

What is Stewardship?

"...We commonly refer to the *"three T's"* of Stewardship, but one "T" may be missing or perhaps taken for granted: *"Truth."* Truth in Stewardship means that we make an honest effort to focus on the call of Christ to commit ourselves to prayer, to work, and to give so that the body of Christ, the Church, may live and meet Her mission. Saint Paul writes: *"It is required in stewards, that a person be found faithful"* (1 Cor. 4:2). With this thought in mind, we must be willing to meet the challenge to strengthen the sacred work of our Church in America..."

Stewardship is an important part of our Orthodox faith and is part of a total commitment to Christ. Stewardship is part of a Christian lifestyle that is expected by God as a loving way to give back to God for thanks of what He has given us in life.

Stewardship in the Orthodox Faith is to live and practice the teachings of Jesus Christ and the actions in our daily lives confirm our beliefs in our faith. The Greek Orthodox Archdiocese refers to the three T's of stewardship being Time, Talents, and Treasures to the glory of God.

The Stewardship Program of Saint Anthony consists of four facets:

Ordinary Stewardship is the regular practice of returning to God a portion of all that God has given us. It involves teaching ourselves how to create a life built upon the notion that all that we have is a gift from God. This includes spreading the teachings of Jesus Christ and the concept that giving regularly of our time, talent, and money to God's work on this earth is as much a spiritual practice as prayer and worship.

Time and Talents is getting involved with the Church both in your participation in ministries and offering your volunteer time as well as your talents to help further the Church's mission and ministries.

Extraordinary Stewardship involves the special occasions that arise in the life of our Community that call us to give beyond our ordinary habit. They involve increased risk and encourage us to experiment with sacrificial giving to help the Community realize critical and important goals and programs. The best example of extraordinary stewardship is our Faith and Light campaign for keeping our parish alive through the current pandemic.

Legacy Stewardship is the way in which we address the matter of disposing of the buildup of our blessing from God that we have accumulated through our lifetime. It is the opportunity to provide a planned gift that constitutes both a legacy to generations yet unborn and presents a final testimony of the belief in our Orthodox faith.

Church Membership

The Special Regulations and Uniform Parish Regulations of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America defines membership as the following:

"Any person, eighteen years of age or older, who was baptized according to the rites of the Church, or who was received into the Church through Holy chrismation, who lives according to the faith and canons of the Church, who has met his or her stewardship obligation (part of which is to meet his or her stewardship financial obligation to the Parish), and abides by the regulations herein and the by-laws of the parish, except that a person under twenty-one shall not serve on the parish council when such service is contrary to local law."

The responsibilities of membership may be divided into the fulfillment of three distinct areas of commitment to Christ and to His Church: (1) our liturgical fulfillment, (2) our stewardship fulfillment, and (3) our canonical fulfillment. To be a "parishioner in good standing" at Saint Anthony Greek Orthodox Church, each person must have fulfilled all three aspects of his/her total commitment to the Church.

Liturgical Commitment

The fulfillment of our liturgical commitment to the Church requires our regular participation in the Worship Services and Sacraments of the Church. Without such a commitment to participation in the Church's life, one cannot be a Christian in any meaningful sense of the word. As our Lord said, *"Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you . . . he who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him"* (John 6:54,56). It is therefore essential that each person commit themselves to frequent participation in the Holy Eucharist (Communion), as well as regular participation in the Sacrament of Confession. Any questions regarding one's participation in these sacraments should be referred to the Proistamenos of the Parish.

Stewardship Commitment

Fulfillment of our commitment to Jesus Christ and to the Church also requires the stewardship of our resources in a manner which follows with the precepts of the Gospel. This includes a commitment on our part to support the local Church through the offering of our financial resources as well as of our own unique gifts and talents. To be a "*parishioner in good standing*" of Saint Anthony Greek Orthodox Church, each person or family must choose to cooperate in every way towards the welfare and wellbeing of the Parish. This includes making a financial commitment (pledge) to the church on an annual basis and fulfill that commitment throughout the year. Members are encouraged to use a "percentage giving" method, whereby each person or family sets aside a certain percentage of their income for the Church. It is understood that situations change, and unforeseen events arise; therefore, a pledge may be amended by simply calling the Church office and speaking with Father. Please know that your offering to God and His Church remains a personal and private one. It should be emphasized, moreover, that our stewardship commitment goes far beyond financial matters; it is rather a commitment of the totality of life to God. Stewardship, therefore, also includes volunteering to serve, helping to organize and execute Church functions, singing, teaching, cleaning and maintaining the Church, and involvement in other forms of ministry; it is engagement in the total life of the Church.

Canonical Commitment

The fulfillment of our commitment to the Church, last of all, includes our commitment to live within the canonical standards which the Holy and Sacred Church has established as normative for the life of every Orthodox Christian. Such standards are not intended as limits upon our freedom but should rather be understood as constituting the very basis for the communal life of the Orthodox Church. These include the following:

Each person must have been baptized and chrismated (confirmed) in the Orthodox Church; in the case of one converting to the Orthodox Church from another Christian confession, he/she must have been baptized in a manner acceptable to the Orthodox Church (generally defined as baptism in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit within the context of a

church which confesses the doctrine of the Holy Trinity), and have been chrismated in the Orthodox Church.

If married, the couple must either have been married within the Orthodox Church, or had their marriage blessed within the Orthodox Church.

If a divorce occurs between a couple married within the Orthodox Church or whose marriage has been blessed in the Orthodox Church, an official ecclesiastical divorce must be procured from the Metropolis of Chicago.

Orthodox Christians are not permitted to receive the sacraments of other Christian churches; to do so is regarded as tantamount to embracing the faith of the other church over/against that of the Orthodox Church. Any person, therefore, who has participated in the sacraments of another church is ineligible to receive the sacraments of the Orthodox Church until he/she has been received back into sacramental communion by a priest through the rite of Confession.

The Church's canonical regulations are closely linked to its liturgical and sacramental life; it is therefore essential to note that any person who does not fulfill the above canonical requirements is not eligible to receive the sacraments of the Orthodox Church, to serve as either a godparent (nounos/nouna) at a baptism or a sponsor (koumbaros/koumbara) at a wedding, or to receive an Orthodox funeral.

Frequently Asked Questions

How do I become a member of the parish?

Membership in the Orthodox Church begins at baptism (Chrismation for some) and continues throughout our life. We are united with Christ through the sacraments, or mysteries, of the Church and through our faithful offering of our entire selves to Jesus Christ. Our Archdiocese requires each parish to distinguish between voting members and non-voting members. A voting member is over 18 years of age and turns in a signed stewardship commitment card, committing a portion of time, talent and treasure to the Church. The Archdiocese also requires the voting member to remain current through the year on their commitments. Keep in mind that true membership in the Body of Christ involves living according to His word and within His Church.

Why must I commit to give a specific amount?

Please keep in mind that your stewardship of money is kept in the strictest of confidence. However, we do compile the amounts anticipated to better plan our budget.

What if I cannot fulfill my stewardship commitment?

During the course of a year, people's circumstances change. Your stewardship is valued because it is made out of your love for God and His Church. Please do not be concerned if you are unable to meet your stewardship commitment – we are glad you are a part of this parish.