



A Message from Fr. Joseph Collins

Greetings in the Lord,

It is with joy and gladness of heart that we approach a new year. I pray that all of you have experienced the love of Christ in 2016, and that in 2017 He might continue to bless each of you, your families, our parish and our local community. As we recount the blessings bestowed upon us in 2016, let's also look forward to how we might bless others in 2017.

As many of you know, our motto for this ecclesiastical year (September 1, 2016-August 31, 2017) is «Όλοι Μαζί» or “Everyone Together.” This motto is central to our 2017 stewardship model, and our parish's life. It is through community and fellowship that we are strengthened and healed, and able to not only endure and prosper in the world, but also extend generosity and give to those around us. This giving is, of course, inclusive of your finances, but extends far beyond our pocket books. Give by giving: your love, your time, your strength, your patience, and your talents all to the glory of God, on behalf of your neighbors and the community that lies outside our front doors.

Remember, and take to heart, that our church community offers to us: the Holy Sacraments, unity in one faith, friendship and hope. We commune with Christ through prayer and the Holy Sacraments, we have one confession of our faith in Christ and His salvation through the power of the Holy Spirit, and the hope that we find in Him and His resurrection, along with our brothers and sisters that we can rely on in our lives, both in times of joy and sorrow.

Coming to church is a major aspect of our Christian life, but it is not the only thing. Think of our Church as the heart and lungs, and us as the blood. The Holy Spirit guides us along the path of life, and we, having been filled with life-giving faith, go out and encounter a needy and exhausted world. Eventually we become depleted too, and we return to the life-giving font that is offered to us by Christ in the Eucharist, His saints (this includes us) and the church; and we, being filled once again by divine grace, return to the world. Using another analogy, hopefully we return to the world with fruits to bear: holiness, peace, love, patience, long-suffering, kindness, meekness, faithfulness and justice for the benefit and nourishment of the world around us. Drawing it back to the heart of our faith, to the Vine—Jesus Christ. Christ, through His church, facilitates our outreach by giving us all that we need to live.

We, are the Church of Christ, and established by the Apostles. The Apostles went out to those around them and offered Christ. Be like the Apostles and reach out to those around you. Outreach, whether reaching out of ourselves to seek help and aid from others in our times of need, or to aid those around us, is an integral part of our faith and stewardship. Stewardship, as outreach, is comprised of three basic principles: education, discipleship and evangelism.

Our world is full of pain; it is full need; it is full of hunger; it is full of fear; it is full of sickness and death. We, as a community, as those who bear Christ in the world by the power of the Holy Spirit, can, in our own spheres, heal and ease the pain, and, in the dark abyss of despair that encompasses so many, share the light and joy of our man-loving and man-befriending savior Jesus Christ. A Savior who became a man, to save mankind. Let's, like Him, give ourselves for the sake of others. Christ Is Born. Glorify Him!!

With Love,
Rev. Fr. R. Joseph Collins