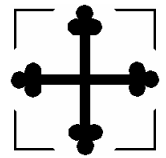




# Agape



## ST. GEORGE GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH - JAN. 2012

Dear Ones,

A very blessed New Year to all!

The following was written by Father Theodore Dorrance and appeared in the Salem Mission's November Newsletter. It offers us a comprehensive history and understanding of tithing. Neal asked me to include it in this month's Agape as the Stewardship Report but it also seems appropriate to share it here, in the section where a pastoral message normally appears.

### All of God, All of Us

September marked the beginning of the new Ecclesiastical Year in the Orthodox Church, and I have been thinking a lot lately about renewal and recommitment. Many of the basics of our Orthodox Faith have come to mind, and I have been setting some personal goals related to my own repentance and relationship with God. I have also been thinking about ways for grow. One area of needed growth is in Christian Stewardship, and specifically in our monetary giving. I would like to challenge each of you to tithe. The word "tithe" literally means "ten percent," and to tithe is to offer ten percent of all we have to God from our first and our best. In this article, I would like to help us all better understand this commandment of God that we may become obedient to Him and experience the resultant blessings.

Right from the beginning, Cain and Abel, the first offspring of Adam and Eve, made offerings to God. Abel's offering was from his first and his best. Cain's offering, however, was neither his first nor his best, but came from what was left over. Of course, God accepted Abel's offering and rejected Cain's, because Abel showed by his offering that God was first in his life. He honored God by giving his best. Cain, on the other hand, put himself before God, and when his offering was rejected, we see the fruit of his self-centeredness in full bloom through his anger and the eventual murder of his brother. In this situation, we learn a valuable lesson about giving back to God. All things come from God and are given to us as blessings. Through our own free will, we become stewards or managers of the things in our possession. By offering back to God the first and the best, we show that we love God and are thankful to Him for all things.

The very first time we see someone offering ten percent of their possessions is also in Genesis. After Abraham had won an important victory over many kings, Melchizedek, an Old Testament type of Christ and representative of God, came out to bless him. After being blessed, Abraham offered Melchizedek a tenth of everything he had won. This act illustrates how Abraham understood that his victory was due to the power of God. His tithe offering was not commanded, but came from his heart as a joyful expression of love and gratitude to God for saving him from his enemies. Abraham's tithe was another way of saying, "I can do nothing of my own accord, but only by the power of God and the will of God." Two generations later, Jacob received the blessing of his father, Isaac. After receiving this blessing, Jacob had a dream wherein he saw the famous ladder joining earth to heaven. Angels were ascending and descending the ladder, and the Lord stood above it and renewed the Covenant He had made to Abraham. When Jacob awoke from his dream, he constructed an altar of stone, consecrated it with oil, and made a vow to the Lord, saying, "If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat and clothing to wear, so that I come again to my father's house in peace, then the Lord shall be my God, and this stone, which I have set up for a pillar, shall be God's house; and of all that You give me I will give the tenth to You." (Gen.28:20-22) We see the blessed Patriarch Jacob, in-

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spired by the Holy Spirit, offering the tithe as a pledge of his own commitment to God and his agreement to abide by the Old Testament Covenant. In each of the above cases, it should be noted that the offerings were not commanded, but were instinctive. As time went on, however, mankind drifted further from God. At the time of Moses, it became necessary to provide a written Law as a tutor to help the children of the Covenant continue to follow God. As a part of this Law, God commanded Israel to offer ten percent of everything to the Lord. "All the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land or of the fruit of the trees, is the Lord's; it is holy to the Lord. And all the tithes of herds and flocks, every tenth animal that passes under the herdsman's staff, shall be holy to the Lord." (Lev.27:30, 32) This commandment became necessary to remind people that everything is the Lord's. He is the Creator and Sustainer of all things; nothing exists or comes into our possession apart from God. The tithe was to serve as a symbol of one's thanksgiving to God, and to remind them to be good stewards of the other ninety percent they were commanded to manage. Whenever the Israelites forgot this important truth, they also began to forget about God, and the result was spiritual harlotry, self reliance, and all forms of mistrust, fear and greed. When Christ came in the fullness of time, He did not abolish the Law and Prophets; He fulfilled them. (Mt.5:17) He not only fulfilled the Old Covenant, but He established a New Covenant. We read about many different incidents where Jesus said, "You have heard that it was said...but I say..." in order to introduce a teaching that did not contradict the Old Covenant but took the old teaching to an even higher level. The same can be said of our giving back to God in thanksgiving. In the Old Testament, we know that the commandment was to tithe. In the New Testament, Jesus does not directly address tithing. Instead, he points to a widow, who is seen giving two copper coins in the Temple treasury. Jesus uses this widow as an example of giving to His disciples. She didn't just give ten percent; she gave everything she had! "And He called His disciples to Him, and said to them, "Truly, I say to you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the treasury. For they all contributed out of their abundance; but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, her whole living." (Mk.12:43-44). This is the spirit of sacrificial giving that our Lord holds up as the most perfect way. Of course, not everyone is able to give away everything when they walk into church. We have responsibilities that require us to manage our money and be wise to meet the needs of our families. There is, however, an important principle derived from the example of the widow: the tithe should not be understood as a maximum or a legal-

