

## **Spiritual Statements**

With the passing of three stewards, Peter Maniatis, Marie Harris, and Lambros Sideris, we are reminded that we have been blessed by their living examples of service and stewardship of God's gifts. As we prepare for the birth of Christ, let us recommit ourselves as living examples of stewards of God's gifts. The last thing Lambros did for the Church was to present the 2006 budget for approval. He did it with clarity and a great deal of preparation. A parish budget is not merely a financial statement but a spiritual statement of the degree to which a community is realizing the Gospel of Christ. I would like to bring to your attention how our parish budget expresses our vision for the Church, its purpose and goals.

Assumption Greek Orthodox Church for the past 10 years has relied solely on stewardship pledges, and candle and tray offerings as income for the operations and ministries of the community. Why is this important? The onus of sustaining a Church and providing for its ministries is on us. It is our responsibility to make annual stewardship pledges in order to provide for the ministries of Assumption. What this means is that any "fund raising" activity done by the church is for a specific purpose. For example, most of the funds raised from the Greek Food Festival are to pay down the mortgage principal. It is important, however, that pledges made for 2006 not only reflect our support for the ministries of Assumption but also the Building Fund mortgage. The 2006 budget calls for \$ 51,000 in mortgage payments from the Operating Account. The mortgage balance is \$ 379,837.00 and due to be paid in full by December in 2008. In addition to making a stewardship pledge, offerings can still be made directly to the Building Fund to help pay down the principal. If possible, at the end of 2006, the Parish Council will allocate any additional surplus from the Operating Account into the Building Fund for the same purpose. The fact that we rely on stewardship to support the ministries of Assumption and can use Festival profit to assist with debt reduction is a statement of a vibrant and living faith.

Stewardship pledges enable the Church to be the Church. The purpose of the Church is to fulfill the Gospel of Christ. The Gospel specifically calls upon us to care for the needs of others and to provide for our spiritual needs. Of the 2006 budget, 9.5 percent goes to the needs of others. This includes support for the Archdiocese, which in turn supports the Metropolis of San Francisco, engaging in outreach and evangelism, supporting missions and missionaries at home and in foreign countries and helping those who are experiencing financial hardships through the Good Samaritan Fund. In addition to this, \$16,400.00 is allocated to the ministries of Assumption for the spiritual development and nurturing of the faithful. One third of the budget provides for the needs of a Full-time priest and an assistant on Sundays. The priest serves the holy sacraments, provides spiritual counsel, teaches the faith and provides leadership for the overall ministry of the Church.

The greatest responsibility of any Church is to provide its youth with living examples of faith and stewardship. The numerous children who share their faith with us every Sunday are a testimony to the parents who are nurturing them in the home and are bringing them on time to Church. It is our collective responsibility to hand the Church over to them more vibrant and relevant, which is meeting their needs and producing faithful Orthodox Christian stewards. This means our "spiritual statement" found in the parish budget has an everlasting importance for all of us.

May the Lord bless you with every good thing so that in having in abundance you may abound in good works, which are pleasing to Him. (From the Wedding Service)

Christ is born, Glorify Him!

+Fr. Andrew Barakos