

# Saint Raphael of Brooklyn Orthodox Church

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Beloved Parishioners and friends of the Church of Saint Raphael of Brooklyn:

May God bless you always!

In last year's letter, I encouraged you to embrace a **bold vision** for who we can be and what we can accomplish with the Power of God working in our lives. I reminded you that giving to the Church is an **investment**. That investment is returned in spiritual rewards that last forever. Giving to the Church is part of our own spiritual therapy. We learn how to be more loving and support one another, including our children, through the practice of generosity.

In the Old Testament, the people of God offered a *tithe*, ten percent. As the people of God, the Church, the biblical model of proportional giving effectively ensures that we can keep building and expanding our ministry and our mission to the greater Iowa City area.

Remember that *proportional giving* means considering the *percentage* of income you are giving to the Church. If you do not give proportionally, please consider doing so. If not ten percent, what percentage can you offer? Whatever you have been giving, how much can you increase your gift this year? Remember that whatever your decision, don't give out of guilt or because you want to follow a rule legalistically. Rather, give freely because you want to give back to God with deep gratitude for the blessings He has given to you. Give joyfully as an investment in the lives of the people who have walked through the doors of our church to experience the grace of the Living God Who changes lives.

Our parish is changing, growing, expanding, and maturing toward more abundant fruitfulness. We've been making progress during the year, but **we are just getting started!** In this next year, let's give with greater