istic church tax. Jesus is trying to illustrate for us a spirit of giving that teaches us to depend on Him, to remember that He is the Giver of all good things and to be free from greed and become grateful and cheerful givers of our first and our best. Should we tithe? Yes, but we should not be tempted to become legalistic and limit our giving only to ten percent. When asked the question, "What is necessary for salvation?" St. Justin Popovich replied, "All of God, and all of man! God has already given us His all, and now He awaits our response." Our giving must be seen as symbolic of our love for God and His place in the hierarchy of our priorities. This is the primary reason for God's interest in our giving: it is chiefly for the spiritual benefit and salvation of the giver. Of course, a secondary reason is for the support of the Church and her ministries. The Church exists in the world, and therefore needs monetary support to fulfill her mission. A spiritually healthy church community that has learned to give sacrificially usually has the blessing of figuring out how to spend their money in a God-pleasing manner rather than how to raise sufficient funds to support a bare-bones budget that minimally keeps the doors open. Without exception, every Greek Orthodox parish and every Metropolis in our Archdiocese falls into the latter category. We have not yet learned to give sacrificially, and therefore we continually find ourselves in a financial crisis. Rather than giving Biblically at a ten percent or higher rate, we give minimally out of our abundance, often after we have taken care of higher priority items in our lives. Sadly, this is indicative of where God fits into our lives. My dear brothers and sisters in Christ, it is easy to think that we are doing okay as stewards if we simply compare ourselves to contemporary standards in the Orthodox Church. But, if we compare ourselves to the Biblical standards God has set for us, we can see that we need to grow and make changes in our lives. We may not all be able to be in a position to make drastic changes overnight, but we are all in a position to better understand tithing and sacrificial giving and move in that direction. God expects more from us than we are offering in this important area of Christian stewardship. Our Orthodox Faith is anything but minimalistic. We are called to love the Lord our God with all our heart, and with all our soul, and with all of our mind. At the same time, Jesus taught that "where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." (Mt.6:21) Let us all ask the Lord to continue changing our hearts that we may deepen our love for Him and increase our sense of thanksgiving. As our hearts change, so will our desire and ability to give sacrificially.

**TREASURER'S REPORT**

Operations Account and Dedicated Account as of November 31, 2011

Previous Balance	\$9,952.93
4 Deposits	\$10,267.54
15 Debits	\$11,119.49
Ending Balance	\$9,100.98

Previous Balance	\$1,896.76
2 Deposits	\$300.00
Ending Balance	\$2,196.76

**Church School Corner**

Dear all,

This year our class is learning about the stories of the old Testament, the miracles of Christ, the lives of the saints, and the feasts days of the Church. Using stories, craft projects and games we teach the children about our Orthodox Faith in ways that they can understand and that bring the liturgy to life for them. As teachers we are planting seeds into their young hearts to grow the love and knowledge of our faith. It is a blessing working with this group of children and we appreciate the energy and enthusiasm that they bring to class every Sunday.

In Christ,

Cassandra & Cheri

**Philia**

St. Nicholas Project 2011: Thanks to all who contributed to this worthy project. Seventy gifts were delivered to Gateway Living to be distributed to residents, mostly living in the memory care units, who do not have family or would not otherwise receive gifts at Christmas. St. George Parishioners certainly helped to keep the spirit of Christmas alive.

Vasilopita Luncheon and Auction: Our annual Vasilopita Auction will be held on Sunday, January 15, 2012. All women of the church are invited to bake Vasilopita which will be auctioned off to benefit St. Basil's Academy. Contact Gloria if you need a recipe for this special, traditional New Year's bread. In conjunction with the auction this year, will be a Philia sponsored luncheon with the proceeds also going to St. Basil's Academy.

