

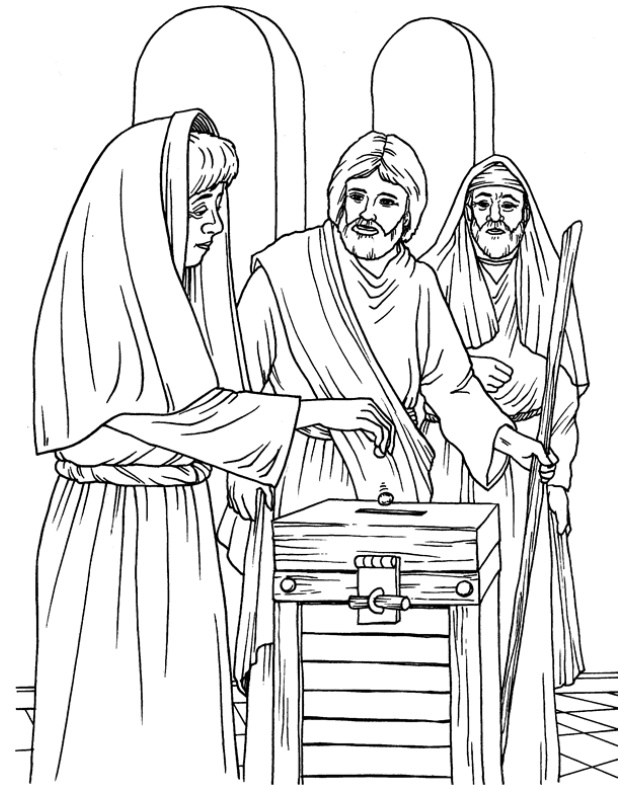
- Dues and Giving are not for services rendered.
  - Dues and Giving are not aimed at the past, but at the present and future needs of the local parish. Giving maintains things such as electricity, building repair, and clergy. Therefore, to not give to the Church can mean that the present and future needs of the Church will not be met.
- Giving is not optional.
  - Giving is about more than money. Not everyone can give money, much less equal amounts of it. It is about giving as God gives. The Church also has need of people's talents and time, especially presence at worship services. Every good thing we have is a gift from God, and therefore everything we have, whether it be time, talent, or financial ability, or some combination of these, we are asked *by God* to give of all that we are and have.

Christ freely gave every drop of His Blood so that by faith we can have His eternal life in us, therefore as Christians we are called to give freely as a faith-filled response of love and gratitude to God's free gift of eternal life. Therefore, we give in recognition of His many spiritual and material blessings to us. We give as an opportunity for the exercise of faith in God and His providence. It is not merely something "due," but the practice of selfless virtue and growth in the life in Christ. We do not simply give from what we have; we give from who we are. We give from what God has given to us, which is everything. In short, we give back. The direction of giving is therefore first from God to us, and only then from us to God. Giving is thus not simply an exercise in minimalism, but proportioned to ability. Seeing more clearly the nature and function of giving in the Church, we see that it is simply an act of love, the act of a heart overflowing with gratitude to God.

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## Getting to "I Due"



## Understanding the Nature and Function of Giving in the Church

by

Fr. Joshua Schooping

Speaking of *dues* or of proportional giving, more than one question may arise as to their nature and function. In order to clarify what dues and giving are, and perhaps equally important, what they are *not*, let's look together at the following "dues and don'ts."

#### What Dues and Proportional Giving Are

- Dues and Giving are a vital form of Providing.
  - To "owe" a due is not for membership, but for the needs and maintenance of the local Church, providing for the financial costs required for the Church's existence. *Out of faithful love* we give to God from what He has blessed us to have, therefore it is vital to remember that *dues are a form of giving*, not merely "owing." The local Church has realistic financial needs which, as a whole, are "due," whether to the Diocese, the Electric Company, or what have you. Thus dues are not "owed" for the individual to belong, but for the local Church community to continue to exist and to offer prayer and the life-giving sacraments.
- Dues and Giving are from the individual for the local Church, not from the individual for himself.
  - When we "owe" a due, it is not for ourselves but for the Church. We give so that the lights can stay on, the building remain in good repair, and the priest kept fed. Thus we "owe" a due *out of love* for our God and for the local community, not in order to benefit ourselves but in order to benefit the Church.
- Prescribed amounts for Giving are calculated based on the real financial needs of the Church.
  - The prescribed cost of giving is proportioned to the calculated needs of the Church, and as a specific amount it is calculated *as if* everyone is able to give equally. Of course, some are blessed by God with greater financial ability, therefore the prescribed amount is not a minimum, much less a minimum for membership, but reflects the projected, calculated financial needs of the local Church.

- Some are unable to give financially according to the predetermined amount, but *this is not an obstacle to membership*, and it is assumed in Christian love and honor to God that those blessed with greater financial ability give proportionately *according to what God has given them* and in order to offset those who do not have as much. In short, giving is according to ability.

Having considered what Dues and Proportional Giving are, it may be helpful to clarify what they are not.

#### What Dues Are Not

- Dues are not required for membership in the Orthodox Church.
  - Membership in the Orthodox Church is based on our relationship with the Sacraments. In other words, it is Holy Baptism, Confession, and the faithful partaking of the Body and Blood of our Lord and God and Savior Jesus Christ that makes us Orthodox Christians. We are not members because we pay, we are members because we commune.
  - We do not pay for Communion, therefore we do not pay for membership in the Orthodox Church. If a person cannot give financially to the Church, they are still able to be in good standing as full members of All Saints Orthodox Church. Good standing in an Orthodox Church is established and maintained on the basis of right faith and regular participation in Corporate Prayer and the Sacraments of Confession and Holy Communion.
- Dues are not for the rights to Church Services or for any additional rights or access.
  - No one is denied full or equal participation in the Church's community or sacramental life because they do not give financially to the Church. Everyone in the Church is equal in the eyes of the Lord, and each other. Giving is not for the sake of getting. Giving is for the sake of glorifying God, expressing faith in Him, training oneself in virtue, and providing for the maintenance and needs of His local Church parish.