

A Prayer of Thanksgiving

O Lord, Holy Father, my Savior Jesus Christ and You O Holy Spirit, the God of All Creation and all goodness. I give thanks to you for the multitude of blessings that you have bestowed upon me, and entrusted to me in this life. I for fashioning me in your divine image and enabling me to reflect your likeness by sharing in your divine Life and glory through Holy Baptism. The angelic powers, the heavens and all creation exult you, and I join in this glorious hymn of praise to you for the multitude of the blessings of this Your world, seen and unseen.

I thank you that you have held trust in me, to share with me the wonderful gifts of the spiritual life as an Orthodox Christian, and especially the precious relationships of my parents, my spouse, my children and family. How gracious You are in allowing me to be enlivened by participating in an Orthodox faith community and sharing in Your divine life through Holy Communion - a foretaste of Your love that is eternal.

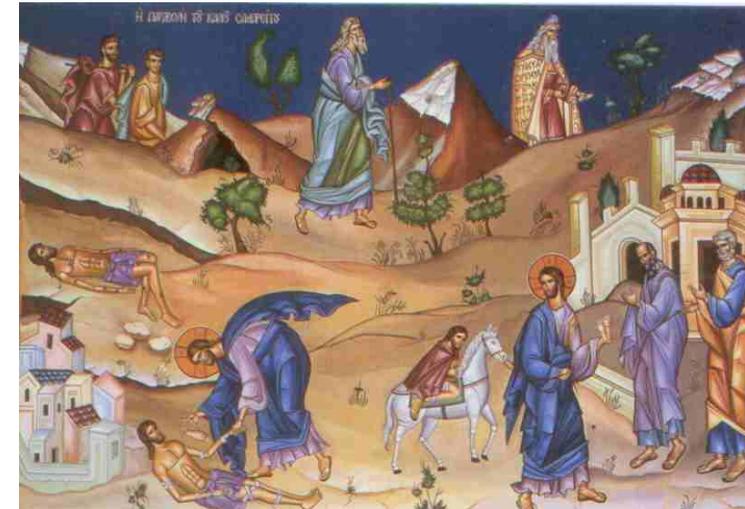
I thank you for overcoming, by your grace alone, all of my willful faults, sins, and imperfections and and ask forgiveness for those of which I am unaware. I repent and recognize of all unworthy thoughts, words and actions. In asking for your forgiveness for my offenses, Lord, I am blessed with the knowledge that You are a God of mercy and forgiveness. Lord help me to be truly renewed by spiritual awareness of this grace that will help me to change my life in ways to serve you and others.

I humbly ask that You will make me a better steward of every good, and perfect gift that comes from You, the Father of lights. Open my eyes to see the bounty of your goodness and help me to search for You and your grace when life is a struggle. Open my heart to all whom you bring into my life - especially the poor and those I am specially called to serve. Help to always commend myself, those who are in the circle of relationship with me, and all of my life to You, O Christ my God.

To You is due all glory, worship and thanksgiving, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, now and ever, and to the ages of ages. Amen!



Orthodox Christian Stewardship



A Self-Examination and Reflection Guide

- The outcome of the Last Judgment will depend upon whether or not we have been faithful stewards, especially in meeting the needs of the poor? Do I look for such opportunities to serve the poor (hungry, thirsty, homeless, sick, imprisoned, etc.)? (*Mt. 25*)
- Do I see the face of Christ in others, but turn away?
- Do I see that I will be called to give an account for my stewardship of all of God's gifts (above) bestowed upon me when I die?
- Have I made preparations (practical or spiritual) for my death? Have I neglected to make out a will? Does my last will reflect the priorities of a steward of Christ?
- Have I made proper Orthodox arrangements for my funeral, the last act of stewardship of my body - the temple of the Holy Spirit? Or have I arranged for the sinful destruction of my body through cremation?



Movement 8 - Eternal Communion with the Lord of Glory

- Do I expect the Resurrection of the Dead (*Nicene Creed*) and long for eternal communion with God? Do I seek first the Kingdom of God and His Righteousness?
- Do I see this life as a testing ground for me as a steward of God grace and that God loves me and desires to bestow upon me His grace beyond measure?
- How can I better orient my life today to God's purposes? How can I draw closer to others - in the love of Christ - through service to them, especially in and through His Body, the Church.
- Am I aware that the Kingdom of Heaven is already at hand? (*Mt. 3:2*)



“Come, you who are blessed by my Father; receive your inheritance, the Kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world!” Mt. 25: 34

ing? Or have circumstances of life lead me to despair?

