\_\_\_\_

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Read Romans 12:4-8. What is required of the members of the Church is that they have faith – that they know who Jesus Christ is and what He is all about. The message of the gospel – both the moral values and the news of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ – are given to the members

of the Church. How can we be good stewards of this message? \_\_\_\_\_

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Don't hesitate to begin reading the Bible by yourself at home, to talk about it with others, to share with them what you've learned or what has helped you in your life. Find out about the Church's missions, and support them by financial aid or volunteering other services. Support the seminaries where the future preachers of the gospel are being trained. (See I Cor. 9:11, and I Tim. 5:17-18)

Read section II of the Appendix: "Stewardship in the Parish." What do you feel are some of the "stumbling blocks" to a real program of stewardship in your parish? How could some of these be overcome?

Notes:

*For Discussion Leaders:*

#### **A Project in Sharing and in Serving**

Place a cookie in front of each person in the discussion group. Tell them that the cookie is theirs to eat, however, they must not bend their elbows to feed themselves — their arms must be held stiff and straight at all times. When the activity has begun, let one person read I John 3:17-18, James 2:14-17 and Deut. 15:7-11. (The solution, as Deuteronomy suggests, is they have to feed each other.)

## Session IV STEWARDSHIP OF PROPERTY AND TITHING

“Every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the Lord your God which He has given you.”

*Deut. 16:17*

It seems that since the Church is concerned with spiritual things — with the Gospel and with God — it should practice what it preaches. Let the Church give to the poor, let her preach the gospel and live it. She doesn't need money for that. That seems like good logic. The Church is spiritual and so shouldn't be concerned over material benefits. But let's look at this more closely:

1. **You** are the Church. The Church isn't someone else. Read I Cor. 12:27. Each one of us is both a member of the Church and by being that we make the Church present on earth. So it is our own responsibility to share in all that Christ commanded His followers — to preach the gospel, to live moral lives, to help the poor, visit, the sick, support the missions, etc.

2. Because the Church is a Body (as we saw in I Cor. 12), it has physical needs. We must take care of all the Body's parts for the Church to be healthy. Read John 21:15-17. How does Jesus tell Peter to love Him? He tells him to feed His sheep. Feeding is something physical. In order to show the spiritual love, we must do physical actions. That means giving of our own possessions — our money, our property. Read James 2:14-19,26. How does one show what one believes? (By sharing your wealth and properties, you show that you love others as Christ loved us.)

Read Mark 10:17. Jesus commands the man to give away all he has. Is this what Jesus wants all of us to do? In a sense, yes, because when we agree to be a Christian, we agree to be completely God's servant, and as His steward we want to try to make all that we have to be fruitful in enriching God's household. But in this story, Christ was looking at a particular man who was trying to justify himself for being so good, and so He told him, “If you want to be as good as you think you are, then give away all your possessions.” The man walked away.

How much then is enough when you're giving to the Church? The Old Testament spoke of a **Tithe** (Deut. 14:22). This was the expected direct donation of the people to the

worshipping community. A tithe was usually the donation of one-tenth of one's wealth (it could be one-tenth of one's money, but for a farmer, for example, it meant one-tenth of his crop.) In the Prophet Malachi 3:8-10, we see that the Lord was angry because the people were cheating in their tithes. In other words, they felt nobody would know if they gave less than one-tenth of their income. Now, read Acts 5:1-11. Ananias dies for holding back on part of his donation to the Church. But, look at Acts 5:4. What was the sin of Ananias? It is not that he held back on the property money, (he was free to give any portion of the money that he wanted to), but his sin was that he lied, pretending to give all of his wealth while he really only gave part. What does this tell us about our own responsibilities for donating to the Church?

Although we are free to decide how much we wish to give, this does not mean that we should be stingy in our donations. The Old Testament tithe still stands as the norm for our donations, but Christ appeals to all of us to share generously all that we are given — physical and spiritual benefits. Examine these Bible passages and think what they have to say about giving to the Church: Mark 12:41-44 and II Cor. 9:6-12. What are the basic guidelines that these passages offer for giving to the Church?

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The Bible calls us to give as freely and as generously as we can. The source of this giving is an appeal to all that God had done for us — even giving of His own Son to die for our sins. We should be that willing at all times to give ourselves and our properties to the glory of God for the spread of this good news about what He has done for us.

In Exodus 22:29 and 23:19, there is a mention of what we should give. Consider this concept of the first fruits. It means that what we give to God comes first in our mind. For example, a person who brings home a \$200 paycheck knows before he spends any of that money that \$20 is going to the Church. First fruits means not giving from what is left, but rather always assuming that this donation to God comes

first. Can this be implemented in your life? What do you think you could budget from your income each week if you really tried? \_\_\_\_\_

Read section III in the Appendix: "Stewardship in the Diocese." What do you feel are some of the important needs of your diocese?

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List several ways your tithing could assist in diocesan programs:

Notes:



## Session V STEWARDSHIP AND SACRIFICE

“The measure you give will be the measure you get back.”

*Luke 6:38*

Read Philippians 2:5-13. What does salvation mean? How was this accomplished for us? Jesus Christ sacrificed everything He had for us. He was the **Son of God**, yet He became a mere man and suffered and died for us. He sacrificed His life in order to destroy death and free all men from sin and death. There is nothing we can do to equal this sacrifice. No matter how much we give or suffer, we don't match what Christ has done for us. Yet, because of what He has done for us; because He was willing to give His life for us, we should have these same thoughts. Christians are those who imitate Christ — those who are willing to suffer for each other and to share with one another.

What we can share is all that we have been given — money, property, talents. When we do this, we do give of ourselves, we do sacrifice and thus we share in Christ's love and even make that love present.

The Old Testament idea of sacrifice was one in which whatever was to be sacrificed could be used for nothing else. A sacrificed lamb was not to be used for food and wool. It would only be used as an offering devoted to the Lord — it was burned on the altar. Does that seem like a waste? It wasn't, because it showed one's complete and total love for God. You give to God the whole thing, not something that could be used in several different ways before being sacrificed. Also, the sacrifice was never something old, or sick or useless. It was always to be something perfect to show how much you loved the Lord. Read Genesis 22:1-19. Abraham waited a long time for his promised son and yet he offered him completely to God. He gave to God all that was perfect and what he loved — his only son. This was the true sacrifice. Does such a perfect sacrifice still happen today? What kinds of sacrifice or offering do we make to God today in the Church?

Because God has given us so much, even giving His only Son for us, it is only right that we should be willing to offer all things back to Him. This is a way for us to make God's love present on earth — by our sharing of the gifts (spiritual and material) which He has given us. There is even a promise in the Bible that this giving is the only natural way for man

to live. Read Proverbs 11:24, 19:17, 22:9; Luke 12:32-34, 14:12-14; II Cor. 9:6-8. What is the implication of all these passages?

