

“Stewardship is the offering to God as children of faith rather than as hired servants. Children of God make offerings to God as expression of authentic love, whereas, hired servants simply fulfill legalistic duty. Christian stewardship is a manifestation of our love for God through the holistic offering of time, talent, and treasure to Him, through Christ’s Holy Church. By this offering of love to our Father in heaven, He further extends the healing experience of His Church to His children, through Her ministry.”

Father Luke Palumbis

St. Basil the Great Church, Houston, TX

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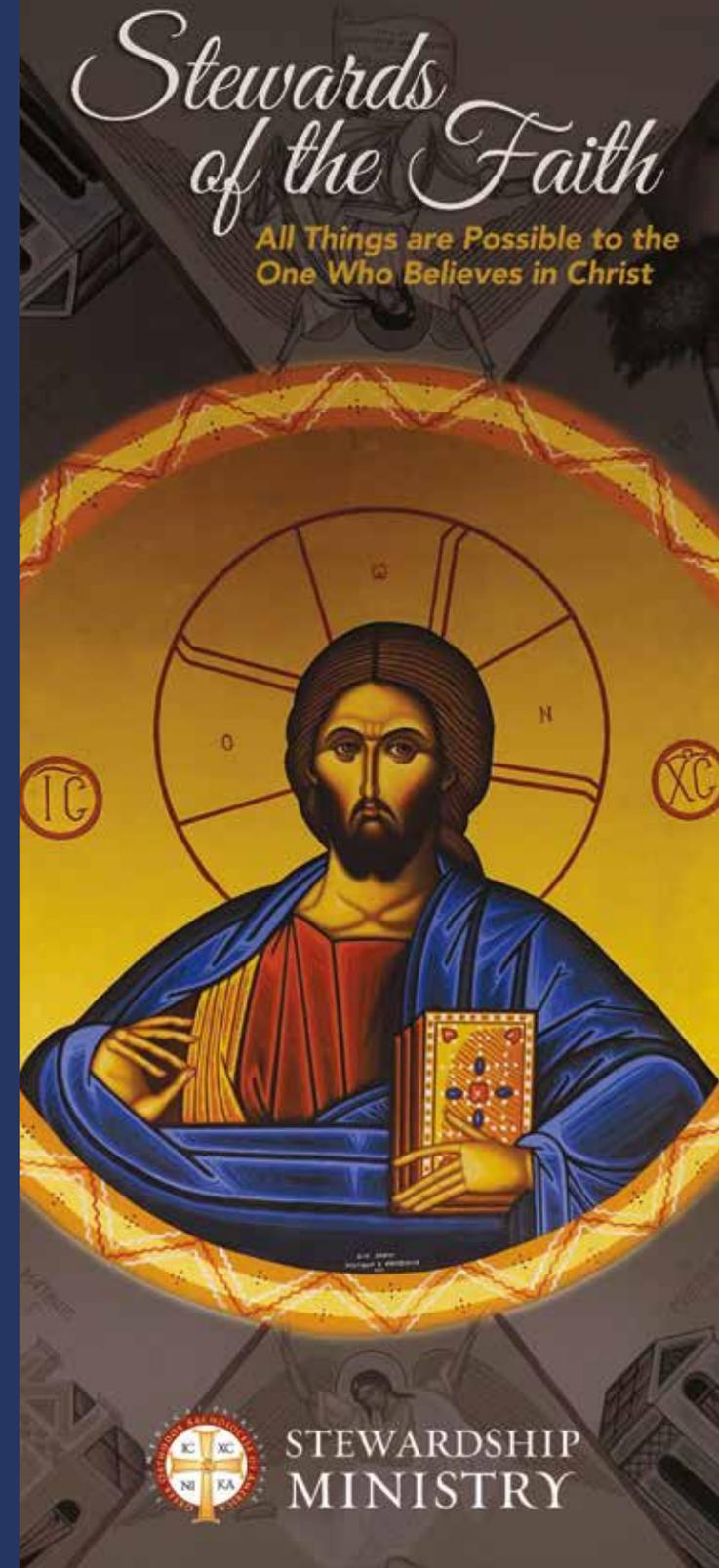


STEWARDSHIP MINISTRIES

GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AMERICA

DEPARTMENT OF STEWARDSHIP,
OUTREACH & EVANGELISM

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Stewards of the Faith

All Things are Possible to the One Who Believes in Christ

Having faith can be difficult. Keeping faith in the face of doubt is the ongoing struggle of every Christian. Thomas the Apostle, though having proven himself one of the bravest apostles, is forever remembered as “Doubting Thomas,” because he doubted the first reports of the Resurrected Christ.

In the Gospel of Mark (9:22 NKJV), we read that when the disciples couldn’t help him, a father brings his epileptic son to Jesus in desperation, saying, “... if you can do anything, have compassion on us and help us.” Jesus replies to the father’s lack of faith, “If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes.” The father’s response is a prayer we can pray every day: “Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!”

Faith is our trust in God. Faith is our trust that He watches over us and has a plan for us: “For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope” (Jeremiah 29:11 NKJV). Living with the uncertainty of our daily lives requires faith. Uncertainty also invites doubt. But doubt does not indicate a lack of faith. As theologian and philosopher Paul Tillich has written, “Doubt is not the opposite of faith; it is one element of faith.”

Stewardship of our faith in Jesus Christ calls us to

do those things that protect and strengthen the faith that lies within us. Taking the time to learn about our Orthodox Christian Faith, praying to God for understanding and guidance, and worshiping with others as the Body of Christ – all these things protect and strengthen our faith. As stewards of the faith, Saint Peter instructs us to “...always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you...” (1 Peter 3:15 NKJV).

Faith is not a big rule book of “dos and don’ts.” It is about loving and seeing Jesus Christ in the other. Stewardship of our faith in Jesus Christ calls us to do those things that reflect our faith to others, living our faith through our actions. As Jesus tells us, “By this all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:35 NKJV). There is no better way of sharing the faith that lies within us than to see Christ in others and to love and care for them.

Through faith, God’s will is accomplished in the world. Our great example is Mary, the Theotokos, the Mother of our Lord. When Archangel Gabriel came to her at the Annunciation, tradition and hymnology hold that all creation awaited her response. In faith and obedience to the will of God, Mary replied to the angel, “Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be according to your word” (Luke 1:38 NKJV). Mary responds with faith in order to fulfill God’s will for all the world.

Stewardship of our faith calls us to do those things that strengthen and grow our faith. Research has shown that Christians we seek three things from their church: Transcendence, Significance and Fel-

lowship (Lost in America, Clegg & Bird 2001). Transcendence is to know God and to experience His presence. This we do through prayerful participation in Liturgy and the sacraments. Significance is the desire to have a purpose – to do something meaningful – most often in service to our fellow man. Fellowship is connecting with others through meaningful relationships. The Church offers opportunities for Transcendence, Significance and Fellowship, and in their pursuit, we also serve and support the Church and fully become members of the

Body of Christ. To be stewards of the faith we are also called to be stewards of our local church which nurtures our faith and the faith of others.

Stewardship is an act of faith. When we believe, stewardship follows. Stewardship is faith in action; action motivated by humble gratitude to God for his blessings in our life.

As Saint John tells us about all that is written in his Gospel, “...these things are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name” (John 20:31 NKJV).