Interfaith Shelter Project: Our annual opportunity to participate with St. Thomas Episcopal Church is Thursday, January 19th. This is an all-parish service project coordinated by Philia. We will be preparing breakfast and dinner for the homeless families in this program. Our duties include cooking, serving, and clean-up. Volunteers will be needed to assist with this project and contributions of food items will be accepted. Please watch for further information in the weekly bulletin.

All women of the church are invited to participate in Philia activities. We welcome your ideas and input. Philia meets on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of the month following the Divine Liturgy.

We wish you a blessed New Year!

Gloria Zeazeas Timmons

Philia Coordinator

## BOOKSTORE THOUGHTS

Although Nativity is now past winter is surely not, and many of us will have more opportunities to read especially as the holiday activity quiets down. To that end, there are many offerings in the bookstore to support and enhance your spiritual life.

I hope some others did see the 60 Minute piece Christmas night covering Mount Athos. Father did recommend it to all of us. Even for those of familiar with Mount Athos, it was an inspiring bit of television. The depth of spiritual discipline and faith found on Athos -- while not surprising -- is, as we say in science or math, several orders of magnitude removed from us. I found it positively inspiring.

In that spirit, and presuming that others of you hope to intensify your spiritual disciplines moving forward, I am going to share some vignettes from my recent own reading, which I have been keeping track of, humble though they be compared to the monks on Athos. Many of these idea 'clips' have come directly from assorted readings of Scripture (I do use the Orthodox Study Bible) and other books from our store (and at least one from elsewhere). I think these are food for spiritual reflection.

+ The idea that many believers feel, and some on the way to the Church, that they are not really 'good' enough to draw close(r) to God. In answering this I read that no one is really good enough *on their own*, but God's hidden reserves of grace and power are available to us as we honestly approach the Lord God. You might wish to reference St. Matt.7:7 God meets us far more than half way.

+ I also came across an interesting short list of several things our Lord tells us we should not be anxious about. Several of these are found in St. Luke 12; some elsewhere: 1) dying or even being killed, 2) what we shall say in defense of our faith during persecution, 3) whether to build another (larger) barn [perhaps house fits today], 4) laying up treasure [our personal economics], 5) family disputes, 6) our food, 7) our drink and 8) our clothing.

I'm sure we could make a strong case for others, and certainly God promises to care for us under all circumstances, *BUT* what we are specifically encouraged to be concerned for is our soul [St. Matt 16: 24-27]. I'll bet we have our concerns at least partly reversed.

+ Orthodoxy speaks widely about controlling our passions, those worldly things that pull us from our spiritual priority, and this can be addressed through the big three of *Prayer, Fasting and Alms giving*. These, of course, are ideas from the very beginning of the Church . . . ways in which we implore God's mercy. I think we must all know this, but perhaps find it difficult on the follow through. Alms giving probably must start with our own church, St. George, and each of us is under a current challenge to slightly accelerate our giving on our January pledge for 2012. Truly something to think about.

+ Finally, I love the image of the Church -- the people of the Church -- storming heaven with their prayers. If one pray-er is good imagine what tens and hundreds and thousands can achieve. Think about the Liturgy, it's almost one continuous prayer. We don't stop long to do other things as worship in non-Orthodox churches do. If each of us could do just one thing more often/better/more engaged this coming year, I would urge you to prayer. At church. At home. In the car. Anywhere.

At any rate, the Bookstore is here to assist you. Please take advantage of our offerings which can enrich all of our lives across the year.

Columba/Dave

## COFFEE CHAT

Thank you all for signing up to host a fellowship hour or two in 2012. I had emailed you all a copy of the schedule and I will hang one up in the fellowship hall for those who do not use electronic mail.

REMINDER: January 1, will be a New Year's potluck. We can all start the new year by joining our culinary forces. It's also a good way to dispose of our holiday leftovers!

Julie

## The Cutting of the Vasilopita

The tradition of baking and cutting a special "pita" (which can mean a loaf of bread, a cake, or even a pie) each year on January 1st is observed of our holy father Basil the Great, archbishop of Caesarea in Cappodocia-- hence its name "Vasilopita" meaning "St. Basil's Bread." This tradition is observed in both parish churches and in the homes of the faithful. What is the meaning of this tradition and how did it begin?

