

PARISHIONERS' OBLIGATIONS

When speaking of the priests' obligations, we saw that they could do none of them without collaboration with their parishioners. It really requires every effort from parishioners to bring about all those aspects of pastoral life.

Let us go over the different obligations of parishioners:

1. To come to church and participate in the life of the church in prayers, the Liturgy and other services and send their children to church services, take part in the choir, prepare for singing, for serving in church, being members of different parish committees, distributing brochures and pastoral news-letters, being ready to receive travellers and strangers into church
2. To contribute to the expenditure of the church, cleaning the priests' vestments, serving in church. Those who come less often to church should especially give donations in compensation for their absence
3. It is good to have a little committee around each priest to animate the Liturgy and the other liturgical services
4. To inform parish priests about everything new in their parishes, births, joys, illnesses, journeys, diplomas or degrees, moving house, or change of address
5. To take part in different committees, meetings and outings, exhibitions and other activities, especially of young people and the faithful must help with other initiatives that priests might have, such as an exhibition, a talk, a feast, a day of spiritual retreat in a monastery
6. To inform priests about birth-dates, and the dates of baptisms and weddings, panikhidas for the departed and the dates of their anniversaries
7. To welcome their priests with friendship and joy to their homes and try to gather the greatest number of their family to hear their priests, pray with them and share the Gospel with them
8. To inquire sometimes about their priests' health, that of the bishop, greet them after a journey, congratulate them on their name-day, call to invite them to a family feast or walk, say good-bye to them if they travel, or invite them if the family are to travel
9. To make ex- voto gifts of things needed for services, oil, candles, incense, bread for the Eucharist and feasts; to hold feasts for patron saints for each family, as far as possible; to give priests the lists of the living, the departed, the sick, so that priests can offer prayers for them or commemorate them during the Liturgy
10. To guide the children and young people, so that they understand their obligations with regard to priests, to respect them, to love them and be close to them in their role as brothers, friends and directors
11. To encourage the children, the young boys and girls, to take part in different parish activities, such as catechism, the youth centre and others
12. To be interested in getting to know other members of the parish, their names, their work, perhaps having coffee together; meetings, excursions, where people can get to know each other, to feel at home with each other, prepare marriages through getting to know each other.
13. To give an offering to the church's funds in return for documents supplied, such as baptismal certificates or marriage certificates, burials and so forth, depending on the different parishes. (That must be done in a friendly fashion, without making demands.)
14. To give flowers to the church on different occasions, especially for the great feasts, the Akathist, the third Sunday of Lent, Great and Holy Friday, the Paraklesis, Saint Basil's Day
15. To think of encouraging a child in the family to consider a religious or priestly vocation, a consecrated life in a monastery, convent or seminary
16. To have the desire to get to know the history of the parish, the church, the community, the rites and customs, so as to be a real child of the Church who knows his or her mother.

All those things animate the parish and make it a living Church, a united, believing community, living in fellowship, and an atmosphere of brotherly communion, so that faith is the same, the sacraments are one and common and all the other elements are there to build up a believing, better Christian fellowship, capable of giving witness to Christ and his Gospel in wider society, so as to bring to all the message of good and of happiness. Thus the parish, the Church, lives out its faith in the world.

Letter of His Beatitude Patriarch Gregorios III - Patriarch of Antioch and All the East, of Alexandria and of Jerusalem