

## OCTOBER 2017

### What is Christian Stewardship?

*Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you shall eat or what you shall drink, nor about your body, what you shall put on.... For the Gentiles seek all these things; and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well. (Matthew 6:25, 32-33)*

The exercise of stewardship for an Orthodox Christian is the process of placing all of creation in its proper perspective. It is the process of establishing the correct set of priorities in a life that is Christ-centered, Spirit-filled, and moving toward the Kingdom of Heaven. Once we dedicate ourselves to this, all earthly necessities will be provided. God does not ask us to take such a journey without He Himself providing what is needed for the journey. How does an Orthodox Christian live out this process?

#### Lordship

*God is the Lord and has revealed Himself to us; blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord.*

*And now we thank You, our God, and praise Your glorious Name.*

*“But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able thus to offer willingly? For all things come from You, and of Your own have we given You.” (3 Kings 29:13-14)*

*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your mind and with all your soul and with all your strength. (Mark 12:30)*

The first step for an Orthodox Christian steward is to recognize Jesus Christ, the Son of God, as **Lord**. To accept the lordship of Christ means that we must become His disciples and His subjects.

We become His disciples by studying His word in the life of the Church. We read the Scriptures; we pray regularly, asking for guidance, wisdom and strength; we repent of our sins and seek the direction of our father confessor and the Church in living out the Christian life; we nourish ourselves at the banquet table of the Kingdom; we feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, clothe the naked, take care of the sick, visit the imprisoned. An Orthodox Christian steward has an almost unquenchable thirst to discover what our Lord teaches about everything.

What our Lord teaches us about stewardship is that we are called to be givers because He is Giver. God created the world and is its Lord because He wanted to share Himself with us. He placed human beings created in His image into paradise. When mankind rejected that paradise, He sent His only-begotten Son to offer Himself for the redemption of creation. God held nothing back from our salvation – even His Son. A Christian steward, in imitation of God Himself, holds nothing back from his Lord.

We become His subjects first by the realization that in and of ourselves we have nothing – not even our life. We are subjects by taking what He teaches and following it and by trusting Him in His promises and teachings. To be a subject of Christ also means that we can follow no one and nothing else. All the paths of this life that lead to something or someone other than Christ are seen for what they are: paths to destruction.

