

What does it mean to be a ‘good Orthodox’? A good citizen in the secular world equals a good steward of the church. Good stewards are willing to contribute their time and effort to make a difference. They see a role for themselves in helping the church. In Jesus' time, the steward was the manager of the household. The steward was not the owner of the parish assets (God is), but a responsible administrator of the owner's (God's) property. The question is: "What kind of stewards are we today?" We are not likely to manage well unless we acknowledge that we are managers. We are not likely to exercise good stewardship unless we recognize that we are stewards. Imagine Jesus standing before you and saying, "Take thou authority to be a steward." Then explore what that will mean in your daily life. Giving money for the work of the church is one very important aspect of stewardship, but it is not the whole of stewardship. Christian giving is a responsive act. It represents gratitude to God. It is a symbol of self-giving. Therefore, giving is not a once-for-all event, but a regular part of life. It is a spiritual discipline that reminds us who we are and whose we are. When parents discuss their investment of time and money in the church in the presence of their children, the parents are conducting stewardship education. Children can be taught to help at an early age. Children's minds are like sponges: when they see their parents and other adults doing something in the church or for the church, they absorb this. Children as young as 7 or 8 can and will respond with an understanding of “volunteerism” and even urge their parents to “do something.” When people talk about how the gifts of the church have made a difference in their individual lives or in the parish community, stewardship education takes place. When the church says "Thank You" for people's generous gifts, stewardship education takes place. It is appropriate to talk about the different facets of stewardship — time, talents, treasure, trust, thankfulness, tithing, tradition, and truth any time of year. Even simple acts such as cleaning up after coffee hour, or cleaning the church itself, are an act of stewardship. Research regularly links education (which equals understanding) to a person's level of knowledge, and interest. Educational levels affect modes of decision making that people use, and rising educational levels increase the breadth of interest in “doing something”. God calls us to be responsible partners with Him. We are given this great responsibility. We should view this as a privilege to make important decisions as we work "in the vineyard of the Lord."

Americans are among the most volunteer oriented people in the world. Witness when a disaster strikes. When Hurricane Andrew struck South Florida in 1992, Matushka and our son, Nikolas, were among the volunteers. Matushka still speaks of the many, many volunteers who came out to work, and those who donated good, new items to clothe, feed and treat the displaced. A large automobile dealership cleared out all its cars and opened their huge facility for a staging center. Matushka worked sorting clothing, Nikolas worked on the truck lines removing and categorizing donations of food, pharmaceuticals, and other non-clothing items. Their lives were affected forever by being a part of this and seeing how **good** people can be when it is necessary. Historians speak of “man's inhumanity to man” and we have many examples of this. But, in 1992, we, as a family, saw “man's humanity” in the purest, Godly sense. On a smaller scale, our church is always there in need. Our volunteerism, our Christian stewardship, should be apparent ALWAYS, not just when disaster strikes. We have it in us as human beings. We just need to “let it out”.

Old Russia had an excellent system of social service, volunteerism and people helping people especially as the educational level rose and people became aware of what was going on. Yet,

when the Communists took over, the words “volunteer”, “volunteerism”, “volunteering” were struck from the language. Many of you who grew up under the Communist yoke, do not have an understanding of what the commitment of good stewardship, volunteering to work, following through and really exhausting oneself for the church really means. Here is where we need to re-educate ourselves, to commit ourselves to the church through hard work as well as prayer and monetary donations. The Pokrov Sisterhood experiment last year was a disaster. Perhaps with renewed interest and an opening of our eyes as to what our individual roles are in the parish, we can resurrect this noble institution. It is not good, Dear Spiritual Children, for only a few to carry the burden of volunteering to make the parish work. I want to share with you, the story of a parish which is made up of many, many émigrés like ours. Here is what they were able to do with a committed Sisterhood:

“This parish community of St. _____ was steadily growing. In time, we put our money together, bought a property and built a real church. Subsequently, we bought a small two bedroom house for the priest and were even able to purchase a separate parking lot. The parish property was large enough to build a Church Hall and this was done. In the hall, Sisterhood members served coffee and pastry that they themselves baked, as well as light lunches and collected donations for this (with a minimum preset). The sisters also visited the sick and shared their food with them. I have been Sisterhood President for 9 years. It has been hard work, but we have a great group of wonderful ladies that make it easier. We make good money by arranging parties for the Holidays, serving Sunday lunches, and running Bake Sales that include Kulich and Pascha every year. We also pool our money to supply Kulich free of charge to the sick in nursing homes and hospitals. Our little group raised enough money over the past few years to be able to sponsor enlarging the hall and the church. Parish life has become quite lively: the Sisterhood began sponsoring a Christmas party (Yolka) for children where we got donations of toys to gift the children with and that is fun. We also sponsored pre-Lenten Blini parties, and parish picnics, as well as socials for teenagers. It was and continues to be a lot of work. The Sisterhood got the men of the parish involved too and that relieved us of some of the work responsibility. We all work, donating our time and money, and the reward is that we are building the parish community. When the church was renovated we installed beautiful new stained glass windows, \$6,000 each. One was paid for by the Sisterhood itself, the other five were purchased by some parishioners, whom we contacted to “adopt a window.” We also work with elderly parishioners to leave their homes and other items to the church so that we could either sell them or rent them out to help the church in perpetuity.....”

Look what we can hope to achieve! Come on, let’s get together. The sky is the limit...WE can do anything we want if we work together for God’s cause! By the way, the aforementioned parish is much smaller than ours...can you just imagine what we can do???

June: Liturgy 10AM every Sunday.

Saturday June 6th 10AM Soul Saturday.

Sunday June 7th, PENTECOST, 50 days after Pascha, the coming of the Holy Spirit.

Kneeling prayers following Liturgy.

Sts Peter & Paul Fast begins 6/15 and runs to 6/28. Sts Peter and Paul Day is June 29th.

Molebien with Holy Water, FATHER’S DAY, 6/21 following Liturgy.