

The Heavenly Host

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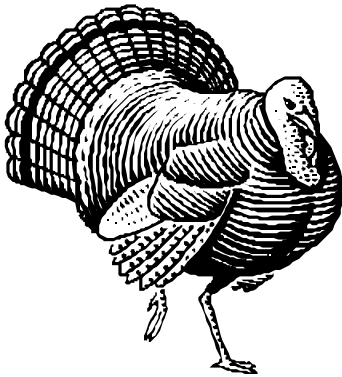
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Sermon on Stewardship – by Hani AbuGhazaleh

“Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God.”

1 Corinthians 4:1.



Time and time again, we are told to be examples of good stewards. As such, we should all have a basic understanding of what a steward does. By definition, a steward oversees the affairs and property of another - implying accountability. In the context of Christianity, it means God entrusts us to oversee all that belongs to Him. With that in mind, His gift of life to us entails us to use our time, talents, and treasure to continue the work of the Church. Those three “T’s” might as well be the foundation of stewardship. And as you have been told before, stewardship is how Christ’s work gets done.

So, let me ask you, how do we, as Orthodox Christians, immerse ourselves in stewardship to fulfill Christ’s work? The easy answer for many is to simply give money to the church. Yes, making monetary donations is always a blessing to the parish; yet, those are not the only treasures we’re looking for. It may come as a delight to teens, college students and young adults to know that our quest to be good stewards in our parish doesn’t necessarily imply that we have to open up our wallets or purses. Rather than making monetary donations, we can make donations of time, talents, and resources.

You may at this point be asking yourself, “Well, I have time, talent, and resources. How can these help my parish?” Let me assure you, there is a lot that you can do! Maybe you have time. Did you know our parish has a lay visitation ministry for home-bound and elderly parishioners? Or perhaps your time could be spent getting in contact with a parishioner that we haven’t seen in a while.

Now, I am sure many of you out there have talents. As common as your talent may sound, you shouldn’t underestimate how powerful it can be. Maybe you have a great voice – have you thought of joining the choir?

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CHRISTMAS FESTIVAL by Sondra Love

St. Michael Community Center, 16643 Vanowen Street, Van Nuys, CA 91406
 Saturday, November 23, 2002 at 6 pm.
 A Delicious Dinner For All Appetites

Baked Goods & Boutique Items For Sale, Silent Auction and a Visit From Santa

Win a fully decorated and lit 7 ft. artificial Christmas tree valued at \$2,000.
 Tickets are \$5 each or \$20 for 5 tickets (winner need not be present).

Dinner Tickets: Adults \$35 and Children (11 years & younger) \$10; Table for eight people are \$280.

ANNUAL FOOD COLLECTION

Did you know that we as a parish are in the upper 10% of the population? Did you know the other 90% starve daily but really get hit during the holidays? Here's a way to do something and to feel good about it without going out of your way to help a family much less fortunate than you.

It's time once again for the Annual Food Collection! During this and every year for the Thanksgiving and Christmas season, you can help by providing a family (8-10 people) with a holiday meal. Below is a sample meal:

Canned ham or a turkey	Instant Milk
Canned yams, instant potatoes, rice, stuffing mix	Dinner rolls
Canned vegetables (3 large)	Coffee/Tea
Canned fruit (3 large) and 2 cans of cranberry sauce	Canned /bottled juices (2)
Desserts; cookies, cakes (no frozen pies)	

All goods need to be boxed for easy transport and have the weight of food contents marked on the box. First drop off date is Sunday, November 24th. I urge for new families as well as the usual faithful families who contribute each year.

Personal Care Items such as deodorant, soap and shampoo, tooth brushes, toothpaste, sanitary napkins, disposable razors. **Baby necessities** as food, formula and disposable diapers. **Clothing/Shoes** like new and 'hand-me-down' for all sizes and ages. Any contributions of items or monetary would be greatly appreciated.

If you know of a family who is having a difficult time and needs assistance, please let Fr. Timothy know. Also, if you have any questions, don't hesitate to contact me at 818-345-4363.