# OCTOBER 2017

St. Paul the Apostle Orthodox Church • Las Vegas, Nevada

<p><b>1</b></p> <p>DIVINE LITURGY, 9:00 AM          HOURS: BITSKO          EPISTLE: ABRAHAM          POST-COMM: HALLIDAY          CHURCH SCHOOL          PROTECTION OF          THE THEOTOKOS</p>	<p><b>2</b></p>	<p><b>3</b></p>	<p><b>4</b></p> <p>DAILY VESPERS, 6:30 PM          ADULT FAITH FORUM</p>	<p><b>5</b></p> <p>COFFEE CHAT, 10:00 AM</p>	<p><b>6</b></p> <p>DIVINE LITURGY 8:00 AM          ST. INNOCENT OF ALASKA</p>	<p><b>7</b></p> <p>GREAT VESPERS, 5:00 PM          CONFESSIONS          CHOIR REHEARSAL</p>
<p><b>8</b></p> <p>DIVINE LITURGY, 9:00 AM          HOURS: YOUTH          EPISTLE: YOUTH          POST-COMM: YOUTH          CHURCH SCHOOL</p>	<p><b>9</b></p>	<p><b>10</b></p>	<p><b>11</b></p> <p>DIOCESAN ASSEMBLY, ST. NICHOLAS CHURCH, PORTLAND, OREGON          FATHERS JOHN &amp; STEPHEN AWAY, OCT 10-12</p>	<p><b>12</b></p> <p>NO COFFEE CHAT</p>	<p><b>13</b></p>	<p><b>14</b></p> <p>RUSSIAN CONFESSIONS, 9 AM          SLAVONIC LITURGY, 10 AM</p> <p>GREAT VESPERS, 5:00 PM          CONFESSIONS          FIRST YOUTH NIGHT</p>
<p><b>15</b></p> <p>DIVINE LITURGY, 9:00 AM          HOURS: W. DEMKO          EPISTLE: BROOKS          POST-COMM: JARLSON          CHURCH SCHOOL</p>	<p><b>16</b></p>	<p><b>17</b></p> <p>PARISH COUNCIL, 6:00 PM</p>	<p><b>18</b></p> <p>DAILY VESPERS, 6:30 PM          ADULT FAITH FORUM</p>	<p><b>19</b></p> <p>COFFEE CHAT, 10:00 AM</p>	<p><b>20</b></p>	<p><b>21</b></p> <p>GREAT VESPERS, 5:00 PM          CONFESSIONS</p>
<p><b>22</b></p> <p>DIVINE LITURGY, 9:00 AM          HOURS: H. DEMKO          EPISTLE: TESFAY          POST-COMM: BITSKO          CHURCH SCHOOL</p>	<p><b>23</b></p>	<p><b>24</b></p>	<p><b>25</b></p> <p>GREAT VESPERS, 6:30 PM          ADULT FAITH FORUM</p>	<p><b>26</b></p> <p>DIVINE LITURGY 8:00 AM          ST. DEMETRIUS          OF THESSALONICA</p>	<p><b>27</b></p>	<p><b>28</b></p> <p>GREAT VESPERS, 4:00 PM          CONFESSIONS          OKTOBERFEST</p>
<p><b>29</b></p> <p>DIVINE LITURGY, 9:00 AM          HOURS: JARLSON          EPISTLE: BITSKO          POST-COMM: W. DEMKO          CHURCH SCHOOL          TRUNK OR TREAT</p>	<p><b>30</b></p>	<p><b>31</b></p>	<p>GREETERS</p> <p>OCT 1: CAMPBELL/CHONG          OCT 8: STAFFORD/GERALT          OCT 15: OSBURN/MOROZOVA          OCT 22: MCAULEY/HAYDEN          OCT 29: DEMKO/CHONG</p>			

# St. Paul the Apostle Orthodox Church

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## CHOIR DIRECTORS

Matushka Elizabeth Dresko  
Grace Brooks

## PARISH COUNCIL

Virginia Hood, Vice-President  
Karen Short, Treasurer  
Catherine Wilkalis, Secretary

Gregory Brooks  
James Brophy  
Kevin McAuley  
Karen Murphy  
Litsa Osburn  
Elena Stafford

## SUB-COMMITTEES

Building & Grounds  
Kevin McAuley

Eritrean & Ethiopian Outreach  
Tekeste Nuguru

Russian Outreach  
Natalia Minkoff

Church School/Youth  
Amy McAuley

Fellowship Committee  
Charity Committee

## Ownership

*Beware lest you say in your heart, 'My power and the light of my hand have gotten me this wealth.' You shall remember the Lord your God, for it is He who gives you power to get wealth; that He may confirm His covenant which He swore to your fathers, as at this day. (Deuteronomy 8:17-18)*

*The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein; for he has founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the rivers. (Psalm 24:1-2)*

*For every beast of the forest is mine, the cattle on a thousand hills. I know all the birds of the air, and all that moves in the field is mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell you; for the world and all that is in it is mine. (Psalm 50:10-12)*

*This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required of stewards that they be found trustworthy. (1 Corinthians 4:1-2)*

Once we accept the Lord as Lord, the next step for an Orthodox Christian steward is to recognize the dominion of the Lord in this world. Everything

was created by the Lord, and everything belongs to the Lord. A Christian steward is someone who cares for something that belongs to Someone Else.

Each and every person made in the image of God is placed on this earth as a tenant, or in the words of St. Paul, a "sojourner." We are all temporarily residing here until we return to our place in the Mansion prepared for us from the beginning of the world. If we are tenants, it is incumbent upon us to return what is not ours to the rightful Owner in a condition at least as good as we received it, if not better.

