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UKRAINIAN GREEK-CATHOLIC CHURCH

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STEWARDSHIP OF DIVINE GIFTS: A Christian Way of Life *Instructions for Parish Clergy*

Lviv - 2015

Permission to print:

His Beatitude SVIATOSLAV
Father and Head of the UGCC

BA15/xxx from February XX 2015, Kyiv, Ukraine



***“The Vibrant Parish –
A Place to Encounter the Living Christ”***

This publication was prepared by:

*The Working Group for the Realization of the
Strategic Development of the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church
till 2020*

Lviv 2015

IMPORTANT POINTS:

- At the Synod in September 2014 our Bishops dedicated considerable time to reflect on “Stewardship of Divine Gifts – a Christian Way of Life.” They would like to share key aspects of that reflection with the clergy and faithful laity of our Church.
- Developing a good understanding of Christian stewardship will help us strengthen not only our parish communities, but also our personal spiritual lives, our families, our Church as a whole.
- We live in an increasingly secular society, and so good Christian Stewardship will help reinforce those Christian foundations and values, which modern society increasingly seems to forget or neglect.

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FOREWORD FROM THE FATHER AND HEAD OF THE UKRAINIAN GREEK-CATHOLIC CHURCH

Glory to Jesus Christ!

Reverend Fathers,

With great joy I recommend these Instructions to a *Practical Workbook for Parishioners* on the theme of “Stewardship of Divine Gifts: A Christian Way of Life.” The Synod of Bishops of the UGCC explored this theme during its session in September 2014, and the “Working Group for the Realization of the Strategic Development of the UGCC till 2020” took the main points expressed during the Synod and gathered them in a practical format for implementation in our parish communities.

I am particularly grateful to Bishop Ken (Nowakowski), who is chairman of the Working Group since October 2011 and who carries responsibility for this new addition to the series of publications in our “Vibrant Parish – a Place to Encounter the Living Christ” program. I also wish to thank Bishop David (Motiuk) of Edmonton, Bishop Paul (Chomnytsky) of Stamford and Rev. Dr. Andrij Onuferko for their work on the individual themes in this publication.

Every person is gifted in some manner. At the same time, Our Lord God placed upon us a responsibility to properly use these gifts, that is, to share them for the glory of God and for the good of one’s neighbor.

Reverend Fathers, I hope that these Instructions will help you deepen your understanding of the sense and meaning of God’s gifts in the building up of the Kingdom of God, and that the material found here will assist you in encouraging your faithful to a more generous gifting of time, talents and treasure in the life of your parish communities.

Let everything be done for the glory of God and for the good of His People!

The Blessing of the Lord be upon you!

+ Sviatoslav

HOW TO USE THIS PARISH WORKBOOK

PURPOSE: These INSTRUCTIONS and WORKBOOK FOR PARISHIONERS on Christian Stewardship have been written to help both clergy and laity:

- deepen their understanding of “stewardship” in the Kingdom of God
- commit themselves to a more generous giving of time, talents and treasure for the building up of the Kingdom of God

FORMAT: The **Instructions** are written in a way that they can be used both for personal reflection, as well as for common reflection by the entire parish community. They contain the **full text** of an “Appeal from the Working Group,” outlining both theoretical and practical aspects of “Stewardship”. Also provided are: **highlighted points** on separate themes, examination of conscience **questions** and **practical examples** for the giving of time and talents.

WHO PRESENTS: Certainly **the pastor** can lead a reflection on “Stewardship.” However, if among **the laity** there are parish members who are comfortable with public speaking, are well grounded in the faith and enjoy the respect of the community, they could be invited to present individual thematic sections of the WORKBOOK. The parish may also consider inviting an outside facilitator.

WHEN: The Parable of the Talents (Mt 25:14-30) is proclaimed as the Gospel reading during Divine Liturgy on the **16th Sunday after Pentecost**. We suggest that each year this be designated “**Stewardship Sunday**” and that each parish organize a **Call to Stewardship**. Since this Sunday usually falls in September, such a Call to Stewardship would precede the annual Pastoral Planning of the parish, generally held in October. The material can also be presented **at any time** (eg. as a parish mission during Great Lent), with the 16th Sunday used to highlight the **main points**, cover the reflection questions and present a prepared list of time-talent opportunities.

KEY POINTS:

- Christian Stewardship is a way of life and a continuous process of conversion in order to make God a priority in our lives.
- It requires a spirit of sacrifice and a readiness to share of one’s time, talents and treasure.
- It is nothing new, for the Church has always had to administer its many gifts, sometimes effectively, but sadly, sometimes less so.
- It is the Gospel in action by concrete individuals, in a concrete place, in a specific time, with those gifts-resources, which God has given us.
- Let us, therefore, together be good stewards of God’s gifts and share them for the building up of His Kingdom.

- The *Handbook for Pastoral Planning* is an important tool to help a parish prioritize its activities with a view towards its mission.
- It is important for parishioners to know the financial state of its community so that they might also have a deeper sense of their responsibility in material matters.

INSTEAD OF QUESTIONS FOR PERSONAL REFLECTION

Every parish should develop an *annual Pastoral Plan*, invite all parishioners to participate, especially in the first two sessions of Pastoral planning: *Count our Blessings* (What are we doing already?) and *Dare to Dream* (What would we like to do?).

Also invite the parishioners to consider whether in the future they might be willing to serve in the Parish Pastoral and Financial Councils.

Practical Suggestion: If you have a large parish, you may consider creating a “**Stewardship Committee**” within the Pastoral Council. This would be a group of individuals who would assist the pastor in developing lists of tasks within the parish, and look for individuals who have specific talents, who might serve in Parish Council structures or help the parish fulfill its Pastoral Plan. If you are a smaller parish, then at least consider calling together a small “**Stewardship Team**” of Pastoral Council members. Members of such a Stewardship Committee might be called upon to assist in presenting this WORKBOOK to the parish community.

IV. STEWARDSHIP OF GOD’S GIFTS – A WAY OF LIFE

“Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. ² And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.”

Ephesians 5:1-2

HOW: In addition to preaching the Sunday homily, we ask that pastors set aside time either *Saturday evening* or *Sunday after Divine Liturgy*, to work through this PARISH WORKBOOK with their parishioners. Larger parishes might need to hold a number of sessions to accommodate a greater number of parishioners.