For centuries upon centuries, parents, grandparents and godparents have related the following to Orthodox children about St. Basil and the Vasilopita. One year, during a time of terrible famine, the emperor levied a sinfully excessive tax upon the people of Caesarea. The tax was such a heavy burden upon the already impoverished people that to avoid debtors' prison each family had to relinquish its few remaining coins and pieces of jewelry, including precious family heirlooms. Learning of this injustice upon his flock, St. Basil the Great, the archbishop of Caesarea, took up his bishop's staff and the book of the holy Gospels and came to his people's defense by fearlessly calling the emperor to repentance. By God's grace, the emperor did repent! He canceled the tax and instructed his tax collectors to turn over to St. Basil all of the chests containing the coins and jewelry which had been paid as taxes by the people of Caesarea. But now St. Basil was faced with the daunting and impossible task of returning these thousands of coins and pieces of jewelry to their rightful owners. After praying for a long time before the icons of our Master Christ and His All-Holy Mother, St. Basil had all the treasures baked into one huge pita. He then called all the townspeople to prayer at the cathedral, and, after Divine Liturgy, he blessed and cut the pita, giving a piece to each person. Miraculously, each owner received in his piece of Vasilopita his own valuables. They all joyfully returned home, giving thanks to God who had delivered them from abject poverty and to their good and holy bishop St. Basil the Great! In remembrance of that miracle wrought by God as a result of St. Basil's love and defense of his people, Orthodox Christians have observed the tradition of the Vasilopita each year on January 1st-- the date on which St. Basil reposed in the Lord in the year 379.

## January Celebrations Birthdays

January 2nd-Angel Stephenson  
January 4th-Nikolas Pos  
January 9th-Jack Buck  
January 10th-Dimitri Kokkino  
January 18th-Lenny Buck  
January 22nd-Lisa Buck

## Feast Days

**January 1st-St. Basil**  
Bill Lilles

**January 6th-Epiphany/Theophany**  
Angel Stephenson (Photoula)

**January 7th-St. John the Baptist**  
Jack Buck, John Lallas, Joan Rundt, Jan Schmidt,

**January 17th-St. Anthony**  
Nick Boston

**January 18th-St. Athanasios**  
Art Mehas

**January 19th-St. Mark of Ephesus**  
Mark Hauser

**January 22nd-Holy Apostle Timothy**  
Timothy Kaelin

**January 25th-St. Gregory the Theologian**  
Greg Sebastian

## Wedding Anniversaries

**January 3rd-The Carrolls'**

## Baptized in Christ

**January 9th-The Bucks'**

**Many Years! Chronia Polla!**

## News and Events

## What's New!

- A special mention of our Catechumens: **Charlie Carroll, Alex Titus, Jessica Graham, Ray, Josh and Ashley Knerl, and Diane Monger.** Let us the Faithful be praying for them as they are being prepared to be received into the Church.
- **Church School Nativity Program:** This year's Church School Nativity Program took place on Sunday, December 18th, following the Divine Services. Special thanks to Lisa Buck for producing the program and to the Church School students and teachers!
- **Holiday Bake Sale:** What a fantastic job the Bake Sale Committee did for this year's Holiday Bake Sale! "Thank You" to everyone who helped!
- **Trenton (Thomas) Jones** was baptized on December 24th with Niko Lilles as his sponsor. **Christopher Knerl** was baptized on Saturday, December 31st with Lisa Buck as his sponsor. **Joseph Sheild and Natalie Van-Wetten** were crowned in marriage on December 31st, at St. Anne Orthodox Church. **Trenton Jones and Frances Carroll** were crowned in marriage on December 31st, here at St. George. May they all live for us!
- **First Saturday Breakfast** food prep will take place on Friday, January 6th, and the breakfast itself will follow on Saturday, January 7th. This ministry to the homeless is always in need of volunteers. Please contact Bonnie Graham for more information.
- **Epiphany/Theophany Services:** Please join us Thursday evening, January 5th, for Vespers Divine Liturgy and the Great Blessing of the Waters as we celebrate the feast of Epiphany/Theophany. Services will begin at 6 pm.
- **Stewardship Sunday:** Please join us on Sunday, January 8th as we will ask God's blessing upon our Stewardship commitment for 2012. Please return your completed stewardship cards to the church by that day. The newly elected Parish Council will take the oath of office on that day as well.
- **Vasilopita Luncheon and Auction:** Please join us on Sunday, January 15th for a special luncheon; the annual cutting of the Vasilopita; and auction of Vasilopita that benefits St. Basil Academy. Philia will be hosting us that day and all proceeds will go to support the work of the Academy.
- **Interfaith Shelter Project:** We will again be participating in the Interfaith Shelter Project so save the date of Thursday, January 19th. Details are forthcoming.