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What is important in all of this is that we remember to do these acts for the glory of God. All that we have is from Him and so all we give, including love is His. Christians are not simply humanitarians, nor is all charity necessarily inspired by God's love. Read I Cor. 13:3. We must act because we love God and our brother and we must give of ourselves to truly love God and our brother.

*For Discussion Leaders:*      **A Multiplication Project**

Ask each person to produce a dollar, or give each person a dollar. This is their "talent." Now tell them to invest their "talent" in some Christian project during the week and report what they did with their "talent" in the next session. Keep the Parable of the Talent (Matthew 25) in mind. Some hints as to how the money can be spent: 1. Use the money to pay for one or two phone calls to parishioners who have fallen away from the Church, just to talk to them—show your concern for them, or to call shut-ins, or other parishioners to get involved in Church programs, including tithing; 2. Buy a couple of stamps and write letters to see how you can help the Church mission programs or the seminary. Maybe send a check in the letter or ask how your parish can assist them. 3. Use the money to buy gas to go visit a sick parishioner, a shut-in, or people in a nursing or old-age home; 4. Donate the money to a charity or the Church; 5. Use the money to help buy a needlepoint or other craft project you like to do and then sell the project and give the money to the Church. 6. Use the money to help buy yourself or a friend a Bible or some other Orthodox publication of an educational nature; 7. Buy a get-well or friendship card and send it to a shut-in or sick parishioner; 8. Decide to give it to the Church missions or the seminary, but think first, if \$1.00 is a worthwhile donation, maybe you will want to increase the donation yourself and ask a few others to donate; 9. Be creative. What can you do to multiply your dollar for the Church?

Read section IV in the Appendix: "Stewardship in the National Church." Gather together the brochures which the national Church has published in the past several years for the three major Appeals: Charities, Mission, Seminaries. List the ways that monies from the national Church are used to fulfill our stewardship to others. Think about ways to promote each of these Appeals in your local parish.

## Session VI IMPLEMENTING A PARISH TITHING SYSTEM

**"Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God." *Hebrews 13:16***

The local Christian community, the parish, is where a system of tithing must begin. No amount of campaigning from the national church will convince the local parishioners of the merits of the tithing system unless the local parish realizes its own reason for existing. That reason is nothing else but to preach the gospel, to keep God's children together, to administer the sacraments, in effect, to be the Church, which is the Body of Jesus Christ. The parish has to become the arms, legs, eyes, and mouth of that glorious Body. The parish has to realize its own importance, its own mission, and its own responsibilities.

This requires a great deal of education. It means that people must learn and understand the Bible and the Liturgy. It means people must begin to develop a faith in God, a love, a commitment. This requires more sermons, Bible studies, and better church school programs. It means more information and publications being made available.

Consider these points for your parish and see if you would support them and what it would take to implement them in your parish life:

1. Convincing the Church Council to support a tithing system (this means leading by **example**.)
2. Convincing the Church school teachers to teach tithing and to lead by example.
3. Bringing the congregation to a deeper commitment to the commandments of the Gospel. What education, preaching, family visitation or programs are needed?

4. Preaching — does the priest need to preach more about donations, or maybe in a different way?
5. Adopting the use of a set budget in order to bring before the eyes of the parishioners, the total financial needs of the parish, in order that it may carry out successful programs in education, charity, mission, etc.
6. Planning and executing concrete financial programs which are biblically inspired, supported by appealing promotional aids.
7. Informing people how the money is spent or will be spent by the national Church.
8. Sponsoring educational programs dealing with seminaries, missions and church charities in order to show what the real needs are on a national level and how a parish can help.
9. Increasing parish programs which show that the money is and can be wisely spent, e.g. adult or youth retreats, special lecture series, teachers' conferences or workshops, etc.
10. Looking into the needs of the local community and ways in which your parish can support local programs of an educational or charitable nature.
11. Teaching people their financial responsibilities as Christians.

These are only a few ideas as to what a parish may need to do or can do to implement a tithing program or stewardship program. A few other ideas to utilize the skills and talents of members of the parish might be:

1. Depending on your parish size, there is a remarkable manpower available in any parish. A parish of 200 members need only request one hour per month from each of its members for it to have the equivalent of one full-time (40 hour per week) employee. This means each member need only volunteer 12 hours of his time per year, (or the equivalent in money for a salary) to obtain the services of a full-time church worker. This could be a great start in helping to maintain the parish property, to assist in charitable and pastoral activities, or in implementing other parish programs.
2. If you are worried that the Church might waste your donations, get involved in helping direct how the Church spends your money. Volunteer to serve on the parish council. Take time out to find out about the seminaries, the missions, the national Church or local charities. Agree to take leadership

positions in the church organizations. Investigate, and then work to direct the funds to deserving groups.

3. See what other churches have as programs for adults, parents, the elderly, or youth, and see what can be started in your parish.

4. Take time to read the Bible, learn about your faith, join a study group, pray.

5. See what local charities, hospitals, nursing homes can use volunteers. Give a few hours each week or month.

6. See if any parish shut-ins are in need of help, or if persons need a ride to church.

7. Read Acts 4:32-35. Look at the early church and compare it with your parish. Where can you begin to improve the quality of Christian life in your parish?

8. Take time to find out what are the needs of your parish, your deanery or diocese.

9. Attend educational programs or special lectures.

Read section V of the Appendix: "Women in the Orthodox Church." Discuss the extent of the role of women in your parish. Is it limited to certain areas of work? Are the talents of all the laity being utilized to their fullest extent? How can we encourage men and women to fulfill their talents in the Church? What ways can you think of to encourage the youth of your parish to seek vocations in the Church? What are some of the "stumbling blocks" in the way of Church vocations and how can they be eliminated?

Notes:

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## APPENDIX

### Background Papers of the 5th All-American Council of the Orthodox Church in America

#### SECTION I THE ORTHODOX IDEA OF STEWARDSHIP

##### 1. What is "Stewardship"?

What is "stewardship"? Why should we discuss it at our All American Council and indeed place it at the very center of our Church's life?

The term may appear to be a new one, unusual within the traditional Orthodox vocabulary. Such an impression, however, would be totally wrong. The word stewardship is *scriptural* and *traditional*:

*Scriptural*: "This is how one should regard us as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of Christ. Moreover it is required of stewards that they be trustworthy." (I Cor. 4:1-2)

"You have heard of the stewardship of God's grace that was given to me for you." (Eph. 3:2)

"As each has received a gift, employ it for one another as good stewards of God's varied grace." (I Peter 4:10)

*Traditional*: In the writings of the Holy Fathers, in liturgical texts and treatises of Orthodox theology, stewardship (Greek: *oikonomia*) is consistently used to describe both God's plan and work of salvation, and our participation in that work.