HOW LONG: Approximately **one hour** should be set aside to present the contents of the Workbook. Larger groups might need to add an additional half hour.

LEVEL OF UNDERSTANDING: It is important that each pastor (or lay presenter) take into account the level of maturity and understanding of the parish faithful. In some parishes the material presented here will be perfectly understandable. In others it will need to be presented on a simpler level.

PREPARATION: Obviously, pastors and lay presenters are to reflect on the presentation themes well before presenting the WORKBOOK in the parish. This includes personal meditation on the Questions for Personal Reflection, for the clergy and laity, respectively.

TIME FOR PERSONAL REFLECTION: After each theme there are a few questions for personal reflection. You may choose to just read these questions aloud, print them out for distribution, or display them on an overhead screen. A few moments pause after each question should be sufficient.

EXPRESSING GRATITUDE: Before inviting parishioners to commit to offering their time, talents and treasure, it is important to acknowledge and celebrate all the good efforts and gifts offered thus far. Before beginning a presentation session, thanks needs to be expressed.

OPENING PRAYER: You can begin your work session with “The VIBRANT PARISH Prayer.”

STEWARDSHIP SUNDAY

How can I contribute to the life of my parish community?

WHAT: Call to Stewardship (*reflection and commitment*)

WHERE:

WHEN:

I. STEWARDSHIP – GENERAL PRINCIPLES

1. *Every Gift is from God*
2. *The Mission of the Church*
3. *Stewardship of God's Gifts is Rooted in the Sacred Scriptures*
4. *Stewardship of Divine Gifts – Our Common Task*

II. STEWARDSHIP OF GIFTS – TIME, TALENTS AND TREASURE

1. *Stewardship of Time*
2. *Stewardship of Talents*
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III. CONCRETE EXAMPLES OF PARISH STEWARDSHIP

1. *Tithing: Four Hours per Week for the Building Up of the Kingdom of God*
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IV. STEWARDSHIP OF GOD'S GIFTS: A WAY OF LIFE

Sunday collection volunteer

Fundraising volunteer

Various professionals:

Medical doctor

Plumber

Carpenter

Electrician

Computer software specialist

Computer hardware specialist

Parish grounds maintenance – landscaping volunteer

Parish building maintenance volunteer

Cleaning volunteer

Lawyer

Realtor

Mechanic

Auto / parish equipment maintenance volunteer

Parish Website maintenance volunteer

Graphic designer

Newsletter/bulletin work volunteer

Secretarial work volunteer

Office volunteer

Parish archivist

3. Pastoral and Financial Councils, Pastoral Planning

KEY POINTS:

- Two parish organizations are called to play an important role in the life of a parish.
 1. The PASTORAL COUNCIL assists and supports the pastor in planning and organizing the broader activity of the parish community.
 2. The FINANCIAL COUNCIL advises, assists and supports the pastor in financial and administrative matters.

Prospora baker
Families praying for special intentions
Church cleaning volunteer
Church decorator (eg. feast preparation)

Communion-Unity (*Koinonia*)

Parish photographer
Brotherhood member
Sisterhood member
Sunday coffee volunteer
New immigrant volunteer
Baby and child care during church event
Transportation for the immobile to church services and events
Ecumenical team member
Parish social committee member
Kitchen volunteer
Social media coordinator

Serving One's Neighbor (*Diakonia*)

Adult day care volunteer
AIDS program volunteer
PRO-LIFE ministry volunteer
Bereavement volunteer
Soup kitchen volunteer
Visiting elderly volunteer
Visiting sick volunteer
Visiting shut ins volunteer
Parish food bank volunteer
Needy children volunteer

Leadership-Stewardship

Financial Council member
Pastoral council member
Stewardship Committee/Team member
Auditor

The “VIBRANT PARISH” Prayer

O Lord Jesus Christ, our Good Shepherd, you became incarnate to find the lost sheep of your flock and preached the Gospel, so they might recognize Your voice. So also today graciously look down from heaven upon our parish community, and send down on it your Holy Spirit, that it might be a place to receive the joy of Your Good News. Strengthen us with your presence, and always gather us together in prayer. Grant us the spirit of serving others, so that in our parish all might encounter You, the merciful God. Bless our spiritual leaders with Your wisdom, and inspire us to generously give of our time, talents and treasure for the building up of Your Kingdom. Unite us in peace and harmony, as befits Your community of love. Instill in us a missionary spirit, and let our parish community shine with the light of the Gospel, with prayer and good works, inviting all to share in the divine life, so that Your Name, O Savior, may be praised, together with Your eternal Father, and your most-holy, good and life-giving Spirit. Amen.

“STEWARDSHIP OF DIVINE GIFTS – A CHRISTIAN WAY OF LIFE”

Appeal of the Working Group for the Realization of the Strategic Development of the UGCC till 2020

“We offer to You Yours of Your own on behalf of all and for all.”
(Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom)

The Synod of Bishops, gathered in Briukhovychi near Lviv in September 2014 continued its reflection on the strategic development plan of our Church, examining the theme of “Stewardship of Divine Gifts – a Christian Way of Life” as part of “The Vibrant Parish: a Place to Encounter the Living Christ” program.

In this appeal of the Working Group (for the Realization of the Strategic Development of the UGCC till 2020) we have collected the main thoughts expressed at the Synod of Bishops on a Christian understanding of stewardship. They should, first of all, strengthen our parish communities as well as our Church as a whole. But they should also be of benefit in the life of every Christian family and in our personal spiritual life, while reinforcing the Christian foundations and values of the lands where we may live.

