

This pamphlet, prepared in accordance with the regulations of the Melkite Greek Catholic Eparchy of Newton, and approved by the Parish Council, contains an explanation of membership in Saint John of the Desert Church, and guidelines to be adhered to by all parishioners. Parish membership includes both rights and responsibilities. This pamphlet has been prepared to inform you of what your parish expects of you with regard to spirituality, religious education, social activities and service, and parish finances, to be considered a member of the community in good standing.

### **Spiritual Guidelines**

A parish is a community of baptized believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, who seek holiness through participation in the Divine Mysteries. Only when we worship together regularly with the community can we be considered a true part of it. Only when we partake of the Sacramental life of Christ in the community can we be considered a true member of the Church, the Body of Christ.

- 1. All MUST** worship regularly at the celebration of the Holy and Divine Liturgy on all Sundays throughout the year. Those homebound or in nursing homes shall keep the parish clergy informed of their condition, so that they may regularly receive the Holy Mysteries.
- 2.** All are encouraged to participate in the celebrations of the Great Feasts and Sacred Seasons of the Church year through attendance at the Divine Liturgy and other Divine Services as they occur.
- 3.** All worshippers should make every effort to fully participate at all Divine Liturgies and Sacred Services they attend, most especially through the reception of the Holy Eucharist. Of course, a proper preparation for the reception of the Body and Blood of our Savior should be made, including Holy Confession if necessary, and fasting beforehand.

### **Educational Guidelines**

The responsibility to grow in knowledge and love of the Lord falls upon all members of the community. The study of Divine Revelation through the Sacred Tradition of the Church, of which Holy Scripture is foremost, is necessary for all; and most especially for the children of our community to assure the future of our Church.

- 1.** All adults are encouraged to develop their understanding of our faith through attendance at our Adult Religious Education Program, when available, and our Retreats.
- 2.** All children of the parish, from three to eighteen **MUST** be registered in our Religious Education Program and attend classes on Sunday mornings as well as the retreats prepared for them. It is important that we see to the religious training of our youth in our own tradition; fostering in them a great devotion to the Melkite Greek Catholic Church. Students attending schools operated by the Roman Catholic Church, who receive religious instruction there, are still required to attend our Religious Education Program since their curriculum does not include instruction in our Byzantine Christian tradition.

### **Social Guidelines**

A living and vibrant community depends upon the personal involvement of every capable member in some area of parish life. Participation in parish and social activities, ministry to the elderly and home-bound, charitable drives, the Parish Pastoral Council, the Melkite Youth Organization, the choir, the altar servers, and readers are all signs of personal involvement.

- 1.** All are highly encouraged to become personally involved in serving the community through participation in the aforementioned areas according to their talents.

### **Financial Guidelines**

Because of all that God has bestowed upon His people, in gratitude we are called upon to support His Church, promote our faith and further His works in this needy world. The giving and supporting that pleases the Lord, according to Sacred Scriptures, is that which is done gladly and sacrificially. It is necessary for each of us to answer the questions, "What about my giving? Is it a haphazard offering? Is it the minimum support to fulfill my duty, or a true offering made according to my ability? Am I giving a fair share back to the Lord for all that He provides me?"

- 1.** Every single person or married couple over 18 years of age **MUST** use the weekly envelopes for their contributions to the support of the parish. (Anyone who is not currently receiving budget envelopes **MUST** call the rectory to register and arrange that they be mailed to you.) Only if some other schedule of contributions to the parish has been arranged with the pastor will this requirement be relaxed. (As an example those of you who give through a direct deposit, Bank to bank transfer, etc, need to use empty envelopes to register their participation in our Celebrations.)
- 2.** A minimum offering of \$20.00 from each income earning adult for every collection or a minimum of \$1000.00 a year is the suggested offering. Those who are currently contributing this amount or more are encouraged to continue in their present practice.
- 3.** College students and senior citizens shall use the budget envelopes to be recognized for their support, and to maintain their dignity as members of the parish community. The amount of contributions shall be according to their ability.

4. Any member of the parish in financial distress, and unable to contribute to the support of the community is kindly asked to make it known to the pastor, so that the matter may be resolved with the proper assistance and confidential discretion.

**Only members of the parish community who are in good standing, i.e., following these guidelines, are entitled to the following:**

1. To receive testimonial certificates in connection with sponsorship for sacraments administered at other parishes, recommendations for schools and positions, and character references.
2. To use the parish hall after Sunday's memorials at the rate established for parishioners.
3. To be married at the Mystery of Holy Crowning. Those planning to marry should contact the parish clergy at least six months in advance of the desired wedding date to fulfill the necessary requirements. All witnesses, if married, must have been married in the Church and be either parishioners of Saint John of the Desert Church in good standing, or if from outside the community, be able to provide the parish clergy with a Certificate of Sponsorship from their home parish.
4. To have their children receive the Mysteries of Christian Initiation (Baptism, Chrismation, and Holy Eucharist). Parents and godparents are required to attend a catechesis session on the Mysteries of Christian Initiation to be arranged through the clergy. Godparents must have received all the Mysteries of Christian Initiation themselves and if married, they must have been married in the Church, and be either parishioners of Saint John of the Desert in good standing, or if from outside the community, be able to provide the parish clergy with a Certificate of Sponsorship from their home parish.
5. To receive the pastoral care of the sick by the parish clergy, including the Mystery of Holy Anointing if desired.
6. To receive the final prayers of the clergy and members of the community after falling asleep in the Lord, at the Funeral Service in Saint John of the Desert.