

## **“LET’S GET READY TO RUMBLE! WELCOME TO THE MAIN EVENT(S).”**

By Bill Marianes<sup>1</sup>

*“WHEW, I’m certainly glad that’s over. Now I can get back to normal.”* This sentiment is perhaps one of the most widely felt emotions, generally in the Fall, in most Orthodox Parishes in America. It follows the 2 “Main Events” we frequently dread in our church lives, namely our Stewardship Sunday and ethnic festival.

Somehow, people we never see during the year magically get their GPS navigation systems to again find their church solely during the day they will attend (and maybe work) their ethnic church festival. And then, as if Harry Houdini and David Copperfield attended our parishes, these “part-timers” become like groundhogs that show us their shadows as they disappear until next year.

On the other hand, Stewardship Sunday strikes fear in the hearts and minds of many parishioners even more than having to go to confession. Someone might actually ask us to account for what we have done with the gifts God gave us. But thankfully for most, the traveling magic show comes into the pews on only one Sunday, with much fanfare, new slick banners, brochures and slogans, and then disappears just as quickly.

Imagine if God only showed up and gave us His gifts one Sunday, or weekend, a year and then He disappeared and left us completely on our own with no food, nothing to drink, no sunshine, etc. Our Lord gives us unconditional love and gifts every second of every day of our lives. Without His gifts we could not exist. The breath of oxygen you just inhaled and the lungs you used to process it to stay alive were both gifts from your Father. And yet we somehow think our stewardship can be relegated to one Stewardship Sunday or weekend of gyro making and baklava slinging.

My simple definition is: “Stewardship is what you do with all of the gifts God gave you.” Nothing more complicated than that. Everything we have is a gift from our Father. And these gifts are ours for only the limited time we are here on this earth. And yet we sometimes forget that what we do with those gifts is one of the measures of whether or not our souls are prepared for salvation and the hoped-for eternal life of theosis and oneness with our Lord and Savior.

Stewardship is a way of life. It is what we do every second, minute, hour and day of our life. It isn’t just about writing a check once a year. It is about demonstrating every day that we understand what our responsibility is with respect to ALL of the gifts we have received. We teach our children to say “thank you” when they receive gifts, but do we do the same to our Father who blesses us every moment of our lives? Thankfully, it’s not too late to walk the talk.

The book Oriented Leadership says “Stewardship is what a person does, after saying, ‘I believe’ as proof of that belief.” We all like to talk and tell folks what “we believe.” But what have we done lately with the gifts God gave us? Not just your talents, but including your talents. Not just your time, but including your time. Not just your money, but

including your money. What have you done with the amazing things that you do so spectacularly? Who in your Parish have you taught that thing that only you can do so well? When was the last time you brought your wit, wisdom, philosophy, coaching, fix-it skills or just loving care to one of your Parishioners (or a total stranger) who was afraid, confused, lost, sick, suffering, hungry, thirsty, in prison, or just in need?

There is only one thing keeping you from being the incredible steward you are capable of becoming. And that one thing is You. I know you are busy. So is everyone else. But every day of your life, among the trillions of gifts God gives you each nanosecond, are two very big ones. The first, is the gift of 24 hours. And the second, is the gift of free will to decide what you will do with the first gift. It is up to you. As we all told our children at one time or the other: “you are the boss of you.”

So, what have you done today with the gifts God gave you? In which ministries of your parish, Diocese, Metropolis, Archdiocese or Patriarchate have you assisted this week or month or year? This is what you are called to do every day, not just the weekend of the Festival or Stewardship Sunday.

You can't change how you got to where you are, but you can change where you're going. You don't know when you will meet your Maker and be asked to account for your life. So perhaps you may not want to wait and hope you'll get a “Hail Mary” shot like the thief next to our Lord on the day of His crucifixion. Ask to be remembered in His Kingdom every day, and in every way you act, and with what you do with the gifts God gave you.

And while the Stewardship Campaign should never be limited to just one Sunday (see more in the Stewardship Calling Igniting The Flame of Stewardship Program at: [www.stewardshipcalling.com](http://www.stewardshipcalling.com)), please don't wait for the Main Event(s). It might just be too late. Do something today! And God bless you as you pursue your own unique stewardship calling. SOTPAETJ (stay on The Path, and enjoy the journey)

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