St. Nicholas Project helpers deliver gifts to Gateway Assisted Living Facility. "Thank You" all for your generosity!



# KOINONIA

	1/1	1/8	1/15	1/22	1/29
FELLOWSHIP	Potluck	Markopoulos	Vasilopita Luncheon	Wilson	Zotoff/Merritt
GREETER	Judy S.	Erin M.	Ann L.	Stephanie C.	Judy S.
PROSFORON	Leda Litke	Lisa Lilles	Shafers	Katie Hauser	Lisa Lilles
FLOWERS	OPEN	OPEN	OPEN	OPEN	OPEN
READERS	Brad Thomas	Brad Thomas	Brad Thomas	Brad Thomas	Brad Thomas
NARTHEX CLEANUP	Carroll	Kaelin	Lenkoff	Green	Carroll
NAVE CLEANUP	Hauser	Kaelin	Lisa Lilles	Lenkoff	Hauser

## GET INVOLVED!!!

Look through this list of organizations, programs, and ministries at our parish, then call the contact person and get involved!!!

PARISH COUNCIL	Arin Carmack 541-579-4796
ACOLYTES	Bob Graham 541-937-2670
BOOKSTORE	David Shafer 541-234-2139
PHILIA WOMEN'S GROUP	Gloria Zeazeas-Timmons 541-484-0575
CHURCH SCHOOL	Lisa Lilles 541-746-5592
CHANTER/CHANT GROUP	Brad Thomas 541-689-9690, Ann Marie Kaelin 541-335-9256
FRIENDS OF ST. JOHN CONVENT	Art Mehas 541-485-8671
FELLOWSHIP	Julie Lenkoff 541-345-2107
STEWARDSHIP	Neal Zoumboukos 541-344-4485
GREETERS	
OUTREACH/1ST SAT. BREAKFAST	Bonnie Graham 541-914-3381
O.C.F.	Ann Campbell 541-654-4061
GREEK LANGUAGE CLASS	Dimitri Kokkino 541-341-3977
PARISH FAMILY NIGHT	Cassandra Batterson 541-345-5248
FUNDRAISERS	Presbyteria Maria 542-844-1094
SUPPER FOR SIX	

St. George Greek Orthodox Church – (541) 683-3519, Fr. Gerasimos (Jerry) Markopoulos  
 E-mail address: [frgerasimos@sntgrg.org](mailto:frgerasimos@sntgrg.org) Church's Website: [www.stgeorgeor.org](http://www.stgeorgeor.org)

**Saint George Greek Orthodox Church**  
**202 Hillview 1**  
**Eugene, OR 97408-5018**

- **Epiphany/Theophany Services: RACHMANINOFF VIGIL IN JANUARY 2012:** The All-Night Vigil ("Vespers") by Sergei Rachmaninoff to be sung by Cappella Romana, directed by Alexander Lingas. These performances feature not only Rachmaninoff's brilliant settings of Znamenny and Kievan chants, but also selections for Christmastide by Kastalsky and Tchaikovsky, Rachmaninoff's teachers, filling out the program as if it were sung as an actual Vigil. Artistic director Alexander Lingas conducts these historic performances in celebration of Cappella Romana's 20th-anniversary season. PORTLAND: Single prices start at \$27; \$22 for students and seniors. Fri., Jan. 6, 2012, 8 pm, St. Mary's Cathedral; Sun., Jan. 8, 2012, 2 pm, Trinity Episcopal Cathedral. [cappella-romana.org](http://cappella-romana.org); 503-236-8202.
- **House Blessing Basics:** The month of January is the traditional time for House Blessings. This is an ancient Tradition of the Church related to the Great Blessing of the Waters conducted on Epiphany/Theophany. We take Holy Water from the Church and we use it to bless our lives in every way possible. The priest blesses us, our homes, our cars, our yards and gardens, and by extension, all creation. Not only do we receive a special blessing from God, but through that blessing, God enables us to see His creation in a redeemed way-as a means of greater union and communion with Him. For a House Blessing, a short prayer service is offered by the priest at your home altar. Then the priest proceeds through the house sprinkling Holy Water as he goes. A bowl, lit candle, icon and incense (optional) are needed on your part. **Please call, email, text and arrange a time for Father to come and bless your home as a means of growing closer to God and in seeing His creation in a redeemed and blessed way.**