



EPARCHY OF NEWTON
MELKITE GREEK CATHOLIC CHURCH

OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

Oct. 4, 2020

My Dear Melkites Across America,

In today's Gospel Jesus is telling us what he told us in the Sermon on the Mount: love conquers all: Our enemies, those who hate us, revile us, persecute us, speak evil against us and there is only one way to conquer them. Love them! And that is not impossible because each person gives what he/she has and since we have Christ within us, then we give his love, his care and his forgiveness.

Be merciful as your heavenly Father is merciful! These words of the Gospel are not impossible to live because the power of God overshadows us and we, having Christ in us, we too can be merciful. Our love needs to spill out.

Today we begin our Annual Bishop's or Eparchial Appeal and our love for God and the building and growth of his Body, the Church, must spill out of each one of us. The present and the future of our Church are in our hands - all of us together, bishop, priests, deacons, religious and laity. With all of our hands together we can accomplish great things.

You will be receiving a letter from me this week sharing some more information of the "vision" of our Church and your involvement in living this vision. My faith in God is strong and over the many years, 50 as priest and 31 as bishop, I see his guidance in my life, especially the last nine years as your eparchial bishop. I have witnessed your strong faith and commitment to your parish and to the Eparchy. Your involvement in the Body of Christ – the Church is truly a blessing and I thank you sincerely for sharing that blessing by your participation in parish life and your prayerful and financial assistance to the Eparchy. Your assistance is helping us grow our Church, support our seminarians for priesthood and diaconate, develop more resources for our Evangelization and Catechesis, especially on-line, YouTube and family faith celebrations. Your gifts provide us the opportunity to send you *Sophia* – an award-winning magazine. We have begun to properly develop our archives and digitizing all records along with preserving precious icons, books and memorabilia in an eparchial museum. Even our Annual Calendar that your parish gives you has a catechetical-education approach.

We all need to grow in Christ more and more and your gifts allows me to share this growth and make it possible. I decided to merge the Annual Appeal and the Order of St. Nicholas. At next year's Convention in Atlanta we will have a luncheon meeting for the Order members – They are those who are able to give \$1000 or more each year continuously. We will form a board of directors who will work with the bishop to develop the assistance for mission growth and insurance for the married clergy families. Each Order member will be inducted on the parish level and be given the Cross of St. Nicholas which they wear on special occasions and especially when the bishop makes a parish visitation.

The other donors to the Appeal will be supporting *Sophia* Magazine, priesthood and deacon formation, charity, religious education, archives, digitizing documents, etc. This year 10% of our Appeal will be sent to our Melkite Metropolitan George Bacouni in Beirut to assist the families hurt severely by the horrific explosion of the 4th of August.

St. Paul in today's Epistle speaks to us about Giving – God loves the Cheerful Giver. So often people say “money talks.” In a sense it does. If someone glanced at your old checks, they could see the real you, what kind of person you are. They would know if you belonged to a church, how much you gave to God, how much you spent for personal luxuries – so yes, “money talks.” It tells what kind of people we are, what we value most in life, what we love and care for most.

St. Paul says: “Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that by always having enough of everything, you may share abundantly in every good work.”

The important thing about Christian giving is not “how much” we give but rather “how much in comparison to what God gives us. God blesses us abundantly – so we give in proportion to his love, and we give this lovingly.

Paul says “the one who sows sparingly will reap sparingly” so let us not err but rather give generously – give abundantly and you will receive abundantly. Let each family make 2 lists: column 1: “What are we living for? Column 2: What are we spending for.” When you realize what you are living for, give wisely and give gladly – be a cheerful giver.

Years ago I got hooked on “tithing” – 10% for God, 10 cents for every dollar I made. I have never felt a loss, in fact I found I could not win with God – He always out gave me. He gave to me physically, financially and in many other ways. He owns me and my income too, all of it. I learned that tithing is just a symbol of my trust in Him.

Proportionally, lovingly, generously, wisely, gladly – and finally give humbly. When we give a gift to God, we bow in deep humility even on our knees because we bring so little when we think of how much He gave for us on the Cross and still gives.

In giving to God to your parish and to this Annual Bishop’s Appeal and Order of St. Nicholas you are assured that God’s good work in us continues to grow in abundance. God promises, says Paul “to provide you with every blessing in abundance” so that you may share this abundance to build his Body on earth.

If our giving is abundant, God’s giving to us will be even more abundant.

I keep you all in my prayers especially during this COVID-19 crisis, asking God to keep you in good health. I ask also that He open your hearts to keep His good work alive in our Eparchy by a generous gift to the Annual Appeal.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Nicholas".

Most Rev. Nicholas Samra
Eparchial Bishop of Newton