

STEWARDS OF THE GOSPEL

You are the Voice of Christ in a Changing World

“As the Father has sent me, so I send you.”

John 20:21

Are you a good and faithful servant? As Orthodox Christians, we have been given a sacred trust. We have received the treasure of the Gospel – the Good News of Jesus Christ. With this sacred trust comes the great responsibility to share it.

If we compare ourselves to the stewards in the parable of the talents (Matthew 25:14-30), do we multiply the treasure for which we are responsible and for which we will be held accountable when the master returns? Or do we bury our treasure in the ground, offering back only that which was given to us? Jesus said “As the Father has sent me, so I send you” (John 20:21). At the end of our life, will He say to us, “Well done good and faithful servant”?

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As recipients and stewards of this great treasure, we are called to protect it, keeping its message pure. This is difficult to do in a time when knowledge of the faith is informed so

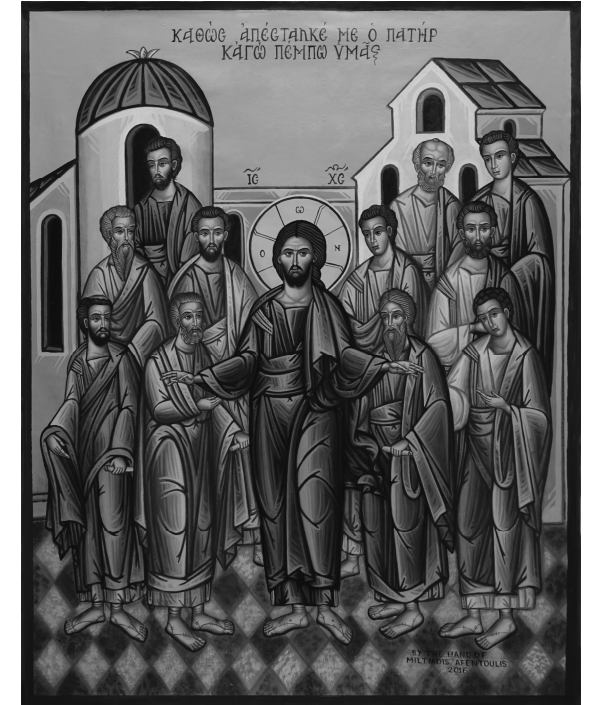
much by popular culture. Orthodox Christians in America may rely too heavily on our culture to bind people to the faith, often at the expense of knowledge of the Gospel message and the faith. As each generation becomes increasingly assimilated, these cultural ties become less effective in keeping people engaged in the life of the Church. For many, knowledge of the faith is insufficient to appreciate the unique teachings and traditions of Orthodox Christianity. Without a clear knowledge of our faith, we have become less able to share our it as we have been called to do.

We are called to guard the Gospel message, but not to hoard it. We are instructed not to hide our light under a bushel (Matthew 5:15). As Jesus Christ sends us to be His voice in a changing world, we must also remove impediments or perceived impediments to non-Orthodox inquirers that seek His Truth. What messages do we send out intentionally or unintentionally? What might cause the Gospel message to be ignored or misunderstood?

Since the first Orthodox Christians came to America, the local parish has served as a guardian of the faith and also of the culture from which it was transplanted. Parishes must think carefully about how they share the faith with others. Thoughtful and sensitive consideration must be given to our outreach

efforts in order to identify what aspects of our parish life may be creating potential stumbling blocks for others.

As we share the voice of Christ, the message we share is one of hope, truth, grace, divine power, life and invitation. In this busy, ever-changing world, His voice of wisdom is needed to guide us in discerning what is good, what is true and what will bring us closer to Him and to one another.



We live in a physical world that places great value on material possessions. Material possessions and wealth may bring power and status. But wealth and possessions can be

fleeting. Circumstances change. It is the voice of Jesus Christ and the truth of His Gospel that remain constant. In our spiritual relationship with our Creator, we realize that we are called to be good stewards of His creation. And as stewards of His Gospel, we are called to use our material, worldly possessions to meet the needs of others.

The base from which we serve as the *Voice of Christ in a Changing World* is the parish. A strong parish provides opportunities for sharing the Good News of Christ, for welcoming those that are searching for a spiritual home, and a base from which we are sent out into the world. The parish also provides a place for worship, community and education in the faith. To be stewards of the Gospel, we need to be stewards of our parish. This requires the vision and inspiration to see the parish, not as it is, but as it could be. We are called to offer ourselves and our treasure to make our local church all that is can be.

We conclude with these words of Archbishop Demetrios of America: "...we are called to be the light of the world; we are sent into a changing world to offer the voice of Christ to those who are not connected to the Church. This includes those who have never heard the voice of Christ, others who have not been prepared to listen, and still others who need a new invitation to return to Him. For

these and even others who are distracted by disparate and deceptive ideas, the voice of Christ through us offers meaning and purpose in truth and love. In fulfilling our commission from God, we must continue to strengthen our ministries of outreach and evangelism so that our clergy and laity have the guidance, programs, and resources to offer His voice clearly and effectively" (from the Reflections of Archbishop Demetrios of America on the Theme of the Clergy-Laity Congress of 2016).

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**STEWARDSHIP
MINISTRY**