- When God bestows forgiveness to me through another person, can I accept it? Or do I continue to harbor anger or bitterness toward them?
- When God has granted spiritual blessings or insights have I changed my life in light of it, or have I ignored these treasures that can change my heart?

Movement 6 – The Steward Grows in His Relationship with God as His Servant

- Is the Spirit of Thanksgiving evident in my heart, the grace of the awareness of God's many blessings to me? Do I see times of suffering as opportunities for great spiritual growth and maturation?
- Am I seeking to mature as a Christian? In faith and practice?
- Are my relationships, especially those closest to me, maturing and deepening in God's love?
- Is my commitment of my time and treasure offered to Christ growing?
- Have I learned to disentangle my life from materialism and worldliness.
- Have I developed a wise use of electronic devices to be used in service of God and the betterment of my life and that of others?
- Am I drawn more deeply to prayer or do I resist this? Have I sought the wisdom of God and discernment?
- Have I developed the practical aspects of my life in service of Christ – through training and education not only that of practical nature, but spiritual as well.

Movement 7 – The Steward shall give an account to The Master

In Orthodoxy, Holy Confession is a means for us as stewards to give an account to Christ, in repentance and anticipation of the final account we will give.

- Do I seek opportunities for Confession, especially during the penitential seasons?
- Do I seek to be reconciled with others? Do I delay making peace? (Mt. 5:24)
- Do I meditate upon the Second Coming of Christ to Judge the living and the dead?

Stewardship Examination - Reflection Guide

This guide serves as an opportunity to reflect on our inner attitudes and outward behaviors that reveal how we steward our relationship with God, and with others, as well as the countless blessings He has bestowed upon us. The Guide is designed to provide questions about our faithfulness to God as stewards of His spiritual and material gifts. It may serve as a helpful guide for personal growth and can serve as a suitable preparation for the Holy Mystery of Penance.

How to Use the Guide

This longer version of the guide is based upon the 'Stewardship Cycle' that uses the theme of Christian servanthood and stewardship to present the spiritual and practical elements of spiritual life in a coherent, orderly form. It is best used as a source for personal reflection, by going through the questions thoughtfully with reflection about our response to God's goodness and blessings in our personal life. This sort of reflection can be very fruitful if done slowly, perhaps over a period of many days, and allowing the questions to trigger deeper thoughts, memories and responses by grace that come from the Holy Spirit. In some cases we may feel enlightened or heartened, or discover new ways we can serve the Lord, or be affirmed inwardly of our call to serve Him in some specific way. In other cases, we may find that we fall short of what we are capable of being and doing. This becomes a cause for renewal and repentance, hence this guide can be a type of 'examination of conscience' in preparation for the Mystery of Holy Penance.

However it is used, its intent is simply to open our minds and hearts to the ever-present love of God, inspiring us to know Him and love Him, and by extension serve Him by offering our lives back to Him in worship, and in service to others.

With minor adaptations, it can be used in a corporate sense - in the Church, and by parish groups to consider the ways in which we are called to serve the Lord, in our parish worship, service efforts and ministries.

Movement 1 – God is the Lord and Source of All

Stewardship of all that we have begins and ends with God, the Lord of all creation, and of our lives. Consider these questions regarding your life and worldview – is Jesus the Lord of all?



- Do I believe there is a God who is Creator of the Universe, and Lord?
- Do I believe that He relates to human beings, whom He made in His image and likeness, in a personal relationship of love?
- Do I really believe that everything in my life comes from Him and belongs to Him? Or do I see *myself* as the source of my own life, success and destiny?
- Do I submit my life and my will to Him as Lord? Do I reject Him in anger?
- Do I pray so as to honor God and enter into that relationship with Him?
- Do hold fast to the revelation of God through the holy Orthodox Faith? Have I held to falsehoods, childish immaturity or indifference in relationship to Him?
- Am I unduly bound to worldly things, especially money? (*Love of money is the root of all evil.*)
- Do I live to please or impress others, or to please God?