I. STEWARDSHIP – GENERAL PRINCIPLES

1. *Every Gift is from God*

When we speak about “stewardship” in the Church, we speak of **the wise use of human** (natural and spiritual) as well as **material resources** for the **building up of the Kingdom of God**. Our Lord gives each of us a variety of gifts – time, talents

The Word of God and Catechisis

Catechist
Catechist assistant
Christian initiation instructor (for parents and godparents)
pre-Marriage instruction volunteer
Adult education facilitator
Bible study leader/member
Catechumenate team leader/member
Parish School volunteer
Youth group leader or coordinator
Young adult leader
Librarian / Media resource volunteer
Parish bookstore volunteer

Missionary Spirit

Evangelisation committee member
Visiting lapsed Catholics
Outreach to newly arrived
Outreach to the unbaptised
Parish Neighbourhood Outreach
Media relations volunteer
Parish hospitality (Ushers/greeters)

Liturgy and Prayer

Altar server
Liturgy Committee Member
Sacristan
Reader
Cantor
Choir member
Choir Director
Prayer group leader
Prayer group host
Prayer group member
Caretaker of vestments and linens

2. Concrete opportunities for stewardship based on the elements of the “Vibrant Parish”

“Remember, O Lord, those who bring offerings and do good works in Your holy churches, and who remember the poor. Reward them with Your riches and heavenly gifts of grace; for earthly things grant them heavenly ones; for temporal ones, eternal, for corruptible, incorruptible.”

(Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great)

KEY POINTS:

- All of us should ask ourselves: how can I contribute to making my parish “a place to encounter the Living Christ.” We can all contribute in ways, great and small.
- The best way to think about our commitment and involvement in the parish community is from the perspective of the priorities of “the Vibrant Parish,” especially its first three elements.
- Each parish needs to make a list of its needs and possibilities for pastoral action, and reach out to its members, asking them to consider offering their time and talents

PRACTICAL TIME-TALENT OPPORTUNITIES:

It is time to make a commitment. Can I see myself taking on responsibilities or engaging in

NOTE: The lists provided below are given as an example. Each parish is invited to use it, expanding or shortening it according to its concrete needs and possibilities for action.

and treasure (material acquisitions), a portion of which we should joyfully dedicate to the Church for the fulfillment of its mission on earth.

Stewardship of Divine gifts begins with an awareness that **everything comes from God and ultimately belongs to God**, and serves to give Him glory. At each Divine Liturgy we pray: “for all good giving and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from You, the Father of Lights.” The Church also encourages us in its services to “commend ourselves, and one another, and our whole life to Christ our God.”

We receive many gifts from God, but the most precious gift given the human race is **the gift of salvation in Jesus Christ**, the gift of participation in God’s Kingdom, the **gift of life in God**. Our human and material gifts are secondary to this greatest gift: “For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul? For what can a man give in return for his soul?” (Mk 8:36-37). Our Lord calls us to work together and share our God-given gifts for the establishment of His Kingdom, and our positive response to this calling requires **sacrifice, dedication and a sense of shared responsibility** for the life of the Church and her mission on earth.

2. The Mission of the Church

As His Beatitude Sviatoslav in his Pastoral Letter on the theme of “The Vibrant Parish: a Place to Encounter the Living Christ,” the Church fulfills **her mission** on earth primarily through: preaching the **Word of God and catechesis, Liturgy and prayer**, and **Serving one’s neighbor** through works of mercy and justice. These are the first elements not only of a “Vibrant Parish,” but also of the Church as a whole. To a great extent, the other elements – **Leadership-stewardship,**

Communion-unity and **Missionary spirit** – flow from the first three. The Word of God calls us to conversion and to a life in faith. Liturgy grants us the possibility to unite ourselves to the one sacrifice of our Lord, given on the Cross, and to give our life in sacrifice to God. Through works of mercy, *diakonia*, we allow others to experience how good the Lord is.

This mission of the Church is **not fulfilled theoretically or abstractly, but concretely** where we live in our own time, through actual people, called to various forms of service, using what is necessary from the material world. This world has been given to us for our benefit and good, and we for our part are called to **place it in God's service**, for the building up of a community of love and for spreading God's Kingdom where it has yet to be established.

3. Stewardship of God's Gifts is rooted in the Sacred Scriptures

The Holy Scriptures make several references to the theme of stewardship. Especially in the parable of the **just and unjust servant** (Lk 12:42-46) or in the **parable on the talents** (Mt 25:14-30, par. Lk 19:11-27) Jesus Christ helps us understand that God's gifts are given us not to be used solely for our benefit or glory. Rather, our Lord lends them to us for a limited time for the purpose of building up His Kingdom. We can never know when **the Lord will come to receive the fruit of our labor**.

The term which is most frequently used in the Sacred Scriptures in reference to the stewardship of Divine gifts is the Greek word, *oikonomos* (literally, "house-ruler") which is usually translated in English as "steward." For example, in the first universal letter of the Apostle Peter we read: "Show hospitality to one another without grumbling. As each has

the first and best portion of anything we acquire belongs to God (see 1 Cor 16:1-2).

- Might we not today commit ourselves to a modified form of tithing? Concretely: four hours per week dedicated to God's works. What we cannot offer in its monetary equivalent we should offer in time and talents.

QUESTIONS FOR PERSONAL REFLECTION:

For the Clergy

1. Do I support the activity of my parish from my personal funds?
2. Does the practice of tithing and the example of Prince Volodymyr apply to me (see Num 18, 24–26: tenth of a tenth!!!)
3. Do I foster in myself and in my parishioners an understanding that the first and best belongs to God?
4. Can I see a modified understanding of tithing in the broader sense of stewardship working in my parish? How would I encourage my parishioners to this type of giving?

For the Faithful Laity

1. Is the tithing example of St. Volodymyr the Great something that I should be emulating in my life?
2. What does it mean to me when we say that the first and best belongs to God?
3. Do I think that it's reasonable to expect that I donate one tenth of my time, talents and treasure to the building up of the Kingdom of God?
4. Do I trust God when it comes to my personal financial security? (Mt 6:33: "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.")?

For the Faithful Laity

1. Do I acknowledge as God's gift that which I have acquired through honest labor?
2. Do I have a sense of ownership for my parish and recognize my responsibility to financially support its mission?
3. How do I respond to special appeals, either from my Bishop, from His Beatitude or the Holy Father?
4. Do I judge others on the basis of how much or how little they give?
5. Do I teach generosity to my children and give them good example?

III. CONCRETE EXAMPLES OF PARISH STEWARDSHIP

1. *Tithing: four hours per week for the building up of the Kingdom of God*

"Every 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."

