

DO YOUR BEST

A traditional American proverb says, “God makes this request of his children: Do the best you can – where you are, with what you have, now.” The story of Jesus Christ feeding the 5,000 illustrates this through the boy’s offering of all that he had – five loaves and two fish. This boy did his best with what he had, and Jesus used it to perform an incredible miracle.

THE ECONOMY OF HEAVEN

The disciples had wanted to send the people away to get something to eat, but Jesus responds, “There is no need for them to go away; give them food yourselves.” The disciples approached the issue from the point of view of earthly economics. To buy food for the people assembled would be too expensive – 200 days’ wages.

Jesus’ response is simple. He asks, “What do you have?” But the disciples don’t realize that they are being called to participate in a miracle by simply giving what they have.

BRING THEM TO ME

Jesus’ disciples tell him that all they have are five loaves and two small fish that a boy has offered. Jesus’ response is the phrase, “*Bring them to me.*” Jesus then takes the loaves, blesses and breaks them, and feeds 5,000 men plus women and children.

We also bring what we have to Jesus. We offer bread and wine. He returns it to us as His body and blood in Holy Communion. We offer ourselves and we become the Church, His body on earth. No matter how much we give, He cannot be outdone. Just like the boy who offered the loaves and the fish, if we offer what we have – however great or small our gift – with prayer and humility, God will receive our gifts and multiply them to feed His people.

STEWARDSHIP IS ABOUT JOY

We don’t give out of fear of judgment in the afterlife. We give with joy as part of our spiritual growth, putting the emphasis on experiencing heaven now. Stewardship of our gifts can help shape our world and ourselves in such a way that we can experience God’s grace, love and communion in the present. This perspective on Christian Stewardship emphasizes that which is possible for us as humans – *now* rather than later. It shifts our focus from fear to the potential for experiencing joy.

Hard work may bring power and success. Only God can bring us joy, peace and love. American writer, Frederick Buechner has written, “Greed is the mathematical truism that the more you get, the more you have. The opposite of greed – the selfless love of God and neighbor – is based on the truth that the

more you give away in love, the more you are.”

PUT AWAY THE PIE CHART

Stewardship is not about calculations, portions or percentages. It cannot be reduced to a number of hours of service or dollars offered. We can’t reduce our responsibilities as members of the Body of Christ to paying the bills. Christian Stewardship is a mindset – a way of life. In true stewardship, we do not give to the Church for any specific purpose. We are giving back to God with joy in thanksgiving for what He has done for us. God is never outdone in generosity.

GRACE

The true motivation for giving is grace. Giving is an act of worship in response to the generosity of God. “You are to give,” says Saint Paul, “as God has prospered you.” His Second Letter to the Corinthians teaches us clearly, “He who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.” God blesses those who give with generosity.

THANKING GOD

The question is not, “How much do I give to stay in the club?” or “What are the dues?” The real question we need to ask ourselves is “How do I thank God for my many blessings?”

As Orthodox Christians, we are called to a new way of seeing things – a new way of life. Stewardship is obedience to the greatest commandment to “love the Lord with all your heart, soul, mind and strength.” We are called to bring ourselves and others to commit our lives to Jesus Christ in such a way that leads us to the joy of knowing him personally and profoundly.

GOD’S GENEROSITY

Saint Gregory the Theologian writes, “You will never overcome God’s generosity, even if you give away all that you have. And however much you bring to him, always more remains. Nor will you give anything that is your own; for all things flow from God (Or 14.22).

LEAVE THE REST TO GOD

You cannot do *everything*, but you can do *something*. God wants you to do your best and leave the rest to him. Saint Theofan said, “Exert all your strength, but rest your concern for success on God.”

The Lord doesn’t expect any more from us than what we have to offer. But He does expect us to be faithful and that we do our very best for Him.

We do our best and leave the rest to Him.



For further reflection...

Jesus said, “Well done good and faithful servant.”

He did not say, “Well *said*.”

He did not say, “Well *planned*.”

He did not say, “Well *thought*.”

And He did not say, “Well *intended*.”

But He said, “Well *DONE*, good and faithful servant.”

The emphasis for us as Christians is in *doing*.

We are called to give the best we have and to do the best we can to promote God’s Kingdom on earth.

Fr. Anthony M. Coniaris



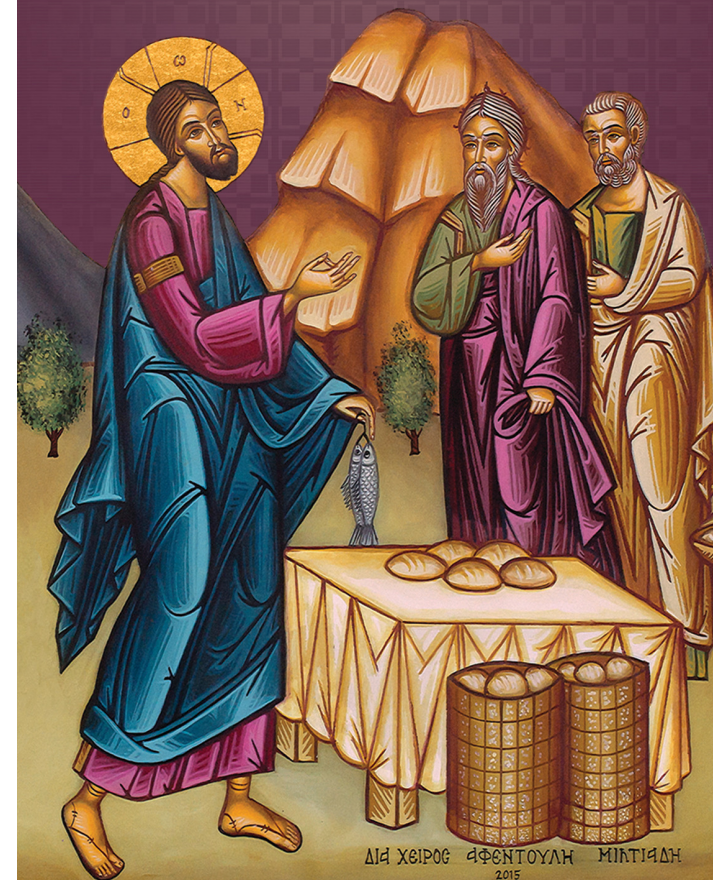
STEWARDSHIP MINISTRIES

DEPARTMENT OF

STEWARDSHIP, OUTREACH & EVANGELISM
GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AMERICA

307 West 54th Street • New York, NY 10019
646/519-6760 • Stewardship@goarch.org

those that seek the
LORD *SHALL NEVER*
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GOOD THING



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