Yours in Christ,
 Cindy Tamoush

REMEMBER ST. MICHAEL CHURCH IN YOUR WILL

St. Michael is very grateful to those who have remembered the church in their estate plans. Bequests enable us to do many things we would not have been able to do otherwise. For those considering it, it's easy to do:

- * Decide on the amount you wish to give to St. Michael. It can be a set amount or a percentage.
- * Contact your attorney to advise him or her of your wishes.
- * Request that your will include a bequest to St. Michael.

Should you wish to make a bequest, or if you have any questions, please contact John Khouri (818/205-9696) or Sondra Love (818/996-0271). Thank you.

A Message from the President of the Ladies Guild by Katie Nassief



To all the ladies of St. Michael Parish. If you have not been attending our guild meetings, you are missing out. This is the way you can keep in touch with all the planning of events that take place during the year, and it is a wonderful way to make friends. The meetings are held on the first Tuesday of each month in our Conference Center. So mark your calendar and plan to be there.

Our Christmas Festival invitations have been mailed. Please support this event as it is a major fund raiser. It will be an exciting affair and as grand as it was last year. We are raffling a beautifully decorated 7 foot Christmas tree. It will be on display in the book store. You have received tickets in the mail. Please fill them out and return them. If you are the lucky winner, we will deliver the tree to your home. We will also have four smaller trees (4 ft. high) decorated with the theme and donated by parishioners. You will also be treated to a delightful meal, browse through a boutique and be tempted by the delicious holiday sweets. So save the day and invite your neighbors. If you have a group, you can contact Sondra Love at (818) 996-0271 and she will gladly reserve a table for you.

We have also mailed holiday bake forms for those of you who wish to place your orders for the Arabic sweets. These can be picked up the evening of the Festival. We will have baklawa, date nut mamoul, graibe, macaroons, nut mamoul made with farina and combination packs. These will make wonderful gifts. In addition to the sweets, we will have petit zahtar, sugar and red bell pepper bread. So don't miss out. Bring the children so they can visit with Santa Claus. But most of all, support your church.

Meet me at the Festival!



Mediterranean Chicken Pitas

2 boneless, skinless chicken breasts cut into 1-inch pieces

½ large tomato, seeded and diced

½ small cucumber, seeded and diced

½ small red onion, sliced

2 tablespoons cider vinegar

1 tablespoon olive oil

½ teaspoon dried oregano

½ teaspoon dried mint leaves

12 leaves romaine or red leaf lettuce

6 whole wheat pita breads, cut in half

4 ounces crumpled feta cheese

Salt and pepper to taste

Spray a large nonstick skillet with cooking spray and heat over medium heat until hot. Add chicken and cook 7-10 minutes or until no longer pink. Reduce heat, add tomato, cucumber and onion. Add vinegar, oil, herbs and feta cheese and mix well. Place 1 lettuce leaf in each pita half and divide chicken mixture between the pita halves.

Makes 6 Servings

Serving Size: 1 stuffed pita half

Meat Pie Bake Day Approaching

The next baking day is scheduled for Saturday, December 14, 2002 in the kitchen. One great aspect is that both young and old (not so old) parishioners get together for a day to knead, mix, scoop, pinch, brush, bake, cool and package our very delicious meat pies. Our newest member, Bria McLinn, is pictured to the right assisting (Aunt) Sharon Rowihab with a tray headed for the ovens. Thanks to everyone who helps make this day a huge success.



Dates to Remember

St. Michael Feast Day Coffee Hour is Sunday, November 10.

Second Annual Christmas Festival is Saturday, November 23.

Founders' Recognition Day (Coffee Hour) is Sunday, December 8.

Church School Christmas Program is Sunday, December 15.

Annual Chili-Cookoff & Bachgammon Tournament is Sunday, January 12, 2003.



Ladies Guild

Scrip available each Sunday in the Community Center. A portion of each dollar is donated to our Church and is applied to our mortgage. Shop at your favorite stores and buy item for work, home or school!

You're all invited to sign up for Holy Bread & to host a coffee hour. Please call Leila Abu-Ghazaleh for more information on open dates at (805) 522-4797. The following dates are still available: December 8 for Holy Bread and November 17 & 24 for the Coffee Hour.

