

MEMBERSHIP IN THE CHURCH

What is Church Membership? Is it Baptism...supporting a parish...going to church on Sunday...or sending the children to Sunday School? It is all of these, yet church membership is something more. It is our active commitment to our belief in God, and the acknowledgment of Christ in our way of life.

Baptism and Chrismation soon lose their personal validity if the vows made at the font are not carried out in everyday life. Baptism and Chrismation give us the right to be Christians and to participate in the sacramental life of the church. But these alone do not make one a Christian. To be an Orthodox Christian, one must be Baptized and Chrismated and then participate regularly and conscientiously in the sacramental life, the worship and the work of the Church.

WHAT IS THE CHURCH

Church is far more than an occasional Baptism, Wedding or Funeral. It is the body of Christ on earth, the fellowship of the faithful. A Church congregation is that group of people who worship together and help one another learn and practice the Faith. The members of the congregation are baptized and confirmed. They regularly receive the sacrament of Holy Communion. They repent for their shortcomings which offend God's Law. They seek God's help and the help of their fellow Christians to do better.

RECEIVING AND GIVING THE FAITH

If our Faith needs practical expression, then we need parishes. A vague belief in God, a few occasional moments of something like devotional feeling, and a good deed once in a while are hardly a real expression of the Faith.

Some people talk a lot about being able to pray and do good with the Church, but they never get down-to-earth about it. To do a good job of anything requires organization of some sort. Every good thing needs an organization to express it, even if that organization is not perfect (and they never are because they are made up of people who are not perfect).

If Christians are really interested in doing good, in prayer and worship, in learning about God, then the idea of an organized Church dedicated to these goals becomes very practical and necessary.

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. None of us is so expert in our Christian Faith that we can afford to ignore the Church. The heritage of the Church stretches back to Moses and David, Jesus and the Apostles, and comes down to our day to us. Those of us who have received and cherish this Christian heritage have an obligation to pass it on to future generations.

Obviously, this cannot be done alone. It takes that organization we call the Church to give Christianity to those coming after us. To be a Christian means to be part of the Church. To ignore the Church while we live, or to use the Church only for occasional ceremonies, means that we have greatly misunderstood its purpose. *It is for this reason that those Orthodox Christians who request Baptisms, Weddings and other services in our Parish are required to be in good standing ecclesiastically and if twenty-one years of age or over, a pledged member of our Parish.*

ECCLESIASTICAL MEMBERSHIP

This means that we:

1. Have been baptized in the name of the Holy Trinity.
2. Have been confirmed (chrismated) in the Orthodox Christian Faith.
3. Have had our marriage sanctified in the Orthodox Christian Faith.
4. Participate regularly in the Holy Sacraments of Confession, Communion, Unction and attend faithfully the Divine Liturgy as well as other services of the Church.

SUPPORTING MEMBERSHIP STEWARDSHIP

Stewardship goal is to make church membership what it is truly intended to be, namely a committed decision to join the fellowship of believers in the Orthodox Faith of our forefathers. Stewardship Program allows participation at many levels. Time, Talent and Treasure are the cornerstones of Stewardship. Everyone is considered a member of the community, regardless of their financial contribution size. However, just as in the parable of the talents, we are all called to give based on what we have received. As in the parable of the poor widow, our contribution is based on sacrifice. Each individual must determine, in good faith, what sacrifice can be made. Our system of family pledges allows us to budget properly and plan for the growth of our community. Our goal in the Stewardship Program is to provide for the financial needs of Saint Andrew.

THE GREATEST PROBLEM

The greatest problem faced by the Church today is not the difficulty of making Christ's teachings relevant, but the reality that Church Membership has become so easy it becomes, sometimes, meaningless. Our goal at St. Andrew is to make Church Membership what it is intended to be, a committed decision to be part of that fellowship of believers which intends to bring Christ to the world.

We invite you to become a living part of that fellowship through active membership.