

What Does the Church Expect of You?

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Answer: Money.

Comment: The sacrificial giving of money is certainly something which the Church regularly expects from Her members, both young and old. Money is needed to provide a church building where Christians can regularly gather to celebrate the Liturgy; money is needed to support pastors and teachers and the whole missionary and educational work of the Church; money is needed to help the poor and needy. But in no place in the Gospel is the giving of money isolated from the rest of the Christian message. For example, in Matthew 6:2-4, Christ says:

“When you give alms, sound no trumpet before you as the hypocrites do...that they might be praised by men...But when you give alms do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your alms may be in secret, and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.”

And in another place, when Jesus saw a poor widow put two copper coins in the treasury he called his disciples together and said:

“Truly I say unto you, this widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the treasury. For they all contributed out of their abundance; but she out of her poverty has put everything she had, her whole living.” (Mark 12:43-44)

We see that the giving of money to the Church is a basic Christian duty, but the Christian message does not stop at that. The Gospel says that the giving of money becomes an act meaningful for one’s salvation especially when it is done in secret—to please God and not men—and when it is a true sacrifice—like the widow who gave all that she had. Finally, our Lord has said:

“If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor; and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.” (Matt. 19:21)

Answer: I wish I knew.

Comment: “Ask, and it will be given you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For every one who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened” (Matt. 7:7-8). For all times and ages, these words reflect the eternal promise of our Saviour, Jesus Christ. In our own day and age, with the Bible, sermons, services, and lectures in English, with Sunday Schools, libraries, and pamphlet racks in almost every church, and with all the emphasis in society on education and learning, it is somewhat appalling to hear that someone does not at least have some slight idea about what the Church expects of him. If you have no idea what the Church expects of you, then you should wake up and ask, seek, and knock, and with the ever-

present Grace of God, as well as all the sources of knowledge about the Church available to us today, the answer will be opened to you.

Answer: To be a good Youth Group Member.

Comment: “For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ” (I Cor. 3:11). Nothing can replace the basic mission of the Church: to announce the Good News about Christ. If you feel that the Church expects you to be a good youth group member, then be sure that She can expect this, in a Christian sense, only in as much as being a good member means being a good Christian. If the youth organization is a helper to the Church in the accomplishment of Her basic mission; if it promotes a sacramental life of unity with God and fellow man in the Spirit of Christ, then by all means be a good member. If, on the other hand, you are permitting the activities of group to replace the work of the Church, then perhaps you had better restudy your answer. Attendance at a meeting can never replace participation in the Divine Liturgy. Learning folk customs can never replace Confession and Holy Communion.

Answer: Too much.

Comment: “God said, Let us make man in our own image, in our own likeness...” (Gen. 1:26). The Church only expects us to be ourselves, and nothing more. The above passage, however, points out that being oneself means to reflect the image of God in all actions of life.

We should not think of our creation as the winding of a time clock which thereafter runs independently from its winder. The creation of man is rather like the plugging in of a light bulb which gives light only when in full contact with the source of its power. When man, through erroneous, independent use of his life, cuts himself away from his Creator, he no longer reflects the image and likeness of God.

The Prodigal Son illustrates this point. When the Prodigal took his share of the inheritance from his father and went to a far country, he fell into the depths of sin and despair, even resorting to the feeding of pigs, whose food he would have gladly eaten in order to sustain himself. Such is the nature of a life from which God is absent. But the parable also speaks of the Prodigal’s recovery: “But when he came to himself, ...he said...I will arise and go to my father...” (Luke: 15-17). Having seen the nature of life which is separated from God, the Prodigal realizes he has not been all he was “called” to be. He “comes to himself” and wants to return to a life which reflects God’s image.

What, Then Does the Church Expect From Us?

The Church can expect from us nothing more or nothing less than that which her Head, Jesus Christ, has commanded: “You, therefore, must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Matt. 5:48). If this seems to be asking too much, remember that for the man who lives with God, all things are possible.

Living with God means living the life of the Church. It means regular reception of the food of eternal life, the Holy Communion; it means a life of prayer, watchfulness,

fasting, Scripture reading and study; it means a life filled with the love of fellow man; it means using one's talents to their utmost and sharing of one's good fortune.