In today's consumer-driven society, we are all taught that success is not only measured in how much we accumulate for ourselves (a popular bumper sticker reads, "The one who dies with the most toys wins."), but that truly successful people are self-made. Education, hard work, willingness to put aside personal life to succeed, and any other "virtue" of success – all are seen as accomplished by individual effort. There is no sense of dependence upon God for all of life, including talents, determination, and even the blessing of being in "the right place at the right time." The

## AT A GLANCE...

**October 1: PROTECTION OF THE THEOTOKOS**

**October 6: St. Innocent of America, Divine Liturgy 8:00 AM**

**October 7: Choir Rehearsal following Vespers**

**October 10-12: Diocesan Assembly, Portland, Oregon**

**Frs. John and Stephen out of town**

**October 14: Russian Confessions, 9:00 AM; Slavonic Liturgy, 10:00 AM**

**First Youth Night after Vespers**

**October 17: Parish Council Meeting, 6:00 PM**

**October 26: St. Demetrius of Thessalonica, Divine Liturgy 8:00 AM**

**October 28: VESPERS, 4:00 PM, 2017 OKTOBERFEST FOLLOWS**

**October 29: TRUNK OR TREAT**

Send email addresses and corrections to:  
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world does not teach that God is the Source and Owner of all life, and certainly doesn't teach that true success demands the letting go of ownership on our part.

In a human sense, part of the reluctance to let go of ownership in this world is a lack of trust in the Lord. "If I really let go, what will happen?" But we have many examples of what will happen. Jesus Himself told us to "Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things [i.e., everything that one needs] shall be yours as well" (Matthew 6:33). Look at the story of Abraham and the Lord's request that he take his only son, Isaac, and offer him as a sacrifice (Genesis 22:1-19). Abraham let go of his ownership, and was ready to offer his son (not a simple gift of time, talent or treasure!) to God. When Isaac asked his father why they had taken everything but the offering, Abraham responded, "God will provide himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son" (22:8).

### Tenants

The Christian steward is not only called to give of the blessings which have been bestowed, but also to understand that we are only giving to God what already belongs to Him. We are not the owners – we are the borrowers. We must understand that we will answer at the Judgment Seat for the way we use what God has loaned to us. We not only will answer about our own offerings, but also about the way we use even what is given for our own benefit. If we squander and misuse our funds, if we spend and borrow to acquire more and more, if we pursue riches, power, and glory at the expense of our family and neighbor, we shall come to our graves like the Prodigal Son, squandering everything that the Father has given us. But we will be worse than the Prodigal Son,

for he repented and returned.

The Christian steward also understands that he is the steward of the world and of his body. A Christian is obliged as a Child of God to care for the environment and exercise dominion over the world in a loving and caring way. Dominion is not consumption. A Christian is also obliged to care for his own health and body as the Temple of the Holy Spirit. All manner of sin is excused in our contemporary society of abundance. Food, drink, money, sexual activity, impatience, anger, and numerous other selfish traits are not only excused, but also exalted in society. Not so for a Christian – self-denial, prayer and fasting are an essential component of Christian life and an essential component of stewardship.

*We will spend the next weeks reflecting on various aspects of stewardship. Please prayerfully look at your own life and measure it against the ideals that the Lord Himself gave us.*

*Father John*

### FEASTDAYS

During October, we celebrate the following feastdays:

#### PROTECTION OF THE THEOTOKOS

OCTOBER 1

VESPERS/LITIYA, 5:00 PM (SAT)

DIVINE LITURGY, 9:00 AM (SUN)

#### ST. DEMETRIUS OF THESSALONICA

OCTOBER 26

DIVINE LITURGY, 8:00 AM (THUR)

### HELP STILL NEEDED

We are so thankful for God's mercy on His servant, Ginny (Veronica) Hood, our Council Vice President, who continues her recovery from cancer surgery. She has been saddled with a breath-taking amount of medical

expenses as a result of her treatment.

We continue to ask for your help in a charitable outreach for her family. We ask you to consider a donation by check, card, or online, earmarking it for the Hood Collection.

