

St Botolph's Antiochian Orthodox Church

Thanksgiving Sunday – June 21st 2009

Christian giving is our responsibility as God's stewards, both for the ministry of the Church and to provide for the poor. On June 21st we will be having our first Thanksgiving Sunday to renew our giving to God's work to conform it to both the teaching of Scripture and that of the Church Fathers (especially St. John Chrysostom and St John the Merciful).

We need to see it as:

Part of the Gospel

"For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich." (2 Corinthians 8:9)

An expression of thanksgiving

"For the rendering of this service not only supplies the wants of the saints but also overflows in many thanksgivings to God." (2 Corinthians 9:12)

An experience of joy

"For God loves a cheerful giver ..." (2 Corinthians 9:7)

A willing and sacrificial action

"For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own free will." (2 Corinthians 8:3)

A generous spirit

"He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully." (2 Corinthians 9:6)

Based on trust in God

"And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that you may always have enough of everything and may provide in abundance for every good work." (2 Corinthians 9:8)

Regular and proportionate

"On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up as he may prosper ..." (1 Corinthians 16:2)

How should we respond to this?

We need to pray to God to show us what proportion of our income we should give in thanksgiving to his work. Please do not think of an amount and then work backwards to the proportion! Pray about the proportion, the share you are going to give to God's work in the future.

The biblical guide to proportionate giving is of course the tithe or 10% of our income. However, in Christ we live by his grace, not by laws or rules. For some on low

incomes this might be too much. But don't forget the widow in the Temple! For others it might be not enough. Pray about it!

Please do not ask your Priest or anyone else. Ask God about it.

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On Sunday 21st June you will have an opportunity to make your personal commitment, privately, of course. At the beginning of the sermon pieces of paper will be given to everyone and you will be asked to put on it your name and the amount you will be giving each month from now on. You will then bring them up at the end of the sermon and put them in a basket placed in front of the Holy Icons, which you can then venerate before returning to your place.. It must be stressed that this is entirely a private matter, and only our Treasurer, Aidan Garnett will know what you have pledged to give.

If you cannot come on Thanksgiving Sunday, then we suggest you phone Aidan during this coming week (0777) to share with him what your pledge is.

At the end of the service we ~~plan~~ to announce the amount that has been pledged by us all.

The current financial situation

We have been informing you regularly about our current situation – so let us remind you roughly of what that is. Our income at the moment is £28,000, of which slightly over half comes in pledged standing orders. Our expenditure is expected to be about £31,000. This is made up of - Rent 11,500, Clergy 14,400, Deanery quota 1,800, Kenya Parish 2,400, Insurance 250, Liturgical 500. The gap between our income and expenditure has halved since we first reported it last March. We are praying that by Thanksgiving Sunday we will have closed the gap altogether, thanks be to God!

Father Michael Harper
June 14th 2009