

Giving Thanks
**Eucharistic
Stewardship**



STEWARDSHIP
MINISTRY





The Holy Eucharist is called Holy Communion because it unites us as the Body of Christ. The word *Eucharist* comes from the Greek word for thanksgiving. This is what we do when we celebrate the Divine Liturgy – we are giving thanks.



Stewardship is our response to God's grace and moves us from grace to gratitude. Just as we love because God first loved us (I John 4:14), we give because God first gave to us. The question of the Psalmist "What shall I give to the Lord in return for all His benefits towards me?" (Ps 116:12), is answered in every liturgy when we pray, "Let us offer ourselves and one another and our whole life to Christ our God."



In his book on the Eucharist, Fr. Alexander Schmemmann explains that in the early Church, the Eucharistic sacrifice was offered by all the members of the church. Each person coming to the gathering of the Church brought with them everything they could spare for the needs of the Church. This is the Church that we as Orthodox Christians claim to be.



We read about this in Acts 2: “Everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles. And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common; and they began selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need. Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved.”



How many times have you heard people say, “I don’t get anything out of liturgy”? The truth is that we don’t come to church to *get* something, but to *give* ourselves – our whole being -- to God. We have to give ourselves as an offering to God and what we get in return is the presence of Jesus Christ within us. As we come to know Jesus this way, we are drawn into the communion of the Church.



Through Holy Communion, we are drawn out of ourselves and embrace the mission of our parish. We carry the fire of God's love within us with the power to renew all things. When we understand the true meaning of the Holy Eucharist, we bridge the gap between liturgy and life, between the love of Jesus on the cross and our daily lives, between our beautiful theology and practical stewardship. As Eucharistic Orthodox Christians, we see the world as God's gift. We offer the world back to God in thanksgiving with the words, "Thine own of Thine own we offer to Thee...."



Christian stewardship means that I own nothing. Everything I have belongs to God. He has loaned it to me. I am committed to use it responsibly, and one day, I will have to answer to Him for my use or misuse of His gifts.

I am the manager of God's gifts: my time, my talents, my possessions, my body, my soul – everything belongs to God. Saint Paul asks us, "What have you that you have not received?" Money, for example, becomes a sacrament when it is offered to God. It becomes a visible expression of our commitment, faith, and love for Jesus. Once given to God, our gifts are consecrated by the Holy Spirit, who then translates them into works of mercy that bring glory to God.

Father Anthony M. Coniaris (1926-2020)

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