

O.N.E.

ORTHODOX NEW ENGLAND

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Right: Fr. Steven Hosking of St. Alexis, Clinton, Conn., stands forty feet out from the shoreline to **bless Long Island Sound**. (There was no break in the ice before that point!)

This issue contains galleries of Blessing of Water at the Sound and Twin Lakes, Salisbury, Conn.



Exploring Stewardship at SVOTS

Rev. Joshua Mosher

In January, three members of our diocese participated in a course on Stewardship at St. Vladimir's Seminary, taught by Rev. Dr. Robert Holet. Fr. Robert is priest in the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the USA. In addition to his parish responsibilities, he is on the Council of the Metropolia and has served as their Treasurer and Director of Stewardship. He led a well-received retreat for the OCA Metropolitan Council last year. He also has written *First and Finest: Orthodox Christian Stewardship as Sacred Offering*.

Fr. Michael Korolev (St. Peter & St. Paul, Springfield, Mass.), Anne Wilkinson (Christ the Savior, Southbury, Conn.) and Fr. Joshua Mosher (Saints Peter & Paul, Meriden, Conn.) joined several seminarians for this class. The experience provided valuable ideas to renew our own stewardship efforts. Anne Wilkinson will provide a more thorough analysis of the class and its value for the diocese in the next issue of the ONE.

Later in the current issue, Fr. Robert introduces his ideas on stewardship. **ONE +**

Giving Above and Beyond

March is ONE Stewards Month

Protodeacon Paul Nimchek

The diocese reached its highest level of ONE Stewards donations in 2014, over \$25,000. Our Diocesan Archbishop Nikon continues to set the example of generous stewardship with his personal donations to ONE Stewards throughout the year. The "Bishop's Circle" donors (\$500 or more) also are very crucial in meeting the goals of ONE Stewards and in 2014 there were three new donors to this select group. This past year also included a new category of "anonymous" donations totaling over \$3000 to ONE Stewards.

Below Left: Activity at the Saints Peter & Paul Brotherhood **Winter Clothing Give-Away** in Meriden, Conn.

Below Right: Members of Saints Peter & Paul pack bags for the annual "Thanksgiving baskets" for needy families in the neighborhood.
(More news of Meriden on the next page.)

Show your support of our diocesan Youth by sponsoring a "rallyer" through ONE Stewards. In addition our diocesan Seminarians, our diocesan Missions, and our diocesan Charity donations are supported by your "Giving Above and Beyond" to ONE Stewards. You should be receiving your ONE Stewards appeal envelope



in late February. Remember, March is ONE Stewards month. Let's all join Archbishop Nikon in supporting ONE Stewards in 2015.

ONE Stewards
PO Box 1182
Torrington, CT 06790

Yours in Christ, Deacon Paul

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SS. Peter and Paul Church, Meriden, Connecticut

Donna Leonowich

Fall was a very busy season for the parishioners of our church. The Events Committee and the Church School organized many activities for the children, their parents, and the entire community.

The Church School program began the year with an Ice Cream Social for children to enjoy. On the first Friday night in October, we began a monthly Game Night, an event for children of all ages to enjoy with family and friends. We celebrated the fall harvest with a party hosted by Cindy Dennis and Alexia Tassmer.

November began with our annual Thanksgiving Feast. Turkey dinners were also delivered to all of our area "shut-ins." The "young ladies" of the Church School attended Vespers on Thurs., Nov 20 and celebrated with a very special Tea Party to commemorate the Entrance of the Mother of God into the Temple. The children also participated in an "Icon Proce-

sion" during the Great Entrance of Divine Liturgy.

On Saturday, Nov. 15, the Brotherhood held their annual Winter Clothing Give-Away. For the second year, members of the Mt. Hebron Baptist Brotherhood joined us in the effort.

Throughout the month, parishioners donated canned goods and money to prepare Thanksgiving Baskets that were distributed to eight families in our neighborhood.

On Sat., Dec. 5, the children celebrated St Nicholas the Wonder Worker, Archbishop of Myra with stories, games and activities, and a visit from St. Nicholas, hosted by Matushka Jenny and Alexia Tassmer.

As part of our celebration of the Nativity of Christ, on Jan. 4, the parish enjoyed a Nativity Play presented by the children. The entire parish enjoyed a holiday luncheon and a group sing led by Choir Director Mary Ann Sporic.

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Below left: The daughters of Saints Peter & Paul enjoyed a "Theotokos Tea Party" on the Entry of the Theotokos into the Temple.

Below right: The girls also participated in a procession to escort the festal icon into the church on the eve of the feast and also the following Sunday.



Parish Grant Program for 2015

Protodeacon Paul Nimchek

At the 2011 Diocesan Assembly, a "Parish Grant Initiative" was approved. Parishes in the New England Diocese can apply for financial grants to support outreach and charity programs in their communities. The diocese has budgeted up to \$10,000 in grant monies to help support parishes in these efforts. Check the Diocesan

website at www.dneoca.org for the grant guidelines and an application. Applications will be reviewed as received. Check the website for details.

