



METROPOLIS  
OF DETROIT

## HOLY MOTHER QUEEN OF ALL (*PANAGIA PANTOVASILISSA*) GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

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Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give;  
not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.

[2 Corinthians 9: 7]

May 17, 2018

The Feast of the Ascension

To the beloved members of the Holy Mother Queen of All/ Panagia Pantovasilissa parish family:  
Greetings in Christ Jesus, Our Lord.

Christ is in our midst!

As we call ourselves a family, so do we call the beautiful temple that has been raised to God in our fair city our home. And just as the homes in which we each live privately are united by blood relations, so are we all united corporately in our home through the precious Blood of Christ, which has been shed for us all. And the similarities do not end there; for, indeed, each of these types of "home" are united by a common purpose, and by common sacrifice. In essence, we offer of ourselves, for our families, and for the sustainment and growth of what we might provide for them. This is more than sacrifice; indeed, it is, properly speaking, sacramental. Creation was given to us by God, that we might partake of what we need for our sustenance, sacrifice and sanctify that which we do not, and offer it back to Him that He might sanctify it in turn, and pour forth His blessings on us all. For this we were put on the earth! This is true whether we are speaking of the offering a young couple makes of themselves to one another in marriage; the offering we make as a community of the bread and wine, transformed into the Body and Blood; or the offering of our time, talents, and treasures, that we make so that our community might survive and thrive into the future—so that our children's children might look back on our actions, and glorify God in Whose Name they were undertaken.

My friends, I have no qualms about speaking to what is a self-evident issue: The Church requires our offerings to function. It requires our *sacrifice* to thrive. Historically, we operated, as did so many of our beloved Orthodox churches, on a "dues" structure. The figure ranged from \$300-\$600, depending on the precise location of the community in space and time, but the principle was the same: Pay your dues, and become a member. This is not a model which bodes for success in the future. Quite frankly, this is not a model which promises success in the present. Having built our church, we *might* be able to maintain her on such offerings. We *might* even be able to provide for a limited number of ministries. We will not be able to reach out. We will not be able to grow. We will not, in essence, have been good stewards of the vineyard in which Christ has called us to work. For, my friends, we must admit, in addition to all of these practical concerns, that the dues system was never a model which adhered to the principles on which Christ founded His Church. In its very essence, it fails on every level to live up to the principle of *sacrificial* stewardship. For the standard of stewardship is established on sacrifice.

But what is this standard? I have been asked this many times over the course of my brief years of ministry, and my answer is always the same: The standard is the tithe. That is ten percent, right off the top. "Ten percent, you say, Father?" I often hear from the amused inquisitor, as if I were spinning the figure out of moonbeams and fairy dust. Yet it comes from the sacred tradition of the Old Covenant. It is referenced in the New Covenant by Christ and His Apostles. And, if we seek it out, we find it referenced in the regulations of our own Archdiocese. Ten percent of the income which we have earned through the grace and mercy of God.

Yet, though this be the standard, this is not what the Church demands. Indeed, the Church does not properly demand anything at all. There will be no publicans and soldiers sent to our houses if we fail to live up to the intrinsic responsibility which inheres in the heart of every follower of Christ. Indeed, what the Church asks takes into account that very heart, while respecting the free will which resides in the rational mind of the Christian. For there is another standard under the New Covenant, which, though it has varied from age to age, has stayed the same in its essence: That of the cheerful giver. And cheerful givers rejoice in giving, whether they are required to or not.

"But what can I do? I haven't the foggiest notion how to adapt from what I have done in the past to what I am now being told." you might muse to yourself. My friend, you have only to establish a plan. When we exercise or practice at any other task, we keep track of our progress. We record our successes and our failures, and we make the effort to improve toward a standard. We establish a goal, and strive, through our blood, sweat, tears, and hours of investment, to reach it. Such it is in life and in our support of our families, and such must it be in our support of the Church. If you have been giving one percent of your income, do not despair. Rather, try to work up to two in the coming year. If you have been giving two percent, do not be disheartened. Rather, take heart, and try to work up to three. The important thing is that we set for ourselves a goal, and that we strive to live up to it.

The goal? That, my friends, is why we fill out pledge cards. We also fill them out because they demonstrate that we show the same level of professionalism in our dealings with Christ and His Church as we do in our dealings with the electric company. We also fill them out because those whom you have elected to your Parish Council, as well as your Parish Priest, require an idea of what resources you will have given us to work with as we seek to sanctify the coming year for the greater glory of God. We also fill them out because they show where your interests and evangelical energy lie, and what the Church can do to provide outlets for those interests and avenues for that energy. But primarily, my friends, we fill them out to set for ourselves a goal; to challenge ourselves to grow in our devotion to our Lord, by offering up that which He has given us, that He might sanctify it and offer it back to us in the form of the work of the Holy Spirit through the ministries of his church in our God-guarded city.

My brothers and sisters in Christ: This is stewardship! This is sacrifice! And this, my friends, is a sacrifice which sanctifies those who offer it up, by drawing them into deeper communion with the sacred Body which depends on them for its sustenance and its growth. May we all be found worthy, through the grace and strength which God offers us, of offering up this sacrifice together!

With every pastoral blessing and faith in the, generosity of the children of Christ, I remain,



Rev. Fr. William J Redmon