

# *What is a member in Good Standing at St. John the Divine?*

## **WHAT IS THE CHURCH?**

The Church is a treasury, a storehouse of centuries of accumulated experience and wisdom in man's attempt to relate to God and other men. The heritage of the church stretches back to Moses, David, Jesus and the Apostles, and comes down to us today. Those of us who cherish this Christian heritage have an obligation to pass it on to future generations.

To be a Christian means to be part of the Church. To ignore the church or to use the church only for occasional ceremonies means that we have greatly misunderstood its purpose.

## **ECCLESIASTICAL MEMBERSHIP**

The fulfillment of our commitment to the Church last of all includes our commitment to live within the canonical standards which the Church has established as normative for the life of every Orthodox Christian. Such standards are not intended as limits upon our freedom but should rather be understood as constituting the very basis for the communal life of the Orthodox Church.

### **This means that we:**

- Have been baptized in the name of the Holy Trinity
- Have been confirmed (chrismated) in the Eastern Orthodox Christian Church
- Have had our marriage blessed in the Eastern Orthodox Church by a canonical Orthodox Priest.
- Participate regularly in the Holy Sacraments of Confession, Holy Communion, Holy Unction and attend faithfully the Divine Liturgy as well as the other services of the Church.
- Observe the prescribed Fast-Days in a proper manner, as the tradition of the Church teaches.
- Observe the Cannons, Teachings and Traditions of the Orthodox Church.

## **CHURCH MEMBERSHIP**

The Special Regulations and **Uniform Parish Regulations of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America** defines membership as the following:

“Any person, eighteen years of age or older, who was baptized according to the rites of the Church, or who was received into the Church through chrismation, who lives according to the faith and canons of the Church, who has met his or her stewardship obligation (part of which is to meet his or her stewardship financial obligation to the Parish) and abides by the regulations herein and the by-laws of the parish, except that a person under twenty-one shall not serve on the parish council when such service is contrary to local law.”

**St. John the Divine Greek Orthodox Church Parish By-Laws** (approved by General Assembly of SJTD) defines membership as the following:

“Any person, eighteen years of age or over, who was baptized according to the rites of the Church, or was received into the Church through Chrismation, who lives according to the Faith and canons of the Church, abides by the Uniform Parish Regulations and these appended by-laws, and fulfills his or her financial obligation to the Parish, and cooperates in every way towards the well-being of the Parish is a member in good standing of the Parish.

The definition of “fulfilling one’s financial obligation to the Parish” is by necessity a flexible one. Generally, for purposes of voting in Parish Assemblies and elections, one is considered to have

## *What is a member in Good Standing at St. John the Divine?*

fulfilled his or her stewardship and financial obligations to the Parish if he or she has pledged and paid an amount certain for the year prior to the current year and has pledged an amount to the Parish for the current year.”

Once someone turns 18, they no longer fall under parent’s membership, including college students; and must comply with these regulations set by the Archdiocese and Local by-laws.

The responsibilities of membership may be divided into the fulfillment of three distinct areas of commitment to Christ and to His Church:

- (1) our liturgical/worship fulfillment (regularly)
- (2) our stewardship fulfillment (yearly)
- (3) our canonical fulfillment. (life-long)

### **LITURGICAL COMMITMENT**

The fulfillment of our liturgical commitment to the Church requires our regular participation in the services and sacraments of the Church. Without such a commitment to participation in the Church’s life, one cannot be a Christian in any meaningful sense of the word. As our Lord said, “Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you . . . he who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him” (John 6:54, 56). It is therefore essential that each person commit themselves to frequent participation in the Holy Eucharist (Communion), as well as regular participation in the Sacrament of Confession. Any questions regarding one’s participation in these sacraments should be referred to our parish priest, Fr. Nicholas Louh, or to one’s own spiritual father. Furthermore, it is important that each person commit themselves to participation in the other services of the Church, including Wednesday services, Sunday morning Orthros, feast-day liturgies, and the other regular and occasional services offered by the Church, as well as following the Church’s calendar of fasting and feasting.

### **STEWARDSHIP**

A steward of God is one who realizes that all is God’s, and that the beholder is simply a temporary financial minister. Our conscious must dictate our financial support of our Church. With the Stewardship Pledge System, we must return to God only what is His. We are called upon to be caretakers and stewards of these gifts. "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness hereof." Stewardship is learning how to be responsible and concerned caretakers of Christ's Church. It is our active commitment to use all our time, talent, and treasure for the benefit of humankind. Stewardship is caring for the needs of others.

Fulfillment of our commitment to Christ and to the Church also requires the stewardship of our resources in a manner which follows with the precepts of the Gospel. This includes a commitment on our part to support the local Church through the offering of our financial resources as well as of our own unique gifts and talents. In order to be a “member in good standing” of Greek Orthodox Church of Holy Trinity, each person over 18, or (if married family) must make a financial commitment (pledge) to the church on an annual basis and fulfill that commitment throughout the year. Members are encouraged to use a “percentage giving” method, whereby each person or family sets aside a certain percentage of their income for the church. It is understood that situations change, and unforeseen events arise; a pledge may therefore be amended by simply calling the Church office. It should be emphasized, moreover, that our stewardship commitment goes far beyond financial matters; it is rather a commitment of the totality of life to God. Stewardship, therefore, also includes volunteering to serve on church committees, helping to organize and execute church functions, singing in the choir, teaching Sunday School, cleaning and maintaining the Church, and other forms of ministry; it is engagement in the total life of the church.