

**Saint George Antiochian Orthodox Cathedral**  
**November 08, 2015**  
**Sermon (Stewardship)**

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and the Holy Spirit, Amen.

Good morning, as you know, November is Stewardship month, yes, when we think of stewardship, we usually think of money. I am not here to talk about money but to speak to all of you on the subject of Christian Stewardship. For each one of us is called by God to be a Steward.

What does stewardship mean? Merriam Webster's dictionary defines it as follows:

**Stewardship:**

***... the careful and responsible management of something entrusted to one's care. –***

How does the concept of stewardship apply to us as Christians? First, and foremost, we are to understand that everything belongs to God! God is the Creator of all things, **visible and invisible**. He created the universe, our world, all aspects of nature, including us. Life only happens when God decides that it is to happen.

The Bible contains numerous references to the role of stewardship in the Church and to the importance of stewardship as a vehicle for living by Faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. For instance, in 1 Corinthians 4:1-2, the essence of stewardship is discussed by St. Paul:

***"This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and Stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required of Stewards that they be found trustworthy."***

What does Stewardship mean to us? The following list of statements are all different, each explaining the meaning of stewardship in a unique manner. They are all, however, valid, since they contain the essential elements of service and faith.

- Christian Stewardship is our commitment to the giving of our time, talent, and material possessions. These are a trust from God to be used in His name for the benefit of all mankind in grateful acknowledgement of Christ's redeeming love.
- Stewardship is being a responsible and concerned caretaker of Christ's Church. It is also learning how to enjoy Church life and be happy in Church work.
- Stewardship is the caring for the needs of one another.
- Stewardship is offering of one's self as Christ gave His life for us.
- Stewardship is what a person does after saying "I Believe", as proof of that belief.
- Stewardship is being devoted and totally committed to serve God and His Church morally, spiritually, physically, and financially as an individual and collectively as a family unit.

Christian Stewardship could be defined as the effective commitment or investment of human and material resources in participation with Christ in his love for others.

Now, I would like to offer few words concerning the difference and misunderstanding we all have between volunteerism and stewardship, and how it correctly pertains to our life in the Church. Over the years, we have seen many of us in the church struggle to get more and more people to participate and **“Volunteer”** to do what needs to be done to keep our church going. Whether it be helping out once a year at the annual festival, event, or being a part of the weekly and monthly life in the Church, we always seem to find ourselves, sooner or later, lamenting the fact that we do not have enough people **“volunteering”** to do all of the tasks and fill all of the roles that need to be done and filled. Well, I believe that one of the difficulties that we see in all of this is our focus.

Are we really looking for **“Volunteers”** to do a project, or are we looking for **Stewards** to fulfill a ministry?

We find ourselves looking for parishioners to teach in Sunday School, sing in our choir, serve in the altar, oversee our Youth Ministry, join the organizations, usher, chant, cook, clean, plan for the future, pay the bills, make the necessary decisions, and so on. Then, we look at them all and call them such wonderfully *“dedicated volunteers,”* and try to be ever so careful not to put too many demands on them, or expect too much from them, because they are simply **“Volunteers.”** Well, enough of that word! May I humbly, yet boldly, say we are NOT volunteers! We are **Stewards!** Our Archdiocese does not have a Department of Volunteerism, but rather a Department of Stewardship.

Some of you might say: *“What’s the difference? What’s in a name? We’re all working for the church anyway and trying to get the job done. Who cares what you call it!”* Well, there really is a big difference, and a name can make all the difference in the world, especially when that world is dealing with, and is, **God’s kingdom.**

Let us, take a look at the definitions of each word and see how they present themselves. The word voluntary (as taken from the Random House Dictionary) means *“done, made, brought about, undertaken, etc., of one’s own accord or by free choice; of, pertaining to, or acting in accord with the will.”* A volunteer is defined as *“a person who voluntarily offers himself or herself for a service or undertaking; a person who performs a service willingly and without pay.”* Furthermore, none of us, would ever expect to be paid by the church for singing in the choir or teaching Sunday school. But, is there not much more to our life in the Church than simply doing something freely and without pay?

Now, let’s look again at stewardship. A Steward is defined as *“a person who manages another’s property or financial affairs; one who administers anything as the agent of another or others; a person who has charge of the household of another, buying or obtaining food, directing the servants.”* As you can see, the focus is much different. As **Stewards**, we are not simply coming of our own free will to accomplish a task, but more importantly, we are taking care of that which has been given to us by God. **This is His World, His Church, His Property**, and we are His Children and Stewards who have been entrusted with the care of it all. *“The earth is the Lord’s and the*

*fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein” (Psalm 24:1). Furthermore, as stated in the pamphlet put out by our own Archdiocese’s Department of Stewardship “Standing Ready to Serve,” we read: “Life is a gift from God. All that we have in this life is part of that gift. Stewardship reinforces this belief and reminds us that our time, talents, and resources are the gifts through which we show our love and appreciation to God.”*

As faithful Stewards of God’s holy House, we have a sacred obligation and responsibility not simply to volunteer a few extra moments, but rather to humbly and joyfully offer our time, our talents, and our resources back to God in the **management and care** of that which He has given to us. And this responsibility belongs to all of us, clergy and laity alike.

Yes, it is true! There is no human being alive who has not received a gift from God. We have all been blessed by God with certain gifts and talents – and opportunities to use them! – and are called upon to give back a portion of these blessings in thanksgiving for what we have received, and for the glory of His holy Name. So, whether we are serving at the altar, changing the candles, working on the budget, singing in the choir, fixing the broken door, teaching in Sunday School, cooking in the kitchen, overseeing Youth Ministry, cutting the grass, teaching Bible Study, chanting, greeting people, making Holy Bread, offering a donation, putting the Festival or an event together, counting the money, working in the office, visiting the lost sheep, staying after to lock the doors, visiting the sick and shut-ins, reading the epistle, ushering, planning a special event, caring for the elderly, serving coffee hour, working in an organization, serving on the Parish Council, preaching a sermon, and whatever else I may have forgotten. This is what we call **“Total Parish Involvement”**– we are ALL of infinite value to our God and a vital part of the management and stewardship of His holy Church. This shows us, then, that the Church is not a charity at which we volunteer; **rather, She is our Mother whom we serve.**

In conclusion, Stewardship is much more than giving money, it is giving time and skills and prayer and thought to the church. It is more than giving to the Church; it is giving to all the good causes that will help bring salvation to the world. Good stewardship means budgeting our time and energy and attention to evangelize the world; it means analyzing life’s priorities and counting costs; it means being aware that someday we shall have to give an account of ourselves before God. Therefore, let us be faithful and righteous in our stewardship as we read in (Colossians 4:17): *“See that you fulfil the ministry which you have received in the Lord”* .

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and the Holy Spirit, Amen.

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