Webster defines a steward as one who is a supervisor, administrator, manager or keeper of accounts. Applied to a Christian, this term means then *participation* in and *responsibility* for Christ's saving work which He fulfills in the world through the Church.

The definition of a Christian, a member of the Church, as steward (and of the whole Church as "stewardship") is not accidental but essential. It stems from the very nature of Christian faith and the nature of the Church. Christ calls us to be His co-workers in the work of salvation, or rather, He works through and in us, the living members of the Church which is His body.

If, for a relatively long time, the term "stewardship" was not often used to denote our function in the Church, it was because of a certain "reduction" and narrowing, in Christian mentality, of the very understanding of the Church. It began to be understood as *servicing us*, rather than being our personal and corporate way of serving God and His saving work.

Today, however, when the whole life of the Church, and her very existence, clearly depend on all of us, on the degree of our active involvement and participation, interest and sacrifice, there is no better word to "focus" that involvement, its content as well as its application. Therefore, it is an urgent need for us that we clarify this essential definition of our membership in the Church, of all which this membership implies.

## 2. *Spiritual and Material*

By its very definition (cf. above: "manager," "administrator") the term *stewardship* seems to apply primarily to all those areas of the Church's life which we usually describe as *practical* or *material*, opposing them to the spiritual ones.

Thus, to work on a budget (parish, diocese, national Church), to discuss fund-raising activities, to allocate funds, to plan buildings, etc., is more often than not envisioned as belonging to the "material" dimension of the Church's life and therefore to be governed primarily, if not exclusively, by principles of "good business" with virtually no relation to the faith and, in general, the spiritual content of the Church.

Such opposition, however, is not only alien, but even contrary, to the Orthodox faith. In our tradition and understanding of the Church, the "material" and the "spiritual" are organically related one to another, the "spiritual" expressing itself in the "material" and the "material" always aiming at being the means of the "spiritual." There can be no schizophrenia in the Church. Whatever we do -- whether we plan our budget, or discuss the renovation of the church's basement -- we do it as *Christians*, and this means: fulfilling, working however humbly at, the work of Christ Himself who never separated in His own ministry the "spiritual" from the "material."

Therefore the term stewardship means precisely the coordination of the material and the spiritual, the fulfillment of the one in and through the other. Stewardship consists primarily in relating the *practical* in the Church to the *spiritual* by referring both to the ultimate goal of the entire Church's life. It is the answer to the question which we must ask every day: how is what we do now to serve God, to help the church to be the Church and each of us Christians to be truly Christian? Once more, no *work*, no *service*, no "business" in the Church, however humble, or practical, they may appear, can be isolated from the unique vocation of the Church.



### 3. *Stewardship is based on Understanding*

Stewardship presupposes the *understanding* of the Church's task and goals, of her *vocation*. To give but one example: *money*, whether we want it or not, plays a very essential role in the life of the Church. And yet there are people who think that needed as it is, "money" is a material, not spiritual, preoccupation and thus ought not to be discussed or even mentioned as a *spiritual* problem. But *money* is by its very nature a means to an end, and it all depends therefore to what *end* it is referred, of what in the Church it is "means." Sometimes it can become an *end in itself*, sometimes a means for self-glorification and pride. But properly understood it can truly be the very *means* of love, of involvement in mission, in education, in Christian charity. Thus it must be "sanctified," i.e. understood and used for God's purpose, and not in a self-serving way. Here, as in many other areas of the Church's life, we need to convey to all members of the Church the proper place and function of *money* in the Church, i.e. of sacrifice, giving, etc. (cf. Luke 16:13; Matthew 6:24). This principle applies to every aspect of the Church's activities, when they are properly *understood*. Hence the need to make *stewardship* the subject matter of *study* on every level of the Church's life.

### 4. *Stewardship is Involvement*

Stewardship begins with a spiritual decision: the decision to be *involved*, to be *responsible*, to *serve* the Church which involves us in the work of Christ Himself.

We very often use the term "obligation." But the proper language of the Church is not that of "obligations," but that of *love*: "where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Matthew 6:21). God sent to us His only-begotten Son not by "obligation," Christ died for us not by "obligation," but because of *love*. And it is *love* therefore that is the inner law and motivation in the Church. And love *is* involvement, interest, care, help. *Stewardship* is the expression of love and form of love's action and power in the Church.

### 5. *The main areas of Stewardship*

There are three main areas of stewardship: *parish, diocese, the National Church*. Each one of them constitutes the theme of a special paper.

## SECTION II STEWARDSHIP IN THE PARISH

It is vital to connect parish stewardship with the total vision of stewardship in its every aspect. If stewardship is to bear fruit among us, we must affirm that it needs to embrace each member and every aspect of the Holy Orthodox Church.

### I. STUMBLING BLOCKS ON THE WAY TO STEWARDSHIP

A. *You shouldn't expect too much from our Church's people.* We demand so little from ourselves and we patronize our parishes, as though it goes without saying that we should expect little more from them, knowing their history and background. To remind our parishioners that sectarian tithing is to teach them nothing new. They know that. "But our kind of people," they counter, "will never tithe." End of discussion.

Our people, long-assimilated Americans, lead double lives. They fully understand their obligations in the secular world (some call it the "real" world). In that world they struggle to meet the spiraling cost of living, even finding ways to keep abreast of the times, and to "get ahead." They measure the Church's needs, however, by another yardstick. In such a scale of values the growth of a culture can be gauged by turning what once were luxuries -- television sets, appliances, and automobiles -- into necessities of life, but the Church ironically becomes the single commodity that is converted from necessity to luxury. The builders of the first Orthodox churches in this land did not need stewardship explained, since it was not remote from their life style. To be near the Church and to support it was as natural to them as to build a home near a water supply. To do otherwise was unthinkable. Perhaps these words of the Lord apply today: "But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first" (Rev. 2:4).

B. *You can't rely on sacrifice.* No Church can limp between two concepts of giving. We remember the sublime moment of offering at the Great Entrance, when the celebrant bears in his hands the bread and wine. That gift represents Christ Himself ascending to the Holy Altar together with the entire Church, including each of its members. It is His victory entrance, achieved through His sacrifice, and we also are included through our personal sacrifices. If our gift, taken to the Holy Altar, is indeed a sacrificial offering, must we not examine the types of offerings acceptable as sacrificial gifts? How do we justify that parish income

labeled "proceeds," especially that derived from gambling, bingo, lotteries, and sales of alcoholic beverages? Some feel that our parishes should be run as purely business enterprises, taking advantage of exemptions given to non-profit organizations, yet supporting themselves on such "proceeds," so that they need not depend on free-will offerings. Nothing else, nothing more. Are we not obligated to deal with these conflicting standards?

