

**Stewardship Message**  
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Thank you Father and good morning my Saint Demetrios Family.

Stewardship may be a foreign entity to those outside of our Church, but for the Orthodox faithful, it's something that's been around for a very long time and it has clearly been successful at our Parish and others.

Over time, the word Stewardship has had different meanings. Most recently, in our society, we have heard it associated with ecological concerns (for example, a steward of the environment or the planet, or in another word, a caretaker). The English word is a translation of the Greek word, **ikonomia**. An **ikonómos** is one who "takes care of the house". The English definition is: "the conducting, supervising or managing of something, especially, the careful and responsible management of something entrusted to one's care".

Through the Church Stewardship Program, we become stimulated with a better understanding of the true meaning of giving of one's time, talents and abilities, as well as financial resources. It becomes a wonderful reminder and perhaps, even a spiritual journey of why each of us needs to give back to our Church. As God blesses us with a "lease" to life each and every day, rather than being self-focused we must reinforce our Christ-centered life by giving back to God through our Church.

When we think of generosity, we as humans most often examine the size of the gift or the nobility of the cause. But our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ measured generosity by a completely different standard: the condition of the giver's heart. **"For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also"** (Matthew 6:21). Accordingly, we should recognize that giving is more than an obligation for followers of Christ; it is an exciting opportunity to offer treasure that will be passed on to our children and last for all eternity. Reinforcing this, in Acts 20:35b Jesus teaches us: **"It is more blessed to give than to receive"**.

Yet, statistics show that as a whole, U.S. Christians today give proportionately less than during the Great Depression. And, with the social/economic uncertainties we face today, chances are that there may be an even greater decline in giving. What must be certain in our minds is that without our love and support, our Holy Church and its ministries cannot maintain or cultivate.

In the Old Testament, God set a basic standard of personal giving through the tithe, or 10% of one's income. Through Christ's teachings, the New Testament expands on that basic standard of personal giving by encouraging believers to not stop there, but to give out of revelation as God leads them – giving from the heart, giving by faith and giving in obedience to Him.

Since the establishment of the first Greek Orthodox Church in 1864, the evolution of the Greek-American community has been a major concern of the leadership of the Church.

The Greek Orthodox Archdiocese refers to the three T's of stewardship being Time, Talents and Treasures to the glory of God. Commonly the "three T's" of Stewardship are the only ones referred to, but as a Priest said: "*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, to sacrifice and to give so that the body of Christ, the Church, may live and fulfill its mission. Saint Paul wrote: "***It is required in stewards, that a person be found faithful***" (1 Corinthians 4:2). As such, our duty as faithful, Christian Orthodox stewards is to continue to devote ourselves to prayer, work, sacrifice and generous giving to meet the challenges required to nurture, strengthen and secure the sacred work of our Saint Demetrios Church and its ministries.

As a Community we have truly been blessed because of the willingness of so many parishioners who unselfishly give of their time, talents and finances to 'keep our Church going'. Now, as a Community we are being asked to offer our stewardship pledges for 2009. In order for our Church to fulfill its liturgical responsibilities, be renovated, continue developing and meet financial obligations, we the people, the Ecclesia, must unconditionally support the Stewardship Program with love and a philanthropic motivation.

My fellow stewards, the care and continued growth of this Church have been entrusted to us - all of us and not just a few. It's our calling as **ikonóme**, through stewardship, to ensure that it is well taken care of – only then will our Church, as a Mother embracing her child be able to take care of us.

So, as all of us depart here today, let us rededicate ourselves through the Stewardship Program, to the caretaking of our Community and all its ministries, which make our Saint Demetrios Church, God's great house for spiritual growth and renewal.

Thank you.