Movement 2 – Receiving God’s Gifts

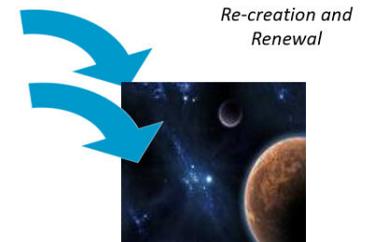
What has God entrusted to me personally and individually as his steward?. Consider the following and as whether you are aware of how He has blessed you:

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| • Human Life | • Intelligence/education | • Forgiveness |
| • Bodily Health | • Home - shelter | • Peace |
| • Mental health | • Material possessions | • The Orthodox faith |
| • Relationships | • Spiritual blessings | • My Parish |
| • Spouse? | • Faith | • My priest |
| • Parents? Children? | • Hope | • Safety |
| • Employment | • Love | • The poor |

of God’s goodness through kindness through a good example? Or do I state that I am a Christian but do otherwise?

- Do I grow in appreciation and use of the spiritual gifts in my life through prayer, spiritual discipline, the Holy Mysteries, participation in Divine services at Church? Have I sought guidance from my priest about my life?
- Do I value the ministry and care of those in need, as did the apostolic Church?
- Have I ever been personally called upon to help someone in need? Did I respond well - or with fear, unwillingness or a cold heart?
- Do I seek to assist those who lack the basic necessities of life: food, clothing, shelter, water, companionship?

Movement 5 – God pours forth a greater abundance - Thirty, Sixty, a Hundredfold



- Are there other blessings that God desires to bestow upon me/us - are there those that I am reluctant to accept? If so, why?
- Have I thwarted His work in my life? Have I, like the holy prophet Jonah, refused His call to serve others because of a lack of trust in Him, fearing others or loss of personal freedom?
- Have I been ignoring a call or vocation to serve Him more deeply in some way?
- Do I take the abundance of God’s blessings for granted? Do I open my heart in greater thanksgiving? Do I remain shallow in my spiritual life?
- Do I see others as participants in God’s blessings and rejoice with them?
- Do I treasure the Holy Liturgy in the Church as God’s divine outpouring of His love and participate in the Liturgy mentally and by lifting up my voice in worship?
- Do I recognize and receive the Holy Eucharist as the True Body and Blood of Christ or something less?
- Do I believe that God can pour forth His grace even in seemingly bad times or circumstances? Do I look for His working in my life - even through trials and suffer-

- Do I seek to put my unique talents and skills to work in my parish community?
- Can my talents possibly benefit others such as my family members, or members of the surrounding community, especially those in need?
- Relationships are the fruit of Trust - a gift from God. How do I or can I serve others as a gift of myself to them in love?
- Do I pray for others (family, friends, parishioners, those in need)? If I have been hurt in a relationship, can I still offer that relationship to God in prayer?
- Does judgment of others, jealousy or unforgiveness hinder me in serving them?
- Do I use the spiritual gifts that God has blessed me with? (see Movement 2 above)
- Given God's blessing of intelligence, have I continued to develop it, or simply stopped learning through laziness. Do I 'know it all'?
- Does my life reflect a Godly stewardship leading to order? Or is my life frantic and disorderly and my decisions made hastily?
- Do I keep the earthly possessions entrusted to me in good order? What do I do with the 'trash' of my life?
- Do I waste things needlessly and fail to take stewardship of my own little corner of the environment? Can I live more simply?
- Do I treat the God's creation with reverence and awe?
- Have I tried to put God's gifts to use in our local parish or Archdiocesan ministries? Or do I stay away from getting involved in the Church? If so, why?
- Do I endeavor to love and serve the poor, those in need, the imprisoned, the homeless, or widows, or orphans?
- Am I afraid of, or feel ill-will toward others - perhaps those unlike me? Do I welcome people, especially at church, who are different from me racially or ethnically, in age, education or culture?
- Do my actions lead others (children, family, those not of the Faith, etc.) to know



- The earth - it's creatures
- The environment
- Society and its support
- Governmental Authority

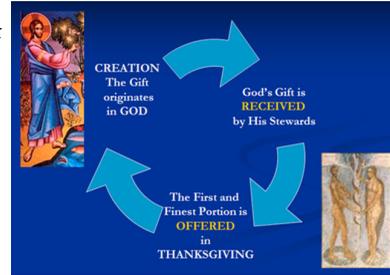


Am I thankful for these gifts? Do I look to appreciate them more fully? Do I explore them, seek their value and develop my personal talents, or are they being wasted?

