

## ***From the desk of Fr. Matthew***

My brothers and sisters in Christ,

This month we will begin our 2010 Stewardship campaign. The theme of our Stewardship campaign is “Come and See,” a quote from the Gospel of St. John (1:46). This quotation describes the calling of the Apostles Philip and Nathanael. When Christ calls Philip to follow Him, Philip runs to Nathanael to announce that the Messiah has come. Nathanael asks Philip, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” and Philip’s response is simply to say, “Come and See.” This response is simple, but it is also powerful. Nathanael is given the opportunity to encounter the Living God. Because Jesus Christ was on earth, Nathanael had the opportunity to approach Him and to see Him in the flesh. Upon meeting Him, Nathanael exclaims, “Rabbi, You are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!”

### *The Calling of Stewardship*

Many times, the word “stewardship” has a negative connotation. But this is actually the furthest thing from the truth. Stewardship is your invitation to participate in the ministry of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ here on earth. It is your opportunity to make a difference in the lives of others. When we give of ourselves to Jesus Christ and His Holy Church, we are making the best kind of investment: an investment in the salvation of our fellow human beings. Being a Steward of the Church means that you are invested in the mission of the Church. And being invested in the mission of the Church means that you are supporting God.

### *The Need for True Stewardship*

In the past, many Greek Orthodox Churches functioned on a system of dues. Once such example would be that each person in the church pay \$250 to be a member. In my opinion, there can be nothing more damaging to the spiritual life of a Church than to have a system of dues. First, a system of dues gives the impression that there is a limit to how much you can offer to God. Second, a system of dues gives the impression that you are purchasing a membership. Throughout the entire bible, there is no mention of dues. This is why our parish does not operate under a system of dues any longer. We are practicing True Stewardship.

### **True Stewardship is your Free-Will, Sacrificial Offering of your First Fruits to Jesus Christ and His Holy Church.**

The bible speaks frequently about offering your first and best fruits to back to God. First fruits was a Jewish feast held in the early spring at the beginning of the grain harvest. First fruits was a time of thanksgiving for God’s blessings. Leviticus 23:9-14 institutes the first fruits offering. First fruits is also mentioned in the New Testament. St. Paul says, “But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep” (1 Cor. 15:20). This means that Jesus Christ Himself was an offering to God on behalf of all of mankind! Since Jesus offered Himself as a sacrifice for us, how can we not strive to offer our best sacrifice back to God?