We have also set up a YouCaring

Page:

<https://www.youcaring.com/viginiaginnnyhood-899443>

In whatever way you care to make a donation, please make a donation and be generous, along with lifting Ginny and her family into the very presence of God in prayer.

### ADULT CLASS

Our Adult Faith Forum has resumed on Wednesdays. We will complete our discussion on *The Parables of Christ*. Then we take a serious look at the *Miracles of Christ*. As usual, we begin with Daily Vespers at 6:30 PM, and then have discussion 7:00-8:00 PM. Please join us and learn your faith!

### DIOCESAN ASSEMBLY

The annual Diocesan Assembly of the Diocese of the West will take place October 10-12, in Portland, Oregon. Both Father John and Fr. Stephen will be away during those days in attendance. We ask your prayers for safe travel and fruitful deliberations as we set the course for the coming year in our beloved diocese.

### CHOIR REHEARSAL

The choir will be rehearsing following Vespers on Saturday, October 7. All choir members are asked to make every effort to be present.

### SLAVONIC LITURGY

Father Alexander Shkalov will be as usual on Saturday, October 14. Russian language confessions start at 9:00 am, followed by the Slavonic Liturgy and fellowship.

## YOUTH ACTIVITIES

We have planned a whole schedule of youth activities to be held over the next year. Our goal is to have social activities combined with service to the Church. The first of these activities will be held on **Saturday, October 14, following Vespers**. We will have pizza and a Family Board Game night. Should be fun – please plan on joining us. More details are available from Fr. Stephen.

## OKTOBERFEST

Our third annual Oktoberfest will be held on Saturday, October 28. We will have Vespers at 4:00 PM (that evening only!), followed by our festival. Tickets are available in the church hall on our parish website. Cost is \$15 for adults and \$5 for children 12 and under. If you bring a friend, extra tickets are only \$10. Such a deal! Please join us!

Some of the side dishes have traditionally be offered by parish volunteers. There is a sign-up list for this in the church hall if you can offer meals appropriate for the setting.

## TRUNK OR TREAT

We will have our (now) annual “Trunk or Treat” in the church parking lot following liturgy on October 29. We will have a short presentation on a Christian perspective of the “holiday,” then children will be allowed to change into costumes they brought after liturgy. Trunks of parishioner cars will be open for a modest trick-or-treat.

**Please remember that costumes may not be worn in the church during liturgy. Costumes also should be appropriate for a church setting – healthy and wholesome, not dark, evil or goulsh.**

## FEEDING THE HOMELESS

Our next Feeding the Homeless project will be held on at date to be

determined in November before Thanksgiving. We meet at 10:30 AM then construct the lunches and bag all of the items, which we then distribute downtown and are usually done by 1:00 PM. Please join us! If you can donate any of the items needed for the lunches (or funds to provide such), it would be appreciated. See Cathy Wilkalis for more information.

## IOCC

We need a new parish liaison to International Orthodox Christian Charities (IOCC). If you are interested in helping us out in this position, please see Father John.

## ICONOGRAPHY

The next phase of our iconography project will be to complete the east walls of the church (to the left and right of the sanctuary). Renderings are available in the church hall and you are urged to take a look. This is a MAJOR project which will require substantial funding. The two renderings posted in the hall will cost \$36,000 each, a total of \$72,000. **We are once again accepting donations to the Icon Fund. Please consider making an offering above and beyond your normal support of the parish!**

## CHARITY

Our normal collections of food for Friends of the Desert continue. Needs: jelly, jam, peanut butter, canned fruit, canned tuna/chicken. Thank you!

## ORTHODOX VENDORS

A list of businesses that our parish uses or are owned and operated by Orthodox Christians (some parishioners). We provide this information for you to consider if you need services.