Spiritual Bouquets: Donations are offered in memory of the deceased in lieu of flowers. If you wish to participate, please see Jeannette Aboud.

Christmas Cultural Event: Carrie will contact everyone when the tickets arrive for *Messiah Sing-a-long* on Monday, December 16, 2002. Plan to stay for caroling.

2003 PLEDGE/TITHE FORMS

As a committed member of St. Michael, please complete and return your 2003 Pledge/Tithe Form by December 31st. All parishioners who are at least 18 years old and self-supporting must complete a new Pledge/Tithe Form each year, and all information is strictly confidential.

Your pledge or tithe supports the church's day-to-day operating expenses, which, like our personal expenses, are expected to increase in 2003. Any questions or concerns, please contact Mary Ann Coury, Comptroller, at (818) 994-2313, or Sondra Love, Treasurer, at (818) 996-0271. Thank you, in advance, for your commitment, and we look forward to a bright 2003 for the parish of St. Michael.

Sermon on Stewardship – by Hani AbuGhazaleh, cont.

(Continued from page 1)

Now ladies – I would not hesitate to say that many of you are quite creative and can come up with some great Orthodox arts and crafts at the drop of a hat. Now, take into consideration that these items can be donated to our Christmas Festival. Maybe you're a very organized person – well, we need someone to organize our parish library and help expand our book collection.

Being a good steward can even be as simple as giving someone a ride to church that finds it difficult to make it otherwise. Start a sports tournament, help on the church grounds, or write something for our monthly newsletter. The list goes on and on when it comes to talents. The very fact that you can *walk* makes you able to involve yourself in our parish life.

I hope that by now you are all starting to understand my point. All of these talents that we are given by the grace of God, no matter how ordinary they may seem, can make a huge difference in the life of the church. Imagine if all of our choir members hadn't devoted their time and talents to singing during our Divine Liturgy. Imagine if our Sunday school teachers hadn't offered *their* time and talents to our kids. It goes without saying that our parish, *any* parish, relies a great deal on the stewardship of its parishioners.

St. Paul, in his Second Letter to the Corinthians, presents a landmark teaching on Christian Stewardship. Coincidentally, this was the Epistle that you just heard a few minutes ago. He says, in 9:7, "So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver." Brothers and Sisters in Christ, I assure you that our giving should not stem from of a feeling of guilty obligation, but rather, from Christian discipline and cheer. It is important that we young adults have the discipline to become pledging members of the parish as soon as we render ourselves financially independent. Our commitment to regular offerings through pledges shouldn't be minimized and it remains an equal part of stewardship. We take it upon ourselves to make payments for our credit cards, cell phones, cars, and possibly apartments. It is our responsibility to make those payments – shouldn't part of that responsibility also lead us to make a commitment to our parish?

Now, let me take you to Matthew 25:14-30. Here you will find the well known Parable of the Talents. Bear in mind that a talent, as used in this parable, is a great sum of money and came to designate a special gift or endowment. A traveling man gives three of his servants a different number of talents: to one he gives five, to another: two, and to the last: one. After the man's return from his journey, he undertook the settling of accounts with his servants. The servant, whom was given five talents, returned ten. The servant, whom was given two talents, returned four. Yet, the last servant, whom was given one talent, decided to not use his talent to gain more. And much to the man's disappointment, he received nothing more than what he gave his servant to use. So are we like these servants: we are to take the gifts that God has given us, no matter in what form, and put them to use in the Lord's name. We are in fact stewards of these gifts and will be accountable to whether or not we have used them for the building up of the Kingdom of God.

ST. MICHAEL ANTIOCHIAN
ORTHODOX CHURCH
OF THE SAN FERNANDO VALLEY

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November Cultural Event

A bus trip is planned for November 9 to the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels with lunch at nearby Olvera Street. The tour is led by a docent and costs just \$4 per person. Make your check payable to St. Michael and send to Carrie Skaff. Buses depart from church at 11:00 am from the east parking lot.

Other Photos from the Meat Pie Baking Day on September 14, 2002