*C. You are a good manager if you keep (hoard) the money you have.*

The parable of the talents (Matt. 25:14-30) demonstrates clearly the scorn of Christ for the servant who buried his talents. We have, however, parishes and church councils that do nothing more with their "income" than to pile up their assets in banks, reporting the amount of accumulated interest at each annual parish meeting. The same persons who plead with parishioners to pay their obligations and who criticize the OCA and Diocese for failing to aid missions, charities, and seminaries, see no inconsistency in hoarding their parish funds. They call it sound management! Yet, is the Church measured by such standards? How will He judge, who said: "You say, 'I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing,' not knowing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked" (Rev. 3:17)? We must find means to encourage each parish to put its funds to the best use in the service of the whole Church. These funds are the offerings Orthodox Christians make to Almighty God through their local church.

*D. You have to exempt some people from giving.* Nothing in holy scripture was written accidentally. Thus, Christ is teaching a lesson by holding up a poor old widow as the primary example of how we are to bring offerings to God. As a specific example, she shows us first that a parish is dealing with individuals, not with categories. Also, St. Paul, who knew well the church in Corinth, wrote: "On the first day of the week, let every one of you lay something aside, as God has prospered him" (1 Cor. 16:2). It follows that a parish should not deal with categories of people; exempting all pensioners, Golden Agers, armed forces personnel, students, etc. We ought not automatically to exclude an entire category from the ranks of responsible contributors. Indeed, does it not occur on occasion that some "senior citizens" are better off financially than they were in earlier years? American military personnel are far from indigent. Shall they not share in their Church's programs? Students as well, despite the high cost of education, must set priorities in their values. If vacations and entertainment are possible for them, so much more is a program for responsive church giving. To reveal the

personal dimensions of stewardship it is advisable to set up a program for face-to-face discussions with each contributing member of the parish annually. Changing economic conditions, rising cost of living, varying church budgets, and fluctuating membership all require reevaluation of the total parish record of contributions at least once a year. What is the point of Stewardship if not to encourage each of us to aid in bringing the Kingdom of God to earth, rather than to indulge in pleasures or less noble endeavors? If Christ is in fact first in our lives, let His plan be realized before anything else.

E. *You have to be realistic about church-related organizations -- they have their own agendas and priorities, and are not responsible for the whole Church.* It frequently occurs that a parish can be held in economic captivity by its own clubs and organizations. Those groups which exist in the name of the Church retain the privilege of independence from accountability to the entire parish, yet depend on the parish and its membership to support their programs. To offset that double standard it is advisable that all parish organizations be required to submit their record of finances initially to the church council, then to the entire parish at its annual meeting. It is the responsibility and prerogative of the Church to ensure that its own budgetary priorities and the priorities of the church-related organizations reflect the real needs and the true mission of the Church. The Church should never be in the position of mendicant before its own auxiliary groups. For that reason, the auxiliary groups should demonstrate in all of their decisions that the parts support the whole, and not otherwise.

F. *You can't expect every member to be fully involved in the Church's life.* We baptize by immersing the whole person. All that we are and all that we have is no longer ours alone, but is put at the service of Christ, as in the folk dance, "We put our whole self in." The spiritual atrophy of our parishes is caused by persons who refuse to become involved. The Church, for them, is a place to fulfill their "spiritual needs." This means an occasional baptism, marriage, or funeral. They attend Divine Liturgy when the whim takes them. Not only they, but even regular Sunday worshippers, just will not be moved: public school teachers who refuse to teach in the Church School program, accountants who will not help with parish budgets or audits, members of school choirs who have no part of the church choir, seamstresses who will not sew altar cloths; the list is nearly endless. Treasuries of talent lie dormant in the parish, either because the bearers did not want to be involved, or else those in authority either felt threatened by new ideas, or simply never thought

to search out the gifts that lie hidden within the parish rolls. The wise pastor and church council are active not only in meeting the actual needs of the parish, but are ever engaged in seeking new possibilities for total church involvement.

## *II. AWAKENING A PARISH TO STEWARDSHIP*

Only that parish which invokes a total commitment from the pastor, the church council members, and from every supporting organization, as well as each communicant, will succeed in Stewardship. Partial measures guarantee failure. A partial Stewardship plan will result in an eventual temptation for the participants to judge those who have no share in the plan, and the non-activists will, in turn, either resent the active members or else lean on them, expecting them to carry all the weight of Church responsibility. All of us know that only one Divine Liturgy shall be celebrated on a single Altar by one priest on a given day. The reasoning behind that rule is to preserve the unity of the people of God gathered in one place which we call the parish. We belong to one another, and whatever we do or neglect to do affects the entire spiritual community.

Can Stewardship be achieved? We can reply by remembering the lesson given Ezekiel the prophet as he stared at the bleached bones of bodies long dead, parched in the desert heat. He asked the Lord, "Can these dry bones live?" The normal answer would be no, but God not only said yes, He also showed how to do it. The same Spirit of God that gave life to those skeletons can surely infuse the parishes of the Orthodox Church in America with the grace of knowing the joy that comes with giving totally, trusting that only by sacrifices and tithes will our people be rewarded in abundance.

The Stewardship concept calls into account our entire attitude towards possessions. In the parish it emphasizes the spiritual insight that we prove our trust in the Lord and Savior's care by our abundant giving. To stress the gift itself is to understand the motivation of the poor widow with her two last coins. We understand, then, why Christ proclaimed her blessed. To ask: "What did they need with it? What good would such a pittance do?" is to demonstrate one's spiritual blindness. She gave her gift to God, her only Hope and Trust. Here is the heart of Stewardship.

### SECTION III STEWARDSHIP IN THE DIOCESE

Stewardship within the Diocese is an important consideration even if it seems to the average Orthodox Christian that Stewardship within his own parish, or even to the national church administration, is a more pressing and immediate issue. With each passing year we experience the reality that the diocese is the mainstay of both the individual parish and the national church administration. For this fundamental reason the diocese has become the important focal point for the Orthodox Church in America.

The importance of the diocese and its role in the Stewardship program cannot be underestimated. Historically the diocese claims a place in Holy Tradition which centrally *manages* (i.e. 'is steward of') the churches in a small geographical area. The parishes in turn are stewards of the diocese in their involvement and participation in ecclesiastical affairs affecting that local area. The vast geographical area of the Orthodox Church in America leads to a natural decentralization of administration and 'Church work' (i.e. missions and education) simply for the sake of effectiveness and efficiency. Added to this natural decentralization, we have the emphasis of the 3rd All American Council, the OCA Statute, and subsequent Synodal and Central Administration decisions which have all encouraged making the diocese a more responsible unit of the Church. An example of diocesan stewardship is the present, ongoing establishment of the Southern Missionary District. Where no diocese was active or 'local' in a practical sense, the spiritual needs of the Church have governed Her administration. These needs, in the case of the Southern Missionary District, could be filled neither by the Central Administration nor by any one parish, but only by a new diocese "in process of formation."