Lev 27:30

KEY POINTS:

- The biblical practice of tithing (offering one tenth of earning to the Lord) was practiced in early Christian Rus'-Ukraine, and indeed is still practiced in many Christian denominations today. Might we take another look at this practice, rethinking it in the context of a broader understanding of stewardship?
- St. Paul encourages generosity, as we have seen, but he doesn't specify amounts. It would seem, however, that the early Church had the same understanding found in the Old Testament: that

received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good *stewards* of God's varied grace." (1 Pt 4:10). Similarly, St. Paul writes: "This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and *stewards* of the mysteries of God. Moreover, it is required of *stewards* that they be found trustworthy." (1 Cor 4:1-2).

We aren't talking about janitors who are responsible for a building, or managers who run a business, although the term used in the New Testament has that meaning as well. "Stewards" here describes those who have been entrusted with **looking after God's house** and managing various human, that is natural and spiritual gifts, as well as material resources needed for building up His Kingdom.

This becomes clearer when we examine how the Scriptures use the related term *oikonomia*, from which comes the word "economy." First of all this word is used in reference to **God's plan of salvation** for the human race, **fulfilled in Jesus Christ**. St. Paul thus writes to the Ephesians: "In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ as a plan (*oikonomia*) for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth" (Eph 1:7-10). The Apostle of the Nations speaks of himself, that he "became a minister according to **the stewardship (*oikonomia*) from God that was given to me** for you, to make the word of God fully known" (Col 1:25).

Therefore, we can say that the "economy of salvation" refers to: 1) God's plan of salvation for humankind, 2) the fulfillment of this plan in Jesus Christ, and 3) our participation in God's plan by the power and action of the Holy Spirit. It is

He who bestows upon us many gifts so that all might be perfected in God.

4. Stewardship of Divine gifts – Our Shared Responsibility

It would be a grave mistake to think that the stewardship of gifts for the fulfillment of the Church's mission applies only to bishops and priests. Church leadership is necessary and has its place. However, in Christ's Church **all of us, without exception, are called to responsible stewardship** of gifts for the building up of the Kingdom of God. St. Paul explains this nicely when he speaks of **different members in the one Body of Christ**: "For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness" (Rom 12:4-8).

As one human body has different organs, and each is necessary and has a function, so also each member of the Christian community has something specific with which he or she can serve in establishing God's Kingdom. In the Church, there are different individuals, **each one having his or her purpose** and bringing benefit to the Body of Christ. This applies to the young and old, to men and women, to laity and clergy, to religious and, naturally, to bishops. All of us have our gifts which we must offer for the glory of God.

In the Church every leader, be it a bishop, a priest, or the superior of a religious order, has his or her gifts. However,

- If time and talents are a gift, then the material compensation which is produced by their application should be seen as a gift as well.
- The Church is called to act in this world and cannot fulfill her mission without a material foundation.
- The Christian community may find the material resources it needs in the form of an unsolicited gift. It may produce something of value or offer services for which it can justly seek compensation. However, for the most part the Church must ask for donations.
- Not only does a parish need the financial and material support of its members, but so does an Eparchy and the Church as a whole.
- St. Paul encouraged early Christians to be generous: "...for God loves a cheerful giver" (2 Cor 9:6-8).
- The Christian community must always receive with gratitude, never judging a person's generosity based on the size of the gift.

QUESTIONS FOR PERSONAL REFLECTION:

For the Clergy

1. Do I practice evangelical poverty appropriate to my clerical state?
2. Do I manage my personal financial affairs in a manner that is proper to God's gift?
3. Am I open about the finances of the parish community where I serve in order to encourage my parishioners to develop a sense of ownership for its mission?
4. Do I encourage my parishioners to give generously when called to do so by my Bishop or His Beatitude?
5. Do I show appreciation for every gift, both large and small, donated to the parish community or to me personally?

For the Clergy

1. Do I have a realistic awareness of my natural and spiritual gifts-talents?
2. Do I seek to develop my natural gifts and talents for the good of the community I serve?
3. Am I a leader who encourages or discourages others to share their gifts-talents? How does this look in actual practice?
4. Do I seek to have my eyes open to recognize spiritual gifts in my community, especially the gift of vocations to the priestly and religious state?

For the Faithful Laity

1. What are my natural talents and do I share them with my parish community?
2. Do I pray for discernment, so that I may grow in spiritual gifts and be open to sharing them with others?
3. Do I recognize the spiritual gifts of my pastor and my fellow parishioners? What are these gifts? How do I show my appreciation for these gifts?

3. Stewardship of Treasure (material resources)

“...Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work.”

2 Cor 9:6-8

KEY POINTS:

every leader also has his or her limitations, inadequacies, and weaknesses. This isn't some oversight. On the contrary, it is by Divine design. **Our Lord calls us to unity, cooperation and joint action**, in the example and image of the Most Holy Trinity. Let us remind ourselves that every perfect gift is from the Heavenly Father. His greatest gift, the gift of salvation, the Father enacts through his Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, and then throughout history through the Holy Spirit, who sanctifies Christ's Church, granting her members various gifts for the fulfillment of God's plan of salvation. If the Heavenly Father, who lacks nothing, calls the Son and Spirit to cooperation and joint action, how much more are we called to do the same.

In the ordination service, the presiding bishop prays thus: “Divine grace, which always heals the infirm, and supplements what is wanting...” Not one of us possesses everything that is necessary for work in Christ's vineyard. **Our Lord supplements that which is wanting in us**, the bishops, through other members of his Body – priests-pastors, religious and laity. Every priest-pastor should have a similar understanding of his limitations. But it is also important to remember that **the Holy Spirit always supplies the Church with all that is needed!** We must merely trust Him and work together, so that that the different gifts He provides might bear fruit for the common good: “Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good” (1 Cor 12:4-7).

II. STEWARDSHIP OF GIFTS – TIME, TALENTS AND TREASURE

There are many ways to describe God's gifts, but in the last few decades, the Church has been speaking of three kinds of gifts: time, talents and treasure (material gifts).

1. Stewardship of Time

Time is a unique **gift from God**. It is given to each person, although **not all receive it equally**: some receive more time, others less. Unlike money – it cannot be accumulated, unlike talents – increased, unlike material goods – conserved. It is a resource that we are forced to expend according to an established order: sixty seconds per minute, sixty minutes per hour. It can't be turned on or off like some machine, or replaced like some laborer. It is a non-renewable resource. Once it is used, it recedes in the past and **cannot be reacquired or exchanged**. We have but one chance to use this resource. Whether we use it wisely or waste it depends on us. If we use our time wisely then this resource can become our servant. However, if we use it foolishly then we become its slave. We are called to be stewards of our time, and not its slaves!

