

Whatever you do
work at it with
all your heart
as working for the Lord,
not for men

Colossians 3:23



SAINT
PHOCAS
THE GARDENER

SAINT
EUPHROSYNOS
THE COOK

SAINT BARBARA GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH
Stewardship 2018

Introduction

“Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men.” Colossians 3:23

This beautiful verse from Saint Paul’s letter to the Colossians is part of a larger pericope that focuses on the spiritual life in the home. In this passage, Saint Paul reminds us that ‘life in the home is **in the Lord.**’ (Colossians 3:18-4:1) That the family is a *little church* and as such, is called to *live in* the baptismal and eucharistic life of *the Church*. Members of the family are asked to live a life that is one of loving service to each another; understanding that **it is Christ whom we truly serve**, and from the Lord that we will receive the reward of the inheritance.” (Colossians 3:24)

On the cover of this year’s Stewardship brochure we find the Icons of Saint Phocas and Saint Euphrosynos. Saint Phocas was a gardener and Saint Euphrosynos was a cook. They are not known as “Phocas the Great” or “Euphrosynos the Theologian.” Known instead by the work they did, they became saints of the Church. We know that service to God and His Church is sacred, and because of this we strive to serve and support the Church. But is it possible for *our work* to be sacred? Can we be Christian stewards of *our work*? According to Saint Porphyrios the answer to both these questions is *yes*, “At your work, whatever it may be, *you can become a saint* through meekness, patience, and love.”

Saint Phocas lived humbly on the sale of fruits and vegetables that he grew in his garden. Through his work, he fed the hungry and gave shelter to those in need. Because of his dedication to his work and his generosity to those in need, he became a Christian example to others. Even non-believers treated Phocas with respect, and by his Christ-like manner, many were drawn to the Christian Faith. Saint Euphrosynos worked as cook in a monastery in Palestine, serving the monks humbly and faithfully. The other monks were not aware of the depth of his spiritual growth until it was revealed in a dream to a priest-monk of the monastery and then related to them. Both Saints, Phocas and Euphrosynos, are known to us by their humble work.

In the second chapter of Genesis we read, “The Lord God took the man He formed and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.” (Genesis 2:15) God placed man in the garden to work. It is part of God’s plan for us to work. In Book of Exodus we read, “Six days you shall work, but on the seventh day you shall rest...” The world has changed. Very few of us are called to work the land and our work week may not be six days. Yet, each of us have been created and called by God to work, and we can serve Him, through our work.

In whatever type of work we find ourselves, our work can become sacred when we dedicate it to God. In the words of Mother Theresa, “Wherever God has put you, that is your vocation. It is not what we do, but how much love we put into it.”

Life on earth is a gift. The work we do is also a gift if we see it as an opportunity to serve God and others. Saint Paul instructs us, “Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men...” (Colossians 3:23). When we see our work in this way, we are able to become Christian stewards of our work.

Stewardship of work teaches us that we don’t *own* our work, our position, or our title. We are only stewards of a position for a period of time. We are responsible to fulfill our duties and also to prepare it for the person that will follow us in that position. We may also have the opportunity to mentor the person that will assume our position when we move on, empowering them to apply their particular gifts and talents to take the position to the next level.

Christian stewardship of work also teaches us that we are responsible to those with whom we work and those that may be served by our work. We are called to reflect the light of Christ in their lives, encourage them, support them and even love them. We are also stewards of our co-workers inasmuch as we cooperate and support them in their efforts for the good of all.

What is a stewardship program?

Stewardship is a system of proportional giving to the Church in which the members examine their conscience and offer their support in accordance with their individual means and circumstances. This often confuses people because a specific amount is never solicited. This system is fair because it acknowledges the reality that the pensioned widow and the prosperous business owner do not have the same resources at their disposal. One has less, the other has more; to ask them both to support the Church equally as we did under the antiquated “dues” system is terribly unfair. It burdens the pensioner unbearably, and discounts the generosity of those who are more prosperous. With Stewardship, therefore, we do not give in accordance with an artificially set amount, but rather in accordance with our true ability to share.

For those who insist in having some guidelines: The average Stewardship pledge in the United States is \$1,200 per married household. As a suggested guide, families should work towards initially pledging 1%-2% of their gross income and eventually working up to 5% over a three to five year period. Some families find it easier to start by pledging \$25/week. Give in proportion to what you have been given.

Is stewardship just about money?

