

So it is with our church, we often imagine only what is humanly possible. If we do our part in faith, God will lovingly return to us much more than we could ever imagine. This is the true meaning of "Your own from Your own." We will see our church, not as it is, but as it could be, with our humble gifts multiplied by God's generosity and love. With our faithful offering, we will see in our church as they did in the early Church, "…the Lord added to their number daily, those who were being saved" (Acts 2:47).



"This Ekklesia exists when the dispersed, divided, self-preoccupied people unite and become a family, where people see one another as brothers and sisters with God as their common father, and try to share whatever they have and whatever they are, and be united in heart and soul"

-P. Faros in *Functional and Dysfunctional Christianity*

Icon:
Jesus Christ Blessing the Five Loaves and the Two Fish
provided courtesy of afentoulis.com

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STEWARDSHIP MINISTRY
GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AMERICA

Your Own from Your Own



We Offer to You



"…but make me worthy, Your sinful and unworthy servant, to offer these Gifts unto You. For You are the Offerer and the Offered, Who accepts and is distributed, O Christ our God…."

Priestly prayers before Holy Communion

A little boy asked his father, "Daddy, can I have ten dollars?" The father, wanting to understand, told the boy "Yes, but can you tell me what you plan to do with ten dollars?" The little boy replied quietly, "Daddy, I need the money to buy you a present."

We are not so different from that little boy. In every Divine Liturgy, when our gifts of bread and wine are blessed and lifted up in offering to God our Father, we hear the words, "Your own from Your own we offer to You." We acknowledge that, just like the little boy buying a gift for his father, everything we have and everything we offer to God first comes from Him. In the Divine Liturgy, we offer bread and wine to God with thanksgiving. He returns them to us as His body and blood in Holy Communion as we receive Jesus Christ within us.

See our Church as it Could Be.

One church member was heard to say, "I just want the church to be here long enough to have my funeral here." This is a church in survival mode, just paying the bills. We ask, "What does it cost?" "What are the dues?" "How much do I owe?" These are earthly questions. A better question would be, "What can I give so that my church can become all it is meant to be – the Body of Christ on earth." With a vision for the future of our parish we can say, "I want the church to be here for my grandchildren's grandchildren."

As Orthodox Christians, we see the world as God's gift, as a sacrament of God's presence and a means of communion with Him. This way we are able to offer back to God, in thanksgiving and love, the many gifts we receive from Him. Like the boy in the New Testament who offered the five loaves and two fish and Jesus multiplied them to feed the 5,000, God receives our humble gifts and multiplies them to feed the world.

When we see great need in our community and in the world, we may ask, "If God is so loving, then why is there so much poverty and suffering in the world? Where is God when we need Him?" Sometimes the need is so overwhelming that to help at all seems impossible, but in the miracle of the five loaves and two fish, we are taught to offer what we have, no matter the amount, and miracles will happen.