Usually we think of **time in a chronological sense**, focusing on how much and in what order (quantity and sequence), which is the meaning of the Greek word *chronos*: one second after another, minute by minute, hour after hour, day after day, year after year, century after century. However, there is another way of looking at time – not by our watch or calendar, but by its quality and nature. In the Scriptures, we find another word for time, the Greek word *kairos*, which sometimes is translated as "season" (for example., Gen 1:14: seasons of the year). In the New Testament, this word takes on a deeper meaning. ***Kairos* becomes favorable time,**

2. Stewardship of Talents

"And he who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five talents more, saying, 'Master, you delivered to me five talents; here I have made five talents more.' His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.'"

Mat 25:20-21

KEY POINTS:

- When we look at our Christian community we can see that God bestowed us with many talents. We should ask God for discernment on how to best use these talents for His glory.
- We have *natural* talents, intellectual and physical, which we can and should develop throughout our lives.
- We receive our *spiritual* talents from the Holy Spirit. They allow us to act with a sense of not our, but God's will, and move us to serve our neighbor for the sake of the Gospel.
- The Church speaks of the Gifts of the Holy Spirit (Isa 11:1-3) and also provides us with some tools to recognize when the Holy Spirit bears fruit through us and others (Gal 5:22–23).
- The Christian community needs both spiritual and natural gifts to fulfill its mission.
- We need to be able to offer our talents to the Christian community. No skill or ability is too small to be given back to God.
- Whatever we offer should be given in a spirit of thanksgiving to God, recognizing in Him the source of all that is good in us.

QUESTIONS FOR PERSONAL REFLECTION:

- There are moments when we can experience this transformation of time, especially in the liturgical life of the Church: the eternal salvation offered in Jesus Christ is made present “here, today for us.”
- We need to examine how we manage time in our personal lives.
- We need to “make time” for God, dedicating a portion of our time each week for God’s community of faithful.

QUESTIONS FOR PERSONAL REFLECTION:

For the Clergy

1. How do I foster an understanding of time as a gift from God?
2. Do I practice good personal time management skills or do I find myself foolishly wasting time?
3. When I am engaged in ministry do I have a proper sense of God’s *kairos* and seek to help my parishioners experience the presence of the eternal mystery of salvation here and now?
4. Do I encourage others to offer their gift of time in the parish community? How do I do this?

For the Faithful Laity

1. In what ways do I, as a Christian, experience time as a gift from God?
2. Do I practice good personal time management or do I often find myself wasting time on things that really don’t matter?
3. In what ways do I use my personal time to serve others?
4. In what ways do I offer my gift of time to help build up my parish community?

supernatural time, the time of invitation and salvation, that is, **God’s time**. This time, *kairos*, entered human history with the incarnation of Jesus Christ and began working among us: “The time (*kairos*) is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel” (Mk 1:15). St. Paul speaks of the “fullness of time” (see Gal 4:4), that is, of human *chronos* which in Christ becomes God’s *kairos*. After centuries of expectation, the Messiah came and opened a new age for humankind, laying out for us the path to eternity.

There are moments in our lives when **we can experience this *kairos* ourselves**. For example, the **liturgical life of the Church** grants us the opportunity to reach beyond chronological time and enter into God’s time. In a mystical manner, the one Sacrifice of the One High Priest, Jesus Christ, offered once and for all, is **made present here, today, for us**. The liturgical reading of the Gospel, which we frequently begin with the words “at that time” calls on us to adapt Christ’s teaching here and now, **in THIS time!** The liturgical year also grants us the possibility of experiencing *kairos* in our lives. We celebrate the very same feasts year after year, entering **ever deeper into the eternal mystery of salvation**. This experience reminds us that time is gifted to us, so that we might make it holy (sanctify it), in a variety of ways.

To be a good steward of the gift of time **in our personal lives** means to use it in order to do good (the only thing we can take with us to our grave!), to spend the necessary time both with those who are dear to us – for example, with our family – as well as with those we might meet for the first time, our neighbor in the Gospel sense of the word (see Lk 10:30-37, the parable of the Good Samaritan). We must set aside time for spiritual reading, and for conversations with our

children about divine truths. My must take care to sanctify time through our participation in the services of the Church, and by spending time alone with God, just as our Lord did throughout his life on earth. We must also set aside time for those who are desperate to hear a good or kind word, who suffer from loneliness; to help those who can't seem to get their lives in order. Here we should also mention stewardship of our own bodies. Do we take care of our health and avoid doing ourselves harm? For while it is true that we cannot add to our time here on earth, we can certainly cut it short by abusing our bodies. As Ecclesiastes writes: "For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven" (3:1). Everything has its time – even rest!

In the life of the Church, especially **in parish life**, to be good stewards of our time means to dedicate a portion of our time each week for God's community of faithful: by participating in the mission of the Church for the study of divine truths, for community prayer, for community acts of charity. The Christian community is made up of concrete individuals who together discuss things of God and act together. We need to participate in conversations about the activity of our parish community, and sacrifice our time for its fulfillment. How often in life do we refuse something, claiming: "I have no time!"? It always seems that we don't have enough time for all that needs to be done. However, **for the things of God we must "make" time!** St. Paul teaches: "Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is" (Eph 5:15-17).

2. Stewardship of Talents

1. How do I understand my calling to be an active member in the Body of Christ?
2. Have I ever asked myself what my gifts might be, and asked in prayer for the Lord to show me how I might use those gifts?
3. How do the words of St. Paul apply to me when he speaks about all Christians using their gifts "for the common good" (1 Cor 12:7)

II. STEWARDSHIP OF GIFTS – TIME, TALENTS AND TREASURE

1. Stewardship of Time

"Working together with him, then, we appeal to you not to receive the grace of God in vain. For he says, "In a favorable time I listened to you, and in a day of salvation I have helped you." Behold, now is the favorable time; behold, now is the day of salvation."