CB Air Conditioning  
Cedomir Blagojevic

(702) 493-0295

Edward Yee  
Doctor of Ophthalmology  
2980 S. Jones Blvd., Suite A  
(702) 362-3937

Kyklos Café (Greek food)  
Galleria Mall  
Sophocles Frangakis  
(702) 450-1515

Makeup and Hair Artist  
Natalia Kasimtseva (Baker)  
*(I travel to client location)*  
Text or call: (702) 336-8300  
View portfolio at:  
[www.facebook.com/NataliaKasBeauty](http://www.facebook.com/NataliaKasBeauty)

Taffer Computers  
*Website Design, Marketing,  
& Computer Repair*  
Fr. Stephen Osburn  
(702) 521-6988

## PRAYER FOR OUR PARISH

We ask everyone to remember our parish in daily prayer:  
Lord, God and Savior of all, we thank You for the blessing of St. Paul parish in our lives. May Your word become alive in each and every one of us who strive to follow You. Please bless and multiply all the gifts – time, talent and treasure – which are given in thanks to benefit our mission and glorify Your name. Bless and multiply the givers and help us all to make present Your Kingdom. For You are the Giver of all that is good, O Christ our God, and to You we give glory, together with Your Father who is without beginning and Your all-holy, good and life-giving Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

## SACRAMENTS/SPECIAL SERVICES

Please follow these guidelines.  
• Baptisms. A personal meeting scheduled with Fr. John will be necessary to schedule any baptism

requested.

- Matrimony. A date and time for weddings must be requested at least six months (preferably twelve) in advance. There will be premarital sessions for both bride and groom to attend.

- Memorials (Panikhida). Requests for a memorial must be made at least one week in advance. If possible, the service should be served on Saturday. Other requests will be met as pastorally possible.

### PARISH COUNCIL SYNOPSIS SEPTEMBER 19, 2017 MEETING

*Rector's Report:* Fr. John was electronically present via FaceTime, as he was in New York attending the Metropolitan Council meeting.

Reminded council that he and Fr. Stephen will be attending Diocesan Assembly Oct 10-12 in Portland, OR. Greg Brooks will also attend as lay representative.

*Associate Priest's Report:* Fr Stephen reported his recent vacation went well; glad to be back.

*Vice President's Report:* Thanks to all who helped during her recent hospitalization with prayers and other support.

*Treasurer's Report:* Karen Short could not be present, but distributed our financials before the meeting:

Capital Fund: \$63,531.55

Rainy Day: \$55,038.83

Icon Fund: \$4,559.62

Income for August was \$11,531.78, with expenses of \$17,449.44 for a **deficit of \$5,917.66.**

### 2017 YTD FINANCIALS (8/31)

2017 Inc \$ 199,598.68

2017 Exp \$ 185,815.37

Inc over Exp \$ 13,783.31

Fr. John reported we collected approximately \$14,000 in the "Hood Fund" for medical expenses to date.

### COMMITTEES

#### *Buildings and Grounds:*

*HVAC:* Ceda is waiting for cooler weather to replace the HVAC units in the attic over the parish office space. He hopes to be able to start this week.

*Doors:* There is one last side door on the church to be replaced. All the doors and the repaired wall will be painted following installation of the last door.

*Courtyard:* Several plantings around buildings and at least 4 trees in courtyard are completely dead. Sprinklers were off for a while for an unknown length of time for unknown reasons. We have two bids from King's Landscape and Maintenance; for removal of dead plants/trees, replacement and rehabilitation of the irrigation system, courtyard and property. Council decided bids from other landscapers were needed. Cathy will contact Private Greens for estimate, and Elena has agreed to contact one other landscaping service. Rehab of the courtyard will be discussed at the parish annual meeting.

*Carpeting:* Carpet installers brought wrong size and design. Sean Campbell has picked out the carpets with Fr John and will personally deliver them. Work and materials are still donated.

*Locks:* Fr. John fixed the sticky locks of numerous doors on church property with WD-40 and graphite.

*Charity:* Feeding the homeless was accomplished 9/16 with 150 lunch bags, hygiene kits and socks distributed. There is a balance of 188.97 remaining in the fund. Next feeding date will be scheduled before Thanksgiving. Collection for Friends in the

Desert is ongoing.

*IOCC:* Still need coordinator.

*Church School/Youth:* Fr John reported first Sunday of Church School went well.

