

STEWARDSHIP AND TOTAL COMMITMENT

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Christian Stewardship is a life-style, which acknowledges accountability and responsibility before God. Becoming a Steward begins when we say we believe in God, to whom we give our love, loyalty and trust. We affirm that every aspect of our lives comes as a gift from Him. Stewards are motivated as recipients of God's abundant love, to respond by participating and supporting His plan of salvation and the ministries of the Church, which make salvation possible for them and for others.

In the Bible, the Steward is depicted as a person who is given the responsibility of managing something that belongs to the Owner, God. The Steward as the manager is thus accountable to the Owner for all that he possesses and is responsible to return to the Lord his or her fair share in gratitude and thanksgiving. As God has been generous to us, He expects us to be generous toward the work of Christ and His Church. Our Stewardship Commitment is the tool of ministry, salvation and healing for us and for others. Christian Stewardship is the privilege and honor of directly supporting God's work on earth through the Church.

A flourishing parish Christian Stewardship Program can be compared to a river, which overflows into many tributaries and reaches out in many directions to share with others our rich and profound spiritual inheritance. Success on the local level emanates to greater support and outreach on all levels of ministry: local, national and international. Christian Stewardship offers each person the means to become an active proponent in disseminating the Greek Orthodox Faith through fair and generous giving to support the Parish, Metropolis and Archdiocesan or National Ministries.

The Department of Stewardship and Pastoral Resources is tasked with preparing Christian Stewardship material to assist the parishes of our Archdiocese in achieving a successful and hopefully vibrant Stewardship program.

TOTAL COMMITMENT

On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up, as he may prosper, so that contributions need not be made when I come." (1 Corinthians 16:2)

Saint Paul instructed the Corinthians to offer their support for the Church of Jerusalem on a regular and consistent schedule. Total Commitment represents the parishes' support for the

National Ministries of the Archdiocese. The support, according to St. Paul, which should be made on the "first day of every week," has two meanings for us.

The parish Total Commitment to the Archdiocese is to be made from the first fruits, meaning that it should be that portion of the parish's income, which should be designated for the Archdiocese, and not the local parish. St. Paul, knew that it was easier to give on a regular basis, than to wait until we have enough to meet our spiritual and financial obligation. Therefore he reminds us that the parish is to contribute regularly, monthly so that the Archdiocese, depending on the regular Total Commitment income, may execute its manifold ministries to the parishes and the faithful of our Church.

Secondly, the parish's Total Commitment directly impacts on the National Church's ability to maintain and augment the necessary programs for the Archdiocese, Metropolises and Parishes. The Archdiocese is sustained by the Total Commitment, which is the lifeblood pumping vitality throughout the entire Body of Christ, which we call the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America.

The support rendered by the local parish is the means by which the Archdiocese is able to support the ministries required of a Major Faith such as ours. These ministries include: the Ecumenical Patriarchate, our Mother Church: the Metropolis Offices and Programs on a regional level; Hellenic College and Holy Cross School of Theology, the source of future Priests and Lay Ministries; Youth Ministry and Religious Education, the present and future of our Church; Internet Ministries and the "Orthodox Observer" for keeping in touch; Saint Basil Academy, for our children in need; Orthodox Christian Missions, for sharing our Faith with others; Greek Language Education for maintaining our Culture. These are some of the obvious ministries, if we were to list all, as Saint John wrote about Jesus: were every one of them to be written, *I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written.* (John 21:25)