Yours in Christ, Deacon Paul

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Right: All Saints of America, Salisbury, Conn., recently received a relic and icon of St. Elizabeth the New Martyr. Here, Fr. John Kreta leads prayers before the new icon.



Our Offerings — What is Needed?

Rev. Dr. Robert Holet, *Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the USA*

We all know what offerings are about. Every time we come to Liturgy, and a collection plate passes by, the impetus to make an offering is unavoidable! One of the goals of this series on Orthodox Stewardship has been to help our faithful make the connection of our material monetary offering, with its spiritual character.

One of the heresies and falsehoods throughout Church history has been to value only spiritual things and to despise material things. While, in this belief system, called “dualism,” the “spiritual world” trumps the ‘material world’, it is nevertheless flawed.

As Orthodox Christians we believe that creation is in essence “good,” and when Christ took flesh of the material world He forever joined us and our world (not just simply our

“spirits”) in His Person with the Father. The story of Abraham and Melchizedek has much to teach us about this.

Abraham’s Life - Battle Tested

In the course of the Church’s Lenten readings of Genesis, we come to Chapter 14, where we learn of the encounter of the Patriarch Abraham with the High Priest and King, Melchizedek. In the story, an enemy king, named Chedorlaomer, gathered several kings who made war against Abraham (known as Abram at the time), Lot and his allies. The outcome of the battle was disastrous, with Lot, Abram’s nephew, taken captive and a great loss of life and materiel. Abram,

Right: Fr. Steven Hosking of St. Alexis, Clinton, Conn., leads prayers for the **blessing of Long Island Sound.**



by faith, summoned 318 kindred allies and counterattacked Chedorlaomer, routing him, freeing Lot and those captured and recovering the material wealth and much more. This victory, as portrayed in Genesis, was guided by God and blessed by Him.

As you can imagine, the reaction of Abram to this glorious victory was joyous — filled with thanksgiving and celebration as the enemy was routed, his family returned and peace was restored.

Genesis reports that Melchizedek, the King of Salem (meaning “peace”), brought bread and wine; he was a priest of God Most High (Gen 14:18). This celebration had a solemn and symbolic character. Melchizedek is a mysterious person, who is Priest, Prophet and King. He blesses Abram, with the blessing of God Most High, and blesses (thanks) God for His



blessing on behalf of Abram, for granting him victory over his enemies.

Then, Abram responds with an unusual gesture. He presents to the priestly King and offering — a tithe —

Right and below: More scenes of the **blessing of Long Island Sound.**



10 percent of everything he had received.

Abraham, the Faithful Steward

Like Abel and Noah, Abraham (Abram) demonstrates what a faithful steward does. First, he follows God's direction and blessing in his life by being obedient to Him; he engages in battle against a formidable foe, and receives victory from the hand of God. Then he receives the spiritual blessing: the visitation of the priest who offers bread and wine in a thanksgiving (Eucharistic) offering. In the midst of this spiritual encounter, Abraham offers the first portion of his material wealth - the tithe (a tenth) of everything.

What we see here is the commingling of the spiritual and the material offering. The spiritual offering, symbolized by the priest Melchizedek is the central action—bring the focus of the whole event to “God Most High, maker of heaven and earth.” (v. 19) The material offering, the tithe, is a perfectly appropriate response of thanksgiving in this world. This offering is given to Melchizedek, but it symbolically an offering to God.

This is important to understand, because it's easy to get things mixed up when we make our financial offering at the Liturgy. When we toss our envelope into the basket or collection box, we may think we make our offering solely to the parish. If so, we will base our offering on what we think the church (or its leaders) needs, or



Right: The faithful of All Saints of America, Salisbury, Conn., in procession to **bless Twin Lakes.**

say it needs. In this frame of mind, we may be tempted to reduce our donation to a simple financial transaction—pay up enough to keep the church doors open and the priest paid (or what we think is needed...)

The Genesis chapter, however teaches us that offerings are not actually made to the Church but to God. The Church, imitating Melchizedek the priest, receives the material offering offerings of both bread and wine, but also the tithe, and in doing so makes a spiritual offering to God.

The Church (and only the Church) is where this dual offering can full take place. The Church serves as the Lord's steward of the material gifts to use it for His purposes. Seen this way, our donations reveal a new value - moving beyond its purchasing power in the world to become a symbol of our faith as people of a God. It externally reveals that our relationship

Right and following pages: More scenes of the **blessing of Twin Lakes.**



with Him not just in our head, but in our hands as well.

Why Give?

If we base our financial donations at the Liturgy on our (often mistaken) idea of what we think the Church needs, we may only offer some minimal amount, because we may decide that the Church has only minimal needs. This is especially true when we think that the Church (the parish, diocese, Metropolia, etc.) is well established, its mortgage paid, and it possesses a steady stream of finances from outsiders provided through hall rentals and food sales. In such a case we see no need to give generously, so

we don't. This is the weakness of needs-based giving.