- Do I see God as the Source of these gifts? Does this prompt thanksgiving?
- Do I feel jealous or envious of others for what our good God has bestowed upon them, and seemingly not me?
- Do I desire things not intended for me? (covetousness)
- Have I desired or engaged in sexual pleasure outside of God's will in Holy Matrimony? (lust, fornication, adultery)
- Have I stolen? Taken liberties with things at work? Cheated on tests?
- Am I prompted by greed?
- Have I searched for, and received the gift of Truth from God, Who is Truth through the Holy Faith? Do I read scriptures and spiritual reading?
- Have I received the gift of Trust in God or am I insecure? Do I believe that God loves me and will care for me?
- Am I impatient when things aren't working out my way (but God's way)?
- Am I stingy with others?
- Does anger disrupt my relationships with others - and diminish love toward them? Have I refused to accept forgiveness or extend forgiveness?
- Do I fail to see God's image and goodness in others, or do I fall into the sin of judging my fellow servant? (Romans 14:4)
- Do I appreciate God's gift of health to me in body? In Mind?

Movement 3 - Sacred Offerings to God - Our First and the Finest?

The faithful servant offers to Christ the first and finest portion of what He has received back to God.



- Do I make a financial offering to God? If so, does it reflect a generous heart? a joyful heart? or do I give grudgingly?
- Do I join my material offering to a full and joyous celebration of the Sunday Liturgy weekly? Or is church (often like offering) more seen as just a duty?
- Do I make a daily spiritual offering of thanksgiving to God in prayer? Do I stop to give thanks to God before going to bed at night?
- Do I see the food on my table as coming from God and offer thanks to Him?
- Do I ever thank God for the simple, daily blessings He multiplies in my life?
- Do I see God as the source of my income and livelihood and try to carry out my daily work in a way pleasing to Him?
- Do I appreciate God's special blessings of spouse, family and home, and give thanks to Him for these?
- Is my Church a place where I offer prayers of thanksgiving and sacrifice to God weekly for all of these gifts? Do I seek to honor God by growing spiritually?
- Do I come to church expecting more to receive - or to offer to God and serve?
- Do I see fasting as an opportunity to make a spiritual offering to God, by denying myself food? Do I perform other acts of self-denial in this same spirit of spiritual offering? Or is fasting just a routine with little meaning for me?
- Have I stopped making financial offerings to God for some reason? Why?
- Do I offer prayers of intercession for others: those close to me, the poor, the sick, the suffering, those near death and the faithful departed.
- Are my offerings characterized in such a way as to be acceptable to God? Or like Cain do I offer to Him less than my best?

- Do I make offerings, fasting or spiritual offerings in such a way as to take pride in myself or to receive praise from others? (*i.e. Parable of Publican and the Pharisee*)
- Have I consecrated my voice and words to God's use? Or are my words impure, dishonest, injurious or evil?
- Have I blessed others through my words and actions, or cursed others - who bear the image of God Himself?
- Have I consecrated something to God (such as a wedding vow) and then rescinded my offering?
- For church leaders - How do I view the offerings of others - with thanksgiving? Do I make judgments of them and the people who make them?
- Do I lead by example in offering humble service to God, or expect others to do it? Is my service to the church blemished by pride, vanity or egotistical motives?

Movement 4 - Sharing the Blessings of God through the love of others.

After offering his first portion back to God, all of the affairs of life are carried out by the steward as further service to the Master. This is Ministry - intended for all.

- What do I do with the financial / material resources that God entrusts to me? Do I plan and use these resources wisely? Am I a spendthrift?
- How have I spent money on things which do not please God?
- Do I abuse my body with alcohol, drugs, excessive food or neglect it by failing to seek health care/healthy habits? Am I a good caretaker of my mental health?
- Do I provide for my family and serve others? Do my spouse or children lack from basic necessities due to my neglect. Do I allow anger to rule in my life and household, which impedes God's blessing to them?
- Do I make an offering of my time in service to God? If so, how? Can I offer more time? Or make my time offering better in some way? Have I wasted too much time on things of little value or entertainments (TV, video games, etc.)?
- Do I realize that my talents (see list above) can be offered to God in some aspect of service to Him, possibly by serving others or the Church?