Of course not. We do not support our Church simply by mailing a check. That has never been our message at Saint Barbara Church. That is not who we are as a community. In addition to our material resources, we also have been given time and talents. The Church prospers with people who also donate their time and skills to the service of the parish. We can serve on boards and committees; we can volunteer to help with the bulletin mailings; we can paint and do carpentry; we can sing in the choir; we can work at the festival and various parish functions; we can keep the parking lots spotlessly clean and tidy. The opportunities are as endless as the talents of our people and their willingness to be involved and engaged in the life and ministries of our Church. Remember: building our parish's volunteerism in time and talent and enhancing our parish ministries has been the explicit and publicly stated strategic goal of our community for many years.

What about my children?

We need to teach our children to be good stewards of the Church, so that they understand that our offerings of time, talent and treasure help the Church with her mission in this world. We need to begin encouraging our children to become stewards at a young age so that they understand the Christian concept of giving. We need to encourage our children to give a portion of their allowance or a percentage of their birthday or Christmas gifts to the Church so that they can develop the understanding that it is ‘not all about us.’ Paying a child's stewardship for them doesn't help them to understand the basic Christian concept of giving; of offering a portion of what we have freely received from God back to Him and His ministry through the Church.

At what age should we become stewards of the church?

We should strive to become stewards of the Church on the day of our 18th Birthday.



“As Christian Stewards we are called to give back to God from the ‘first fruits’ of our labor. We are called to support our parish and her ministries in an intentional way and not with only what it left after everything else has been taken care of.”

I am one person. Can I make a difference?

Yes, you can. History is full of individuals who acting alone made all the difference in the world. Your good example, multiplied by hundreds of others acting together, will be the catalyst that will revitalize the parish.

Become a donor, but more important, become a disciple and apostle of God's truth by encouraging others, friends, children, brothers, sisters, nieces, nephews, and godchildren to also become stewards. A positive word of encouragement, together with your own personal example of generosity, can perform miracles of change.

Why does the Orthodox Church encourage annual stewardship commitments from its parishioners?

The philosophy of the Orthodox Church is to take as much of the daily focus off finances as possible. By making an annual commitment, you provide the security that operating expenses of the Church will be underwritten through stewardship. This will allow us to move forward with our real work of being disciples of Christ, which includes not only evangelization and community service, but also the education, nurturing, and support of our own parish community.

What is the best way to fulfill my stewardship pledge?

Stewardship is most appropriately understood as an obligation not unlike utilities and rent. So we encourage you to make regular, weekly or monthly payments at the same time you sit down to pay your other bills. The Saint Barbara Parish has made fulfilling your pledge easy with a variety of payment methods: online through our web site, automatic bank withdrawal, or credit card. Of course, you may always pay by check.

What if my circumstances change?

God asks only that you enter into a good-faith commitment, not a legal contract. You can make changes to your stewardship pledge affected by new circumstances (positive or negative) simply by contacting the church office and speaking with Father Peter.

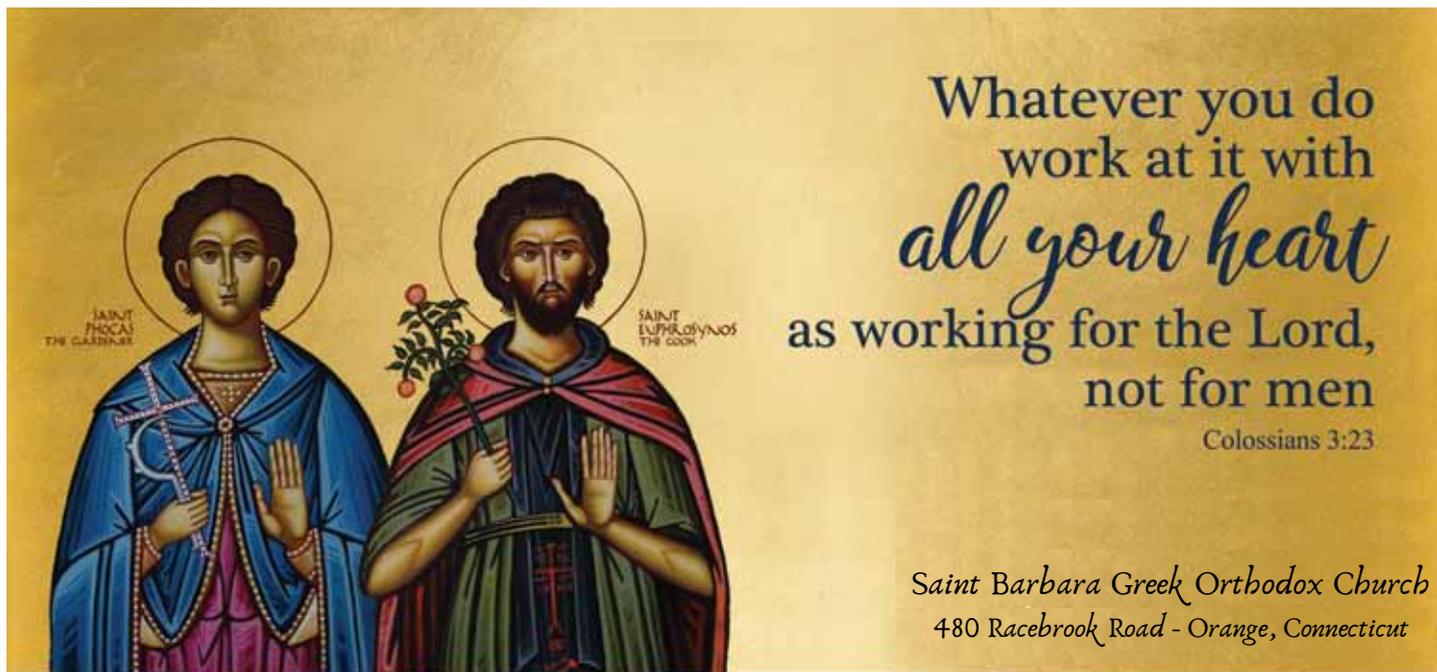
Is my commitment that important?

