

### ***Pledging to Give in Stewardship***

We continue to consider **pledging** (promising) **to give** (to transfer in love for free) **in stewardship** (as those who manage value in trust for the true owner).

#### *Article #5*

### **The History of Stewardship**

Stewardship has a long history in the Church. Four thousand years ago, Abraham **tithed** as recorded in the first pages of the Bible (see Genesis 14:18-20). **Offerings** appear even earlier (see Genesis 4:3-4).

In the book, *Good and Faithful Servant: Stewardship in the Orthodox Church*, Dr. John Erickson of St. Vladimir's Seminary, explains why the faithful from traditionally Orthodox countries have trouble adjusting to stewardship. In the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, the governments of Greece, Russia, Serbia, to name a few, were Orthodox. This meant the Church was supported by the State, which was supported by the taxes of the people. As Jaroslav Pelikan has said, "Before the 324 A.D. Byzantine Emperor, stewardship might have meant giving your life; after Constantine, stewardship consisted of paying your taxes."

Taxation is not God's way of providing for His Church--it robs us of the chance to *choose to give*. Because of state-supported churches, Orthodox who migrated to America had *lost the idea of "tithes and offerings"*! A further financial blow to the churches in the new world occurred after the Russian Revolution of 1917. Russia stopped sending support to the Orthodox Churches in America. By the 1920's parishes had adopted the methods of social clubs and charities, namely, "dues and fundraisers."

In 2005, the Self-ruled Antiochian Orthodox Archdiocese voted to *return Orthodoxy to tithing*, by stipulating that parishes are to support the Archdiocese by tithing, rather than by assessment. By extension, families are to support their parishes by tithing. In the years since 2005, parishes and the Archdiocese have become stronger. Those who tithe have given God top priority in their lives, and have placed themselves squarely in His hands. They have discovered the peace that comes from trusting God, and being in the center of His will.

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