I.

Leadership is essential to a successful program of diocesan stewardship. We have seen in the Old Testament that Joseph, the steward of Egypt, took charge of the pharaoh's affairs -- not for his own benefit, but for the benefit of all. Our Orthodox Faith gives us the bishop as the image of the chief steward. Canon 38 of the Holy Apostles states, "*let the bishop have the care of all ecclesiastical matters and let him manage them, on the understanding that God is overseeing and supervising.*" Today, since the bishop is no longer the pastor of only one city and one parish, but rather is called upon to administer a large geographical area,

he obviously needs assistance in church administration. The early Church took such a contingency into consideration when it stated, *"since in some churches the Bishops are administering the ecclesiastical affairs with the services of a Steward, it has seemed most reasonable and right that each church that has a Bishop should also have a Steward...so as to provide against the administration of the Church being unwitnessed, so as to prevent the property of the same church from being wasted as a result of such stewardless administration and to prevent any public disgrace from attaching itself to holy orders"* (Canon 26, Fourth Ecumenical Council).

Since the bishop is our chief steward it is imperative that he serve in a leadership capacity by such methods as visiting each diocesan parish at least once a year; and during his archpastoral visit he should address the stewards of the parish concerning diocesan goals and procedure. The steward historically has developed the talents of others, and has acted as an overseer to insure that others receive that which represents their share. Developing the full potential of Christ's flock is the responsibility of the bishop, and is the most natural method of increasing the strong foundation of all diocesan projects.

The American situation has shown itself to be in accord with these guidelines of administering the various dioceses of the Orthodox Church in America. The history of our Sobors, All American Councils, and of our day to day church life has witnessed to the logic of using clergy and laity as God's stewards. Now our task is better to execute God's will in all areas of Church life such as mission, education, finances, etc. and to do so we must make Christian our concepts of time, talent, and money. The decisions of this Council will be in continuity with previous decisions that have established the diocese as the primary collecting agency of the national church; and at the same time we must unlock the full potential of stewardship that lies just below the surface in each diocese.

Education is essential to stewardship. Without an awareness of the commonality of Christian direction and purpose we will lack vitality. Each diocese and/or deanery should set up a program to instruct priests and parish council officers in the best methods of implementing stewardship in areas such as church schools, adult education, sisterhoods, brotherhoods, youth work, finances, etc. Workshops should be held at least yearly in order to have parish leaders learn from each other better means of accomplishing goals and overcoming common problems.

An example of such a program is a meeting of all parish treasurers to discuss better ways of keeping parish financial records -- or ways of improv-

ing investment or loan positions; church wardens, secretaries, sisterhood and brotherhood officers plus others could also be included in workshops in order to discuss common work.

Other areas of commonality that need to be coordinated, and hence strengthened through diocesan workshops are music conferences, educational institutes, marriage and family encounters, and religious retreats. Today when the family structure is so abused from without, as well as from within, it is necessary for the diocese to work for family strength.

The missionary aspect of the diocese is the responsibility of each parish and every individual within the diocese. Real growth needs the prayers, time, and alms of each of God's people. In order to accomplish the often difficult task of establishing new missions each diocese must consider setting aside a percentage of its budget for mission outreach, including, for example, salary subsidies to mission priests, "loans" for mission property and buildings, plus educational material, and items for liturgical use.

## *II.*

In accord with the above goals, it is imperative that a "bare bones" diocesan budget be put to rest, and be replaced by a more realistic approach to Church life. We can no longer afford the luxury of separating our diocesan life into separate compartments such as spiritual, administrative, monetary, educational, etc. Rather we must strive to integrate all aspects of Church life into the whole, which is the Orthodox Tradition of life. Currently we seem to be falling short of this principle of wholeness (although there are many promising exceptions) and we seem to be failing to provide enough energy and talent to develop well-rounded total diocesan programs. (In 1916 the American Mission had a proposed budget of approximately \$1,000,000.00 in order to support clergy and administrative costs. If we exclude clergy salaries from the 1916 proposal we are still dealing with a \$600,000 budget -- which in today's terms is approximately \$2 million dollars.)

There is no practical way suddenly to increase our diocesan stewardship to such a large extent at the present time, yet the potential to do so exists within our Church. We have not tapped all of our resources. For example, we can more fully use the talents of our lay people to strengthen each diocese. The more lay participation we have the more we will see the goals of stewardship being learned and implemented. Once we have a clear vision of Christian needs, since the Holy Spirit illumines our progress, we cannot but move in the right direction.



The major key to stewardship is "involvement." It opens up many channels of learning that are not otherwise available. Lay observers and participants, for instance, should be encouraged at all levels of Church administration -- including not only parish councils, but deanery workshops, diocesan councils, and All American Councils. Since our dogma teaches that laity are responsible with the clergy and the hierarchy for protecting the Faith, it also follows that the laity must become more aware, and hence, more involved in diocesan stewardship.

There are established parishes which after years of struggle have "made it," that is, have become pockets of financial stability with surplus bank accounts. It would be good for the Christian steward to consider the idea of establishing a "Loan Fund" within each diocese. One way of doing this would be for financially stable parishes to loan part of their surplus to the diocesan "Loan Fund" with a parish member sitting on the Loan Fund Board of Directors. The board would be empowered to make "loans" and other investments to diocesan missions, parishes, projects, etc. Eventually the board could repay the initial funding to the parishes from which it originated and still have a workable fund.

Even minor forms of involvement can have a major effect on the movement toward diocesan goal fulfillments. Everyone should have maximal awareness of what is happening outside the limits of his particular parish. Each diocese should seriously consider producing a periodic newsletter which would serve as a vehicle of information about diocesan activities and goals. Moving together farther into the twentieth century, it becomes increasingly necessary to open as many productive lines of communication as possible.

Communication has to be more than an "in-house" process, speaking to those already in parish life, it must also be a process of outreach. In other words, communication is to preach the Gospel and establish a missionary arm of the Church as an essential element of our Orthodox commitment to this land. However we no longer can approach mission in the random fashion of past decades. Today we must plan, study and develop the ways and means to better utilize our limited human resources. Priorities must be set, such as: what is the minimum number of people needed to warrant an attempt to create a mission in a new community? how far should a mission be located from an existing parish or mission? what is a workable mission budget? can the diocese subsidize the priest's salary? can the diocese loan funds to missions for the purchase of property? where are the funds to be appropriated? *et al.*

The Diocese of San Francisco has developed a working plan for missions that has the following elements: All missions are automatically designated as English-language; revised calendar; eligible for a subsidy of \$100.00 monthly to augment the priest's salary; eligible for a "loan" in order to purchase property. A minimum salary and benefit scale are prearranged for the missionary priest by the diocese.