Youth Program (Fr. Stephen): Meeting with youth on Sunday to discuss schedule of events from October to June was received enthusiastically. First event will be October 14 with a Board Game Night after Vespers. Most events will be held in the Parish Hall. A movie night is also being planned.

*Eritrean/Ethiopian:* reports the Eritrean community has completed their move into their new temporary facility.

*Fellowship:* Oktoberfest will be October 28. Tickets are available online. Mat. Lindsey will have printed tickets next week.

*Outreach/website:* no report.

*Russian:* no report.

*Stewardship:* Father John reported parish is now in financial deficit due to loss of families and generous donors. Stewardship campaign efforts will focus on what has happened this past year directing attention to our real needs.

### OLD BUSINESS

*Greeters Training:* Father John met with and trained three new greeters. We will continue to monitor and have occasional "refreshers."

*Sunshine Group:* Ginny suggested putting together some hospital kits as a form of outreach and involving youth participation. Will coordinate details with Fr John, Fr Stephen and Cathy. Also suggested a ministry of sending friendly greeting cards to people who have not been in church for a while.

## NEW BUSINESS

*Annual Parish Meeting: (Fr John)* will be held December 10, 2017. Agenda will include nominations/election for an All-American Council, lay delegate and nominations/election for Vice President and Secretary of the Parish Council to replace Ginny Hood and Cathy Wilkalis. Elena Stafford, Karen Short and Fr John will meet together to prepare the 2018 budget prior to the Annual Meeting.

*Bookstore:* The priority for the parish bookstore is selecting a coordinator who will be proactive in making it a useful resource for the parish's needs especially during holiday periods when it gets the most business. Inventory, revamping, modernization, website access were all discussed.

*Security: (Fr Stephen)* this past Sunday, Kimbel, while walking the property, found 13 bullet shells on the parking area. Fr. Stephen called 311 and filed a report with Las Vegas police on Monday. No damage to church property was noted anywhere. Police report will be kept on file in case of future concerns. If parishioners find more shells anywhere, they should report it to Fr. John or Ginny.

*Next Council Meeting:*  
Tuesday, October 17, 6:00 PM

## PARISH DIPTYCHS

This list of parish departed is to remind us all of those whom we love and miss and to spur us to remember them in our daily prayers.

### MONTH OF OCTOBER

Nikola Levrich  
October 3, 1989

Anna Shrive  
October 6, 1999

Darrell George Brezoff  
October 6, 1999

Harry George Turlish  
October 7, 1994

Svetislav Djoric  
October 7, 1994

John Pavelle  
October 7, 2003

Elmas Boyajian  
October 17, 1997

James Manassess  
October 17, 1997

John (Thouas) Thomas  
October 21, 1989

Helen Friesl  
October 26, 2004

Simona Heckel  
October 27, 1991

Maria Hernandez  
October 27, 2007

Sophia Mouratithou  
October 31, 1991

Stanley Andrews  
October 31, 1993

Milton Kevershan  
October 31, 1995

Ernest Kanakis  
October 31, 1997

### FATHER STEPHEN'S CORNER GOOD STEWARDSHIP PUTS GOD FIRST

The book of Isaiah is most notably understood in the Church for its themes of holiness, righteousness, and God's plan for the world. More explicitly, the book concerns itself with justice and righteousness of the poor and oppressed that becomes the essence of God. It is in a complete focus on

God, and God alone, that His holiness is realized. In the early Church, Isaiah was considered to be a type of "fifth" Gospel. Many of his prophecies related to the Messiah and to Christ.

One of my favorite readings from Isaiah is from his 5<sup>th</sup> chapter concerning the vineyard as it pertains to Israel. He writes, "For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah are his pleasant planting..." The theme of vineyards was used multiple times in Isaiah's writings and is often used throughout Scripture. Christ Himself uses vineyards as a tool in His parables to illustrate teachings and the Kingdom of Heaven.