Another shortcoming of needs-based offering is that it trains people to give generously only when things get really bad. So, when the roof is ready to collapse or there is some pending catastrophe, then people feel they can rush in and save the day. Some people will only give when there is a "great" need, (building fund, emergency need, etc.) despite the fact that they have been blessed financially in abundance all along.

Giving with such an attitude may fuel the sin of vain glory and self-importance. In addition, the needs-based giving mindset, by holding back

until there is a “need,” actually places the parish in a position where certain serious needs (and financial shortfalls) arise in the first place!

Let Us Give Thanks to the Lord

The liturgical and spiritual model of giving by Abraham, however is different. It is thanksgiving based. Abraham presents his offering to the priest, first and foremost, because God has given to him in abundance and Abraham sees God as the source of His blessing and desires to give thanks for the those blessings by the offering of his tithe of “the first and the finest.”

Offered in the spirit of our holy Father Abraham, our donations are



not made simply as a sign of our benevolence toward a needy institution, but rather are meant to be a joyous expression of “thank you” to the Lord for all that He has done for us. It is only when we have made this “first fruits” offering, that we then should also look at the expressed needs of the Church, and its ministries, especially to the poor.





For us, in the Orthodox Church, this link of the financial offering to Thanksgiving and the Liturgy is so important because the Liturgy of the Eucharist is the summit of who we are as the Church. We are the new “children of Abraham” who imitate him by thanking God for “all that He has done for us.”

This biblical story in Genesis helps us understand the New Testament/Orthodox perspective presented in the Epistle to the Hebrews, read frequently by the Church during Great Lent. Hebrews teaches us that Melchizedek serves as a “type” or precursor for Christ (Heb.6-7).

Christ is the true “High Priest” and the “King of Peace,” whose sacrificial offering on the cross has restored mankind to a new relationship with God the Father. By His Incarnation He has become one of human family, and has won for us a victory over sin and

death, by making Himself the perfect offering to the Father. This victory, in His Cross, Death and Resurrection is called the Paschal Mystery—specially remembered during Holy Week and Pascha. This saving work of Christ is actually remembered every Sunday, the day of Resurrection, when the Church celebrates the Eucharist in obedience to Christ’s words (“Do

this in remembrance of me.”).

As members of the Church, we, as a priestly people, make this Eucharistic offering to God the Father in Thanksgiving, offering “thine own of thine own” When we understand the spiritual dynamics of our weekly Liturgy, we can begin to understand how important our simple material or financial offering is as well.





thanksgiving—not simply because we like the priest, hear that the youth program needs a boost, or feel guilty because the Parish Board has no money to pay the light bill.

When we, like Abraham (and Abel and Noah before him) offer the first fruits from what God provides, doing so with thanksgiving, our offering becomes a spiritual offer-

ing. Abraham was not compelled to offer a tithe of his material wealth. The spiritual symbols of bread and wine would have sufficed. But Abraham realizes how much God has blessed him and longs to join what he has received to the sacred offering. Abraham's offering of the tenth (to the priest) gives it a spiritual character—it makes his offering holy.

This breaks down the dualism of the material vs. spiritual world. In fact, the offering of bread and wine is a material offering which is transformed into the very Body and Blood of Christ. The spiritual connection to the material world is restored in the Eucharistic liturgy and our material offerings become a part of this process, our consecration of that small part of the world entrusted by God to our care.

A right, Orthodox, understanding of this passage of Genesis reveals to us the true nature of our church offerings. Our offerings are to be made to God in generosity and

ing.

That spiritual character is further enhanced when these funds are used by us, the Church, to accomplish the holy work of Christ—proclaiming the Gospel, feeding the hungry, beautifying His Church, meeting the needs of the Body, etc. When we see the true value of every dime offered to the God, through the Melchizedek-like Church, we will treat our offerings for what they truly are—a symbol of who we are as God's priestly and thankful people, His Church.

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Upcoming Events

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| Apr 15 | Deadline for the next issue of the ONE |
| Mar 8 | Holy Trinity, Willimantic, Conn.: Lenten Vespers. |
| Mar 15 | St. Nicholas (Antiochian), Bridgeport, Conn.: FORCC Vespers. |
| Mar 22 | All Saints of America, Salisbury, Conn.: Lenten Vespers. |
| Mar 28 | Pysanky workshop at All Saints of America, Salisbury, Conn.. |
| Mar 29 | Three Saints, Ansonia, Conn.: Unction Service. |
| Apr 5 | Holy Transfiguration, New Haven: Bridegroom Matins of Holy Monday. |
| May 16 | Iconography retreat with Fr Andrew Tregubov at All Saints of America, Salisbury, Conn. |
| June 14 | All Saints of America, Salisbury, Conn., celebrates 25th Anniversary. |
| Sept 19 | Holy Resurrection, Berlin, N.H., celebrates 100th Anniversary |
| Sept 27 | Holy Transfiguration, New Haven, celebrates 100th Anniversary |