



THE GIFTS OF THE *Magi* & THE SPIRIT OF GIVING

The Gifts of the Magi icon presents the Wise Men offering gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh to the Christ Child. These wealthy scholars and priests of the East endured numerous dangers, and traveled a great distance to offer their treasures to Christ, the newborn king. What a beautiful and meaningful example they set for all future generations, helping us to understand the blessing of giving.

The Magi represent a sincere desire to seek after God, searching through science, nature, and their cultural traditions to communicate with their Creator and discover His will for them, even when it was something so unexpected. Imagine their long, arduous journey, possibly a 1500 mile expedition from Persia to Bethlehem, over mountains and deserts, a journey that took many months. Surely on such a trip they faced numerous dangers from nature, from bandits, and from the fear of the unknown.

What faith, determination and sacrifice they must have had. They surely faced questions and skepticism at the start. During their journey, unexpected challenges and discouraging setbacks would have been commonplace. Yet they persevered. They overcame the difficult trials and tests of their journey, and persisted in their search for God's truth.

When they finally met the Christ Child, they bowed down in worship. They offered Jesus the most precious of their gifts. Although they were the "wise men," the scholars and priests of their day, they didn't allow their ego to interfere with their unexpected discovery. Even when the journey surprisingly took them beyond the king's palace in Jerusalem, to the insignificant village of Bethlehem, they went forward in faith. Everything seemed so astonishing, and yet in humility they approached the Christ Child to worship Him and offer the best of their gifts – gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

The Story of the Magi is not simply a cute part of the Christmas Story. It represents central characters who model a path of faith we are called to imitate: 1) A sincere search for God and an authentic desire to listen to Him; 2) A willingness to overcome any obstacles or challenging inconvenience in their journey towards God; and 3) An offering of the best they had in humble worship to their Creator.

As we reflect on this beautiful stewardship icon, let us take to heart the words of St. John Chrysostom: "The rich man is not the one who has much, but the one who gives much. For what he gives away remains his forever."

— Fr. Luke Veronis



STEWARDSHIP MINISTRY

Quick Start Guide



1. Form a Parish Stewardship Team

- Form your stewardship team early
- Build a team of dedicated stewards blessed with a variety of gifts, training and experience
- Choose a Christ-centered chair with proven leadership and mentoring skills that lives as a true Orthodox Christian steward



2. Make a 12 Month Plan

- Create a 12-month parish stewardship calendar & put it in the church master calendar
- Plan for ongoing communication and personal contact with parishioners
- Schedule and assign tasks, communications, visitations and events
- Recognize that Stewardship is an ongoing ministry – not any single event or activity



3. Communicate

- Include a variety of messages pertaining to stewardship in bulletins, e-bulletins, newsletters, bulletin boards, etc.
- Plan a strategy of visitations or small group meetings
- Keep the parish council informed and active in promoting stewardship. Parish council members should lead by example
- Contact the Archdiocese for Stewardship resources
- Enlist parishioners to offer testimonials
- Offer sermons that apply the them of the Gospel lessons to aspects of Stewardship



4. Engage the People in the Life of the Church

- Get people personally involved in parish ministry
- Welcome new ideas and delegate responsibility
- Listen to and validate the concerns of parishioners
- Create opportunities for people to be heard



5. Utilize the 2014 Theme

- Theme "The rich man is not one who has much, but one who gives much. For what he gives away remains his forever." (St. John Chrysostom)
- Icon: Gifts of the Magi
- Application to Stewardship: In humility the magi – the three wise men – approached the Christ child to worship Him and offer the best of their gifts – gold, frankincense, and myrrh.