

Paying Faith in Christ Forward

Father Andrew Barakos discusses the way in which true Stewardship is a way of paying our faith in Christ forward.

In *Pay It Forward*, the book for the basis of the movie with the same title, Reuben St. Clair, a teacher, gives a voluntary, extra-credit assignment: THINK OF AN IDEA FOR WORLD CHANGE, AND PUT IT INTO ACTION. Trevor, the 12-year-old hero, thinks of quite an idea. He describes it to his mother and teacher this way: "You see, I do something real good for three people. And then when they ask how they can pay it back, I say they have to Pay It Forward, to three more people, each, so nine people get helped. Then those people have to do twenty-seven." He turned on the calculator, punched in a few numbers. "Then it sort of spreads out, see. To eighty-one. Then two hundred forty-three. Then seven hundred twenty-nine. Then two thousand, one hundred eighty-seven. See how big it gets?"

I suppose you could say that the reason there are millions of Christians walking a different walk than the rest of the world is because they understand paying ones' faith forward in a profound way. When a life has been touched by God it is no longer the same and the world is no longer the same nor is how one relates to others the same. When the joy of the gift of salvation touches a heart everything changes. Whether a heart is touched by God's grace, mercy, forgiveness, acceptance and love ~ nothing remains the same especially how one sees themselves in relation to others. Christian Stewardship is the paying forward of everything that God has done and continues to do for us. Whenever there was a gathering of the early church for worship, each person brought with them an offering, a sacrifice which represented their lives being offered to God. Bread was given and the Deacons would then become the arms of charity and distribute the bread to the needy.

Today, the offerings we bring to church are stewardship commitments. The very act of making a sacrifice to God is the most ancient form of expressing a desire for communion and union with God. This means that we must change our perspectives on making annual stewardship commitments from giving the same thing year after year to practicing sacrificial giving which expresses our continued spiritual growth and relationship with Christ. The reasons that play in deciding what to give to the church have much more to do with "why" one gives than with anything else.

Why Give?

The most important reason to give is to pay our faith forward because of what God has done for us in our lives. God changes us so that we may become instruments of His love, His mercy, His forgiveness and His assistance to others in need. The most important task of the Church is to use the offerings made in such a way as to fulfill its royal priesthood by making Christ present through the ministries we establish and through the way we serve one another. This is why 70% of the offerings made to Assumption go to

ministries, outreach, charities and ministry staff. The ministry staff has the task of empowering the people of God to put their faith into action.

Our Next Phase of Parish Growth – The Building Project

It is clear that in order to embark upon a Building project, current stewardship must also grow so that we can have the staff necessary to continue to develop ministries at Assumption. Moving into a “larger home” brings with it added responsibilities and many churches choose to solve this issue by going into some form of “business” in order to afford their dreams. Usually, Greek Festivals, becoming landlords or partnering with some other business seem to be the most common solutions. We have not nor will we endeavor to partner with anyone other than each other in affording our dreams here at Assumption. We are very good at dreaming “BIG” but we have a long way to go in looking in the mirror and into our faith and relationship with God so that those dreams may become a reality.

Here lies the answer to everything. The reason we want to build a building is so that we may “pay our faith in Christ forward” to those without family, friends or support; to those who suffer loss of any kind; to those who do not know Christ and have not tasted eternity on their lips or experienced the joy and peace of the Kingdom of God through worshipping Him in Spirit and Truth!

In Christ’s love,
+Fr. Andrew