Funding up to five missions at a time consumes a large percentage of the budget of the Western Diocese, yet missions are seen as a priority item of diocesan stewardship. The funds of the diocese are raised not by a per capita assessment, but by a direct assessment of each parish which in turn becomes responsible for raising the funds and passing them on to the diocesan treasury. Obviously this type of assessment has its upper limits of practicality as it is currently being applied, but the income could be increased dramatically if we become more open to the concepts of Christian stewardship. Another method which is considered for collecting diocesan funds is to ask for a percentage of a parish's yearly budget. One thing is certain -- our present system of assessment is inadequate because it acts more like a tax than like an offering of our gifts to God.

Diocesan stewardship is a two way street. The giver must feel that his time and/or monetary offering is being used by the receiver in a way that best enhances the Church of Christ. All sacrifices come from the heart and they should be used to strengthen the love of each individual to his diocese. Unless we cultivate such an atmosphere of sacrificial giving *and* receiving there will always be a hesitancy to donate to a distant idea like "diocese." However if the diocese becomes more visible (closer to home) and even more helpful by giving funds back to parishes -- in the form of college and seminary scholarships, low interest loans, legal, financial, and construction expertise, youth programs, adult enrichment, fruitful and frequent archpastoral visitations -- then we will indeed see more commitment on the part of parishes to the diocese.

### ///.

Another area of stewardship is that of active social and moral involvement by our Church -- its laity and clergy. Each bishop with a committee of priests, men, women, and youth could meet periodically to discuss current areas of life where the Church needs to speak out. For example, marriage retreats for adults or engaged couples that shine a Christian light on the Sacrament of Matrimony. Another example is an Orthodox group which watches various state legislatures and tries to ensure an Orthodox input to the growing phenomenon of anti-Christian legislation.

More and more, our people are being bombarded with the demonic temptations of free-love, homosexuality, abortion, drugs, alcoholism, violence and other perversions. No one parish can provide experts on all of these subjects. To be sure, we can condemn these sins without being "experts," but simple condemnation is not enough. With education and explanation of a positive Christian norm of life, there is not only condemnation of sin, but an active representation of the Kingdom of God. We live in a time of relativism where the world tells us the sins of past ages are now "normal" or at least acceptable in private. Sometimes those who speak the truth are regarded as "unenlightened" and "old fashioned." Social morality is an area where the Church can bear witness to the Gospel, and the diocese and its bishop are stewards of truth.

Another area of the Church's social involvement is the development of programs for senior citizens, such as the New York residence operated by the Ss. Cosmos and Damian Human Services Center. Each diocese should consider a senior citizens housing program; and it is reasonable for each deanery to consider operating such a facility in the future.

In conclusion, diocesan stewardship includes the various charisms and talents of all our Church's people -- bishops, priests, and laity. We must involve all aspects of the church within a diocesan plan, and at the same time allow for individual local expression of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. We must draw from our rich past in order to move forward into the twenty-first century.

## SECTION IV

### STEWARDSHIP IN THE NATIONAL CHURCH

#### *I. Introduction: The Vision*

Christ listed almsgiving along with prayer, fasting and love of the brother (Matt. 5-6) as essential elements in the spiritual life. He blessed the poor in spirit (Matt. 5): those who realize that everything they are and everything they have is from God and depends on God. He numbered Himself among the poor and said that He had nowhere to lay His head (Matt. 8:20). Early Christians were called "the poor." St. Seraphim of Sarov, in his conversation with N. Motovilov, stated that almsgiving was one of the necessary means to attain the goal of the Christian life: the acquisition of the Holy Spirit of God.

The Christian teaching about almsgiving transcends the traditional idea of giving alms in compassion and mercy to help the poor and needy. Christians are called not only to help the poor and needy, but to be the poor and needy. This is a radical teaching. It sweeps aside most of our present practices and attitudes concerning almsgiving: the helping of someone less fortunate while retaining much for ourselves; the paying of minimal parish, diocesan and national Church dues and assessments; the use of the Church as a mirror in which we admire ourselves as gracious benefactors; the measuring of the progress of the Church by material gains; the idolatrous concern for property and bank accounts and the endless struggle over their control. It also destroys the notion that money is something secular and dirty, having no real place in the life of the Church. The gaining and using of money in the name of Christ is one of the means of living the spiritual life: acquiring the Holy Spirit of God and becoming Christlike.

The good steward is one who embraces these teachings and knows how to apply them to his life. He manages the household entrusted to him by God, i.e. all that he is and all that he has, to gain friends for eternal life. He strives to give all in order to have nothing and thereby possess everything:

“...as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing everything” (II Cor. 6:10).

He gives to the poor and needy and is numbered among the poor and needy, and is counted in the assembly of those of low degree whom the Lord exalts (Luke 1:52-53). This assembly is the Church.

## *II. Stewardship in the National Church through the Parish*

The Church is concretely experienced by the Orthodox Christian in the life of the parish. In the area of stewardship the Orthodox Church in America has taken this fact into account by historically placing the primary financial responsibility for the national Church on the parish.

The present method for raising funds in the national Church consists in assessing each parish member a certain amount. The parish, however, has the main responsibility. It must pay the total assessment for all its members, whether each member over 18 years of age pays his full assessment or not. The amount of the assessment is periodically increased according to need, a need which is obsolete before it is even presented. The national Church also calls for several collections to be made within the parishes each year for special purposes. The number of these collections, originally set at one per year, has also increased to three.

The inadequacies of this system of raising funds are attested to by the continuous financial crisis in the national Church. There is confusion. Parishes still avoid paying for full membership. There is a wave of complaint each time the national dues are raised. There is mistrust and a lack of proper communication. The harvest awaiting the Church in America is great, and we are to be the laborers. The time has come for the good steward. Through him the potential of the Orthodox Church in America will be realized. We need to see again the ageless and always youthful vision according to which a fresh and adequate method of raising funds for the national Church may be developed.

This method, beginning within the parish, entails the following three principles:

1) *Christian giving is free giving.* Free giving is a natural expression of one who is poor in spirit. He is a royal priest: one who offers (I Pet. 2:9). He lives eucharistically, offering in love and gratitude all that he is and all that he has to God. He does so cheerfully, and receives the free gift of the love of God (II Cor. 9:7). Free giving transcends the fixed dues and assessments which characterize our present methods of raising funds. Even when budgets are prepared and certain minimums are expected, the Christian giver is still compelled by the love of Christ (II Cor. 5:14). He is neither limited nor coerced. If he has received abundantly, he can certainly give lavishly (II Cor. 8:7). If the two copper coins are all that he has, then this offering is blessed by the Lord (Luke 21:1-4).