Vines and vineyards were extremely common in His time and were considered a vital part of the ancient economy. Vines grew readily and wine was part of a family's meal. Thus, vineyards became an important reference point to those hearing both Isaiah and Christ's words at the time. As quoted earlier, Isaiah stated outright that the vineyard was Israel but Christ takes it just a little further in John's Gospel by showing that Israel is all of us ("I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing." - 15:5) Christ uses this imagery to show us that everything we are and everything we have belongs to God. We aren't really owners of anything. We merely act as stewards of the gifts that God has provided for us.

This is the essence of stewardship. God has called all of us to nurture and develop our gifts and talents that they may be used to glorify Him. He expects us to make Him our first priority with everything second, taking our time and effort to molding our

lives that are centered solely on Him. While this may be a difficult idea to grasp, especially in today's world, we are to transform our lifestyles to be more generous and grateful for the gifts He provides. Then we can realize that none of those things we accumulate throughout our lives are as good as God. We can have the fancy car, the new iPhone X, Golden Knight season tickets, or a big and nice house, but while they may give us small pleasures, they can and will never be able to provide us the level of joy that God can when our focus is entirely on Him.

Furthermore, once we recognize that all things come from God, we start seeing stewardship on another level. We are no longer giving to give. We no longer tithe because it is somehow required. Rather, we start seeing that with humility, the good things from the Lord are the things we need most in our lives and so we give a portion of

our time, talents, and treasure to help build up the vineyard, the Church, and us. It then starts to allow more fruit to bear, others to see and want it, and draw closer to Christ and eternal life. In a weird way, it is the slippery slope that leads to the Kingdom of Heaven. When a Christian begins to act as a good steward, giving their time, talents, and treasure with a God-centric mentality, they begin to realize how they are really called and created solely for the purpose of making God's gifts known throughout the world.

Most of us are generous when it is convenient for us. Our generosity extends when we have the time or the money, but real generosity means changing who we are to center every aspect our lives on the well being of others. As such, this means is that instead of giving money to homeless if we happen to have a dollar on us,

we make sure that we always keep a couple dollars in our glove compartment box or in our wallets - just in case such a thing happens. It is always being prepared to give our time, talent, and sometimes even treasures in the midst of others doing so with the glory of God in mind. It all comes down to radically changing our way of thinking so we are less thinking about ourselves but more so thinking about how the vineyard can grow. So I encourage all of you to take this as a challenge to see how you can be more generous with your gifts of time, talent, and treasure. Let's see how we can all change our thinking and focus away from ourselves; directing our attention more on others and on God. As Christ says, "let our light shine before men, that they may see our good works and glorify our Father who is in Heaven." Being a good steward is changing who we are on the inside and putting God first in our lives.

#### PASTORALLY SPEAKING

*Father Andrew Morbey  
St. Mary's Cathedral, Minneapolis, Minnesota*

Although it has been a long time now that celebrities and public figures have completely reversed our expectations concerning adult, responsible behavior, we sense a dramatic uptick in the in-your-face quality of formerly transgressive behaviors. What standards are modeled by people in government and business, in sports, community organisations, certainly in entertainment and even in religion today? While we wish character was important, it is obvious that many people just don't care. What was once scandalous is now just one more titillating sound-bite. What once were broadly and generally regarded as sins are now asserted as 'rights'. In fact, such things are now unremarkable, indeed acceptable, even fashionable... and thus perhaps inevitable.

Such things will most certainly be inevitable if believers talk and act as if without faith, that is to say, if our words and deeds lack conviction. As if we were a people without hope, incapable of joy, and without any expectation of divine grace touching, renewing and transforming life. Christian life implicitly demands of us a certain dimension of witness.

In spite of everything, we ought to keep in mind that the good example of others strengthens us, and that our good example strengthens others, and that we can encourage each other and build each other up simply by keeping faith, showing love, and living in the light of our Christian hope. The great temptation is to think that we are not, after all, responsible for others, that we do not need to set a good example, that what we say and do is nobody's business but our own. In struggling against such temptation, we should strive to show each other that it is possible to live with faith, hope and love, to bear mutual witness to the power of shaping our life in Christ.