2 Cor 6:1-2

KEY POINTS:

- Time is a unique gift, given to all, but not in equal measure.
- Time is a non-renewable resource: it cannot be reacquired or exchanged. We must choose whether to use it wisely or waste it.
- We usually think of time in a chronological sense, but the Scriptures also have a different understanding of time from God's perspective of eternity. With the coming of Christ chronological time is called to be transformed into supernatural time, the time of invitation and salvation, that is, God's time. Frequently the Greek word *kairos* (sometimes translated as "season") is used in this sense.

KEY POINTS:

- Christian Stewardship involves all members of the Church, and not just the bishops and clergy.
- St. Paul teaches us that we are all members of one Body (see Rom 12:4-8) and that in the Church each person has his or her purpose.
- All of us have gifts and blessings, but also limitations, inadequacies, and weaknesses. That is why we are called to work together, supplementing in one another that which is lacking.
- We need to trust the Holy Spirit, who always supplies the Church with all that is needed for her to fulfill its mission.
- We have different gifts, perform different services and activities. To each is given the manifestation of the Holy Spirit “for the common good” (see 1 Cor 12:4-7)

QUESTIONS FOR PERSONAL REFLECTION:

For the Clergy

1. How do I understand Christian leadership? Is this a burden I feel I must carry alone, or do I find ways of sharing it within the parish community?
2. Do I have a good awareness of my personal gifts and limitations?
3. Am I able to invite others to supplement that which is lacking in me for the building up of the parish community?

For the Faithful Laity

People have many different talents. Some have organizational skills, speaking abilities, are able to teach, write well, can sing or have other musical talents. Others can type quickly on a keyboard, take brilliant photographs or videos. Some have a sense of the beauty of God’s house and can sweep, clean and look after things. Still other have creative gifts: paint, sculpt, build. Among us there are many professionals: artists, tailors, gardeners, engineers, doctors, veterinarians, mechanics, electricians, accountants, nurses, etc.

Truly, **God has bestowed us with many talents**, and all Christians should ask themselves: what are my talents? Then we should ask God in prayer to indicate to us, how we might **best use these talents for his glory**. We all have a responsibility for our talents and blessings. What our Lord teaches us in the parable on the talents (Mt 25:14-30) applies to each of us, whether we receive five, two or just one. One day we will all have to **give a report on how we used our gifts**, whether we buried, neglected, forgot to apply, wasted or used them solely for our own benefit and glory.

What gifts are we talking about? We can distinguish between natural and supernatural (spiritual) gifts. We receive **our natural gifts at birth** – each of us can and should work on and **develop these gifts**, both intellectual and physical. When we develop our natural talents and abilities, we foster our natural God-given gifts. It is for this reason that the Church is not indifferent to various schools and programs. We should remember that the Church founded the first universities!

Our **spiritual gifts we receive from the Holy Spirit**, and they allow us to act with a sense of not our, but God’s will, and move us to serve our neighbor for the sake of the Gospel.

In the Book of the prophet Isaiah, we read: “And there shall come forth a rod out of the root of Jesse, and a blossom shall come up from his root: and the Spirit of God shall rest upon him, the spirit of **wisdom** and **understanding**, the spirit of **counsel** and **strength**, the spirit of **knowledge** and **godliness** shall fill him; the spirit of the **fear of God**” (Isa 11:1-3). These gifts, attributed first to Christ, the Messiah, are proposed in the Church as “gifts of the Holy Spirit” which we should ask for in prayer, even though often they are given to us unexpectedly and unrequested. We can recognize spiritual talents by their fruits. St. Paul writes of this in his Epistle to the Galatians: “But the fruit of the Spirit is **love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control**; against such things there is no law” (Gal 5:22–23). When we encounter such characteristics in the course of our lives, this is a sign that the Holy Spirit is acting in our midst.

In the Christian community, both **spiritual and natural gifts are needed for the fulfillment of its mission**. Often people think that what they have or are able to do is imperfect and, therefore, unsuitable. Sometimes in the Church people don't offer their talents for the simple reason that no one has ever asked them or encouraged them to do so. Today the Church is asking and encouraging us: foster within yourselves all that is good, and **offer to the Christian community all that you can**, for it is truly needed. There is so much work in the Lord's vineyard, and certainly everything can't be accomplished by priests alone, much less by the Bishops. Let us foster a **spirit of thanksgiving to God** for our gifts and always seek, in small and great ways, to support our parish community with our God-given gifts: “And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the

QUESTIONS FOR PERSONAL REFLECTION:

For the Clergy

1. I have often preached on the Parable of the Talents (16th Sunday after Pentecost: Mt 25:14-30). Who am I in that parable?
2. Would I be able to present the fruits of my ministry if I were called on by the Lord to do so this very day?
3. Do I share St. Paul's understanding ministry as serving God's great plan of salvation?
4. Am I worthy of being trusted to care for a house that is not mine?

For the Faithful Laity

1. Which of the servants best describes me in the Parable of the Talents (Mt 25:14-30)?
2. What does it mean when we say that our life and all the things we possess are given to us “on loan” from God?
3. Am I a “good steward of God's varied grace” in my personal and family life, in my parish community?

4. Stewardship of Divine gifts – Our Shared Responsibility

“For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.”

Rom 12:4-8

For the Faithful Laity

1. Have the priorities of the “Vibrant Parish” (Word of God and Catechesis, Liturgy and Prayer, Serving One’s Neighbor, Leadership-Stewardship, Communion-Unity, Missionary Spirit) become a priority for my personal and family life? In what ways?
2. Do I understand that I am called to help build the Kingdom of God in my time and where I live?
3. Am I committed to do my part in placing the world at the service of God and His plan of salvation for humankind?

3. Stewardship of God’s Gifts is rooted in the Sacred Scriptures

“As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God’s varied grace”.

1 Pt 4:10

KEY POINTS:

- Our understanding of Christian Stewardship is rooted in Sacred Scripture
- Texts such as the parable of the just and unjust servant (Lk 12:42-46) or the parable on the talents (Mt 25:14-30, par. Lk 19:11-27) emphasize that we are caretakers of the gifts of the Kingdom of God, not its owners.
- The Greek word *oikonomos* (literally: “house-ruler”) is used in texts, such as 1 Pt 4:10 (good *stewards* of God’s varied grace) and 1 Cor 4:1-2 (*stewards* of the mysteries of God... it is required of *stewards* that they be found trustworthy).
- In the New Testament we also find mention of *oikonomia*, used in reference to: 1) God’s plan of salvation for the human race, 2) the fulfillment of that plan in Jesus Christ, 3) our participation and responsibility in the fulfillment of that plan.

Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him” (Col 3:17).

Sometimes a large community has greater possibilities, and can employ laborers, at least in some key areas. However, a great number of our parishes don’t have such a possibility, and must rely on **many volunteers**. Let us not deny God our talents and abilities. Remember that the value and significance of our gifts-talents are in that we use them not for ourselves, but for others and for the community of the saints, that is, for the Kingdom of God. It is, after all, God’s Kingdom, not ours. Our Lord makes us **co-responsible** for its realization in our time and place.

3. Stewardship of Treasure (material resources)

All human beings are called to apply their talents (professional, natural and even spiritual) through **work in the time they are given**. If one works for another, except in the case volunteerism, then he or she has a **right to compensation**. Even St. Paul writes: “Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due” (Rom 4:4). If we consider that talents and time are gifts from God, it follows that the compensation, which is produced from their application, should **also be understood as God’s gift**. This way of thinking is expressed by St. Paul when he writes: “What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, as the Lord assigned to each. I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth” (1 Cor 3:5–7).

We are not angels, but physical beings, and we have physical needs which must be met for our survival: clothing, food, a roof over our heads. In a similar way, the Church must

act in this world and **cannot fulfill her mission without a material foundation**. This foundation, however, cannot run counter to or diminish the spiritual foundation upon which the Body of Christ on earth is founded.

Where do we find the material resources needed to fulfill our mission? We know from our own experience that sometimes donations just come, unexpectedly, **as gift**. Individuals may donate to the Church simply for the reason that they feel it is a “worthy cause,” worth supporting. Sometimes the Church **manufactures something or offers some services** for which it receives payment. As a social institution, it has a right and responsibility to conscientiously and wisely buy, sell and invest her resources, according to her mission and needs. It is best when such income is tied to the mission of the Church (organizing pilgrimages, running retreat homes, publishing religious literature, etc.).

For the most part **the Church must ask for donations**, in order to support both her everyday activities as well as engage in special projects (e.g., the building of a church). Most Christians understand their responsibility to **support their priest and parish**. But not many focus on the needs of the Church at **the eparchial and patriarchal levels**, which are equally necessary. At the same time every member of the Church has the right to be convinced that his or her donations bear good fruit. When the faithful laity is able to recognize that the Church is truly fulfilling her mission, then **the Lord will move their hearts to give generously**.

St. Paul thus encourages the faithful of Corinth to donate to the Church in Jerusalem: “The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must give as he

the first three elements a priority in its life and mission: preaching the **Word of God and Catechesis, Liturgy and Prayer, and Serving One’s Neighbor** through works of mercy and justice.

- The other elements flow from the first three. They focus on who does the work and with what resources (**Leadership-Stewardship**), on how and why we fulfill our mission (with a sense of **Communion-Unity**), always mindful of the Gospel mandate to preach the Kingdom of God to the world (**Missionary Spirit**).
- This is **not a theoretical or abstract mission**, but one that is fulfilled concretely in our own time and where we live by actual people, by US!
- It is our calling and mission to **place the gifts we have received in God’s service**.

QUESTIONS FOR PERSONAL REFLECTION:

For the Clergy

1. If the elements of the “Vibrant Parish” summarize the mission of the Church, in my priestly ministry do I give them priority? Would I be able to number them from memory without the aid of a written list (= a sign that they truly are a priority for me!)?
2. How do the mission priorities of the “Vibrant Parish” (Word of God and Catechesis, Liturgy and Prayer, Serving One’s Neighbor, Leadership-Stewardship, Communion-Unity, Missionary Spirit) describe both my personal vocation as priest, as well as the vocation of the community which I lead?
3. Do I understand the awesome responsibility of being called to fulfill the unchanging mission of Church to build the Kingdom of God in my particular time, and where I live and serve?

3. Do I try to help my faithful foster an awareness of God's ownership over all of creation and understand that everything we are and have is a gift from God?

4. Do I truly have a sense of the gift of salvation in Jesus Christ, and does the joy of this gift come through in my priestly ministry?

For the Faithful Laity

1. My life is not my own but God's. What does this phrase say to me?

2. Do I try to foster an awareness of God's ownership over all of creation? How?

3. If everything we are and have is a gift from God, how does that impact my life as a Christian?

4. What does the gift of salvation in Jesus Christ mean to me? Is there anything more important for me in my life?

5. When in the Liturgy we are encouraged "to commend ourselves and one another and our whole life to Christ our God" how does this phrase speak to me personally?

2. The Mission of the Church

The Word of God calls us to conversion and to a life in faith. Liturgy grants us the possibility to unite ourselves to the one sacrifice of our Lord, given on the Cross, and to give our life in sacrifice to God. Through works of mercy, *diakonia*, we allow others to experience how good the Lord is.

KEY POINTS:

- The **six elements of "The Vibrant Parish: a Place to Encounter the Living Christ"** should always be present in our minds and hearts.
- Every parish community, no matter how small, is called to make

has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work" (2 Cor 9:6-8).

The Lord Himself calls upon the Christian community to **receive every donation with gratitude**, and cautions us not to judge a person's generosity based on the size of the gift: "And he sat down opposite the treasury and watched the people putting money into the offering box. Many rich people put in large sums. And a poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which make a penny. 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 offering box. For they all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on" (Mk 12:41-44). Every Christian community, together with its bishop or priest, understands that people often make donations to the Church while denying themselves of some need or pleasure.

III. CONCRETE EXAMPLES OF PARISH STEWARDSHIP

The question arises spontaneously: how much should I give?

1. Tithing: four hours per week for the building up of the Kingdom of God

The biblical practice of tithing (offering one tenth of one's earning to the Lord) was considered **the ideal in the first years**

of Christian life on Ukrainian lands (it is sufficient to mention the example of the “Church of the Tithes” in Kyivan Rus’). In the Book of Leviticus we read: “Every 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**” (Lev 27:30; see Num 18:24–26; Dt 14:22–26). Although the practice of tithing never became part of ecclesial culture in Christian Rus’-Ukraine, might we not take another look at this practice, rethinking it in the context of a **broader understanding of stewardship**?