Absolutely. We all want the Church to be there for us. If our Orthodox community is to remain healthy, we each need to contribute our fair share, understanding that the expenses and work of the church go on whether or not we are in attendance. More importantly, demonstrating thanksgiving to God in a concrete way is the best way of going through life with an "attitude of gratitude" for all that He has given us.

A final reflection

The Saint Barbara Parish Council continues to do a remarkable job monitoring the monthly expenses of our parish. Through its various committees they have been able to identify cost-saving measures which in the long run have allowed our community to save thousands of dollars in annual expenses. Our parish is also blessed to be supported by a battalion of parishioners who selflessly volunteer their time and talent to assist the Church in its mission to shine the Light of Christ in the world. Even so, just as in our homes - annual expenses continue to rise. As parishioners, we are all called to offer financial assistance to the Church to insure that our parish doors remain open and that the community of Saint Barbara can continue to minister to her parishioner families as well as to the surrounding community.

Including our General Fund (daily expenses) and Mortgage Expenses it currently costs \$74,243 per month or \$2,531 per day to keep our parish operating. While we have begun our next Building Fund Campaign to complete the construction of the gymnasium and lower the existing mortgage on the education and community centers, the Stewardship Goal for 2018 is \$375,000. The monies from your stewardship contribution go directly to the general fund and are necessary for our parish to meet our daily expenses.



My Commitment of Treasures - For Christ and the Ministries of His Church

Yes! I want to support God's work through my Church of Saint Barbara. Here is my Commitment of Faith for 2018 representing my best efforts to return to God a portion of that which belongs to Him.

Name: (please print) _____

This represents my individual stewardship commitment for 2018

I pledge to give: ___\$250/month ___\$200/month ___\$150/month ___\$100/month
 ___\$75/month ___\$50/month ___\$25/week ___\$20/week
 ___\$1,200/year (The National Average per couple) ___\$more/other

I will make my donations:
 ___ weekly ___ monthly ___ quarterly ___ yearly

Υπόσχομαι να προσφέρω:
 ___\$250/μήνα ___\$200/μήνα ___\$150/μήνα ___\$100/μήνα
 ___\$75/μήνα ___\$50/μήνα ___\$25/βδομάδα ___\$20/βδομάδα
 ___\$1,200/χρόνο (Ο Μέσος Όρος) \$___περισσότερο/άλλο

Θα εκπληρώσω τη δωρεά μου:
 ___εβδομαδιαίως ___μηνιαία ___τριμηνιαία ___ετήσια

Name: (please print) _____

Home Phone: () _____

Cell Phone: () _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

E-Mail Address: _____

Work Phone: () _____

Payment Options:

I will mail or bring my monthly stewardship contribution directly to the Church Office.

I will pay my stewardship contribution by credit card online through the Church's web site at **<http://www.saintbarbara.org/stewardship>**.

Note: This is a promise of intentions. It can be changed at any time by contacting the Priest or Stewardship Chairperson.

Please complete this form and return it in the enclosed confidential envelope within 30 days.



SAINT BARBARA GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH
480 RACEBROOK ROAD
ORANGE, CONNECTICUT 06477