2) *Christian giving is sacrificial giving.* The free gift must be a sacrificial gift. The sacrificial gift is expressive of the offering of the whole person to God.

“The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise” (Ps. 50/51:17).

The sacrificial gift unites the treasure and the heart:

“For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also”  
(Matt. 6:21).

The amount of the sacrificial gift may vary from person to person, depending on the means. The Old Testament presents the tithe (giving 10% of one's possessions) as the beginning of a sacrifice acceptable to the Lord (Lev. 27:30-32; Mal. 3:10). Following the Biblical principle of faithfulness over a little (Matt. 25:14-30), the Christian can grow in sacrificial giving. He must determine what percentage of his weekly income he now gives to the Church. Then he can set a higher percentage and strive to master that new level. In this manner he can gradually develop the amount of his financial sacrifice to the Church.

3) *Christian giving is done in secret.* Christ expressly commanded His disciples to give alms in secret.

“When you give alms, sound no trumpet before you...do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing”  
(Matt. 6:2-3).

Secret giving means that no lists are to be published showing how much each person gives. No plaques showing the names of contributors are to be erected in the churches. No labels stating donors are to be attached to items offered for use in the Church. Those who make such displays have their reward, for they love the praise of men more than the praise of God (John 12:43). Secret giving does not preclude the publication of totals and averages, or the setting forth of minimum needs and expectations. Nor does it prevent the keeping of good order and proper financial records. All of these are merely other aspects of good stewardship.

With money raised according to the three principles stated above, the parish can begin to exercise its fundamental financial responsibility for the national Church in a new and inspiring way. It can give in the same way it has received: freely, sacrificially and secretly.

Money which the parish gives out is not charity: it is a direct expression of its very nature as giver -- the assembly of those of low degree whom the Lord exalts. Giving is to be part of the parish budget, and not that which is squeezed in after all local expenses are met. The parish sacrifices and cuts back on local plans and expenditures in order to give. Monies from

its treasury are to flow freely to the national Church and the hierarchy, the seminaries and other institutions of the Church. The parish must care for the sick and the suffering, for captives and their salvation. Its agenda for stewardship is the Great Litany.

### *III. Stewardship on the National Level*

Modest figures for only one parish will demonstrate the tremendous potential which the application of the Christian vision concerning giving holds for the life of the Orthodox Church in America. If 200 working adult members of a medium-size parish, each earning a clear \$7500 per year (\$144 per week), gave only 5% (\$7.25 per week) of their income to the Church, the parish would realize an annual treasury, strictly from cash contributions, of \$75,000. If \$50,000 were budgeted for local expenses, \$25,000 would still be available for the parish to use in executing its task as giver.

The national Church could only prosper under such conditions. She could draw upon the best of her youth, as many modes of service would be available. Stewardship on this level would require staffing, planning, budgeting and communication. It would demand that the level of public awareness of the Orthodox Church in America be raised. Her mission to evangelize America would certainly be high on the agenda of areas demanding funds and people. There is no end to the list of tasks which must be done. Particularly instructive concerning these tasks is the lengthy intercessory prayer of the Liturgy of St. Basil the Great.

The guidelines for the composition of this working document state that the writers are to be practical. It is not impractical to suggest that members of the Church strive to be Christians in the fullest sense. This "working out" of one's salvation (Phil. 2:12), however, is impossible without repentance (change of mind and heart) and a real spiritual feat: the Cross. A new spiritual climate must reign in the Church. Otherwise, everything that this paper suggests is foolishness (I Cor. 1:18-25). We must overcome the minimalism which presently cripples the life of the Church. It is not impractical to suggest that members of the Church strive to be in harmony with the prayers that are chanted in the Church and with the One in Whom they are united sacramentally. In this manner the liturgy of the Church will be alive to us, for we will be alive to the liturgy. We will know by experience the meaning of Christ's words that His disciples must be the salt of the earth (Matt. 5:13). The unique aroma of the Spirit will emanate from us and distinguish us in the true Christian sense, drawing many to the Church for the right reasons. Each concrete proposal must be an embodiment of this vision.

#### *IV. Concrete Proposals*

The specific question which we are obliged to answer is the following: How can our present talents be invested so that when the Master demands an account, we will be able to show more talents? How can we bring together the vision and the present realities of Church life?

Here are several concrete proposals:

*1) The formation of Stewardship Committees on the national, diocesan and local parish levels.* The purpose of these committees, which shall work in a coordinated manner, is to implement the Christian vision of giving and to present in a concrete and realistic way the needs and plans of the Church. These committees shall also stress that the giving of time and talent is essential to stewardship, and shall develop the means to solicit these from the Church membership.

*2) The increase of the amount of the annual assessment to the national Church from each parish member over 18 years of age.* The parish shall remain responsible for the payment of the total assessment for all its members. The continuation of this method of raising funds shall be done with the understanding that the assessment is only a minimum and may certainly be exceeded either by sending contributions directly to the national Church or by sending them through the parish. The maximum calling of the Gospel remains as the only minimum:

“...go, sell what you have, and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come follow me” (Mark 10:21).

*3) The institution of the fair share method.* The national Church shall develop a realistic budget. The sovereign dioceses shall be assessed a fair share of this budget in proportion to their size and other factors. The diocese will assess each of its parishes an appropriate amount in order to cover the payment of the entire diocesan assessment. The parish may do the following to raise the necessary funds:

- a) assess each of its members a certain minimum amount;
- b) conduct a pledge campaign among its membership, asking each member to give freely, sacrificially and secretly. The pledge campaign may be used to present and cover all local parish and diocesan needs as well. The parish member shall then include his or her contributions to all levels of Church life in one pledge. The amount of this pledge may be increased gradually as described earlier.



4) *Pledging to the national Church on the parish or diocesan levels.* This method entails the canvassing of parish members in order that they may make pledges to cover the parish or diocesan pledge.

5) *Communications from the national Church which will encourage Church members to prepare wills and endowments favorable to the Orthodox Church in America and her institutions.*

6) All of the above is to be considered in conjunction with the development of a sense of belonging to the national Church. Presently, our main vehicle in the development of this sense of belonging is the newspaper, *The Orthodox Church*. The All American Councils, now assembling every two years, assist in this process, but they involve only a fraction of the Church's membership. We clearly need more activities and publications which will serve to bring us together as the Orthodox Church in America.

## SECTION V WOMEN IN THE ORTHODOX CHURCH

In recent years the living conditions of both men and women in the Orthodox Church in America have changed greatly. No longer are most of our men unschooled laborers in mines and mills, and on farms and in factories. And no longer are most of our women compelled to spend long hours at home in domestic duties. The conditions of life in which we now live greatly affect the beliefs and actions of our Orthodox people. They provide new opportunities and possibilities for Christian witness and service. And they also present new temptations and dangers to the spiritual life of the people.