We know from the Gospel how our Lord approached tithing: “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others” (Mt 23:23). The early Church did not specify an amount, but continued to follow the Old Testament understanding that **the first and best portion of anything we acquire belongs to God**. In the first letter to the Corinthians, St. Paul encourages them to take up a collection for the needs of the Church in Jerusalem: “Now concerning the collection for the saints: as I directed the churches of Galatia, so you also are to do. On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up, as he may prosper, so that there will be no collecting when I come” (1 Cor 16:1-2).

Bearing in mind the biblical practice of tithing, the notable example of prince Volodymyr, equal-to-the-apostles, and our understanding of God’s gifts, might we not today **commit ourselves to a modified form of tithing**? Concretely, if we take into account that the average person works 40 hours per week, that would translate into **four hours per week dedicated to God’s works** (in addition to our participation in

I. STEWARDSHIP – GENERAL PRINCIPLES

1. *Every Gift is from God*

Stewardship of Divine gifts begins with an awareness that **everything comes from God and ultimately belongs to God**, and serves to give Him glory. At each Divine Liturgy we pray: “for all good giving and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from You, the Father of Lights.” The Church also encourages us in its services to “commend ourselves, and one another, and our whole life to Christ our God.”

KEY POINTS:

- A simple definition of Stewardship: the **wise use of human** (natural and spiritual) **as well as material resources for the building up of the Kingdom of God**.
- Stewardship begins with an **awareness that everything comes from God** and ultimately belongs to God.
- The most important gift we have received is that of **salvation in Jesus Christ**
- That gift requires our response: **sacrifice, dedication and a sense of shared responsibility** for the life of the Church and her mission on earth.

QUESTIONS FOR PERSONAL REFLECTION:

For the Clergy

1. Do I understand my life as being not my own, but God’s?
2. St. Paul writes, “It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me (Gal 2:20). How does my priestly ministry reflect these words?

KEY POINTS AND REFLECTION QUESTIONS

“We offer to You Yours of Your own on behalf of all and for all.”
(Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom)

INTRODUCTION

“Remember, O Lord, those who bear fruit doing good works in Your holy churches and remembering the poor. Send down Your mercy upon all of us.”

(Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom)

KEY POINTS:

- At the Synod in September 2014 our Bishops dedicated considerable time to reflect on “Stewardship of Divine Gifts – a Christian Way of Life.” They would like to share key aspects of that reflection with the clergy and faithful laity of our Church.
- Developing a good understanding of Christian stewardship will help us strengthen not only our parish communities, but also our personal spiritual lives, our families, our Church as a whole.
- We live in an increasingly secular society, and so good Christian Stewardship will help reinforce those Christian foundations and values, which modern society increasingly seems to forget or neglect.

the Liturgy on Sunday and holydays). Yes, a portion can be donated in its monetary equivalent (the wages of one hour per week should be the absolute minimum). However, each member of the Christian community should offer the other two-three hours per week in time and talents.

2. Concrete opportunities for stewardship based on the elements of the “Vibrant Parish”

If my parish is called to be “a place to encounter the living Christ,” how can I contribute to its mission? Taking into account the first three elements of the “Vibrant Parish” we can easily think of a few examples: Word of God and Catechesis – work in catechetical schools, participation in a variety of study groups (bible, catechetical, etc.), distribution or sale of religious literature on a volunteer basis, etc; Liturgy and Prayer – membership in different prayer groups, participation in the church choir, participation in parish, eparchial or regional pilgrimages, prayer for various needs of the Church, etc.; Serving one’s neighbor (*diakonia*) – visiting the sick, offering food or work in a parish soup kitchen, collection of clothes or medicine for the needy. Every parish is called to make such a list according to all the elements of the “Vibrant parish” and expand it taking into account its needs and possibilities for pastoral action.

3. Pastoral and Financial Councils, Pastoral Planning

In the stewardship of God’s gifts in a parish, two councils – pastoral and financial – are called to play an important role. The **Pastoral Council** assists the pastor not only in planning the calendar year, but also in supporting the broader activity of the parish, taking into account its mission, local needs and possibilities for pastoral action. With this in mind, our Church has published a **Handbook for Pastoral**

Planning that is already bearing good fruit in the stewardship of gifts. If a church community has few or limited material resources, it must prioritize its activities according to what is necessary and what is useful. It must find resources to implement that which is necessary. That which is good or useful it can finance, if resources are available.

Our Lord Jesus Christ often spoke of wise stewards. Stewardship of treasure means being good managers and administrators. In the Church, not every person in a leadership position is a professional accountant or financial specialist. That is why Canon law mandates the creation of a parish **Financial Council** and requires the pastor to seek out the cooperation of specialists in financial and administrative questions. The finances of the Church are not some kind of ecclesial secret, but the possession of the People of God. That is why you, dear brothers and sisters, have a right to know the material status of the Church: it is necessary so that you might also have a sense of your responsibility to support its mission in material matters.

IV. STEWARDSHIP OF GOD'S GIFTS – A WAY OF LIFE

The stewardship of God's gifts is not just some program. It is **a way of life** and a continuous **process of conversion** in order to make God a priority in our lives. It requires a **spirit of sacrifice** and a **readiness to share** of one's time, talents and treasure with the Church for the implementation of its mission. Stewardship means having a **sense of our "civic" responsibility in the Body of Christ**. Although all Christians might have citizenship in this or that country, all of us by virtue of Holy Baptism have a second, spiritual citizenship in the Kingdom of God, which for us Christians must be a

priority, for our earthly citizenship is temporary, but our spiritual one is eternal.

We aren't proposing anything new here, since the Church of Christ has always exercised stewardship over her many gifts. From the earliest times the laity, religious and clergy generously have given of their time, talents and treasure for Christ's sake. Although until now we haven't spoken in these terms, we already practice Christian stewardship, which is **the Gospel in action by concrete individuals, in a concrete place, in a specific time**, with those gifts-resources, which God has given us.

Let us open our hearts to God! Let us discover His gifts and, as good stewards, let us share them in the building up of the Heavenly Kingdom and "the place to encounter the living Christ."

+ Ken

Bishop of New Westminster

Head of the Working Group

*for the Realization of the Strategic Development
of the UGCC till 2020*