It is the task of the Orthodox Church in America to provide guidance and leadership in the Christian life and mission for its members, as well as for all people who are inspired to look to the Orthodox Church in hope of finding the way of true Christian faith and life in the present times. It is also the task of the leaders of the Orthodox Church in America, both clergymen and lay people, to develop the life and institutions of the Church in the most effective and fruitful ways for the spiritual life and mission of its members and for the building up of the Kingdom of God in the present age.

When we reflect specifically about the place and work of Christian women in the Orthodox Church today, we see that together with so much that is wholesome, positive and good in regard to women in contemporary secular life and in the Christian denominations (such as greater educational and employment opportunities, freedom from many burdensome domestic tasks, wider possibilities for choosing one's way of life and behavior, etc.), there is also much in contemporary society in regard to women that is unwholesome, negative and evil. And much of this has entered into the life of some of the *so-called* Christian churches and movements.

The duty of the Orthodox Christians at the present moment is to "discern the spirits" in regard to women, the relationship between and among the sexes, and sexual activity and behavior generally, to see what is of God and what is of the devil. To accomplish this task we must turn to God in prayer and immerse ourselves in the life and teachings of the Church, particularly in the Word of God written in the Bible, and in the sacramental services and in the lives of the saints, in order to be "taught of God" as is the promise given to men in the New Testament Church as Jesus himself said, quoting the prophet Isaiah: "It is written in the prophets, 'And they shall all be taught of God.'" (John 6:45)

When we look to God and to all that He has given us in the Church, in the scriptures, the sacraments and the saints, we know that we must categorically reject any view of men and women which places their self-understanding and their relationship to each other -- and to God -- in terms of power, prestige, possessions, positions and material benefits. We must reject the views about "equality" and "fulfillment" which are provided by the values of "this world." We must rather understand our spiritual, social and sexual lives only in terms of sacrificial, self-emptying service of love for God and man which is shown to us in Christ, the Virgin Mary and all of the saints of God, both men and women, in all times and places.

Poverty of spirit, purity of heart, humility of mind and freedom from carnal passions and fleshly lusts must remain today, as always, the rule of human life and behavior for men and women alike. Orthodox Christians cannot follow "this world" in much of the "feminism" which serves only to enslave women to the same evils to which so many fallen males are already enslaved. And the Orthodox Church cannot follow the so-called Christian churches and groups which are following "this world" in their decisions and actions; "this world" whose "fashion," according to the Word of God, is "passing away" (1 Cor. 7:31).

The Orthodox Christian Church has a glorious tradition whose saints serve eternally as the model of perfection for Christian believers and for all human beings. Included among these saints, led by the Mother of God and Ever-virgin Mary, are a vast number of righteous and holy women: women martyrs, confessors, missionaries, monastics, prophetesses, rulers, judges, healers, evangelizers and righteous wives and mothers, some of whom are glorified by the Church with the most exalted of titles: "Equal to the Apostles." This fact should convince us that within the God-given order of churchly and human life in which men are called to be the husbands and fathers of families and the bishops and priests of churches, that women are equally called to lives of sacrificial service without which the ministry and mission of men would be fruitless, futile and vain. Indeed, what would our Orthodox Church in America be today without the countless women who have built it and held it together over the generations by their prayers and sacrificial labors? And what could the Church possibly hope for in the days to come without the development and strengthening of the ministry of women within the new possibilities and opportunities offered to us by God for our salvation?

The times today are different from the past. The services that women can offer within the Church today are different from what could previously be expected and accomplished. We must ask ourselves today as the Orthodox Church in America if we are truly being faithful to God and to what He daily gives to us for our needs and purposes, for our witness to His Truth and to His Kingdom, for our salvation and inheritance of life everlasting, for our mission of revealing to all people the beauty and perfection of the Orthodox Faith.

Following Christ and His Holy Mother and all of the saints, we know that only the male members of the Church can be husbands and fathers, bishops and priests in the Church, the sacramental images of Christ who is the Head of the Body and the Husband of the Bride which is His Holy Church. And we know as well that as fathers and husbands are not families, so the bishops and priests are not the Church. The Church is one body composed of many members, each of whom has his or her personal calling and gifts to be used for the edification of the body and the salvation of all people.

The Church is not the clergy; and the clergy are not the Church. The mission of the Church is not performed by the clergy alone. And every ministry and service in the Church which is not specifically that of the clergy is to be accomplished by the lay people, including all men, women and children. And any mission and service in the Church which is not that of bishop, priest or deacon is open to all people in the Church, including all women, as God in His gracious wisdom and providence should decide. This is what is taught to us in the scripture and tradition of the Church. It is a dogma of the Orthodox Faith.

Today, as always, every man and woman in the Orthodox Church who is not called to be a clergyman is still called to fulfill some mission and ministry in the Lord. In our day, as in days past, most women are being called to be saints as wives and mothers with the specific task of being the spiritual centers of families and the spiritual nourishers of their husbands and children. Nothing can replace the wife and mother in a family; and no form of human community and relationship can replace the family. It is certainly the task of Orthodox Christians today to bear witness among men that God Himself has created His people, made in His image and likeness, in families which are created images of the Holy Trinity, "small churches," and sacramental realizations of the Kingdom of God on earth.

It is also certainly the case in our time that many women are being called by God to enter our church schools and seminaries, to study the Bible and the theology, liturgy and history of the Church in order to be prepared to exercise specific Christian ministries in the Church for the salvation of others. Women today, much more than in the past, are called to be teachers, scholars, writers, journalists, artists, musicians, iconographers, missionaries, evangelists and counsellors. Women are being called by God to exercise ministries of healing both body and soul. They are being called to care for the poor and the needy, for the sick and the suffering, for the young and the elderly, for those who are in institutions and prisons. They are being called today to serve in church offices and agencies, conducting church projects, organizing church services, developing church finances. And certainly it is the case that today, as always, women are being called to live the monastic life and to follow the ascetic way: praying and fasting and praising the Lord continually in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs; supplicating God's great mercy for the Church, the world and the salvation of mankind. What a grace it would be for all of God's people if the monastic life of women would flourish and blossom in our Church today! And it may well be the case also that it will be pleasing to God to restore the ancient office of deaconess in our Church so that mature, unmarried women who are not called to monastic life may yet live a consecrated and committed life of Christian service in direct obedience to and under the guidance of the hierarchical churchly authority.

Now is the time for the Orthodox Church in America to listen to God and to develop her life and mission in the most perfect way according to the instruction and inspiration of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The mission and ministry of women is central and crucial in this task. May God guide the All American Church Council in Montreal to positive and assertive action in the accomplishment of His will; for the glory of His Name, the building up of His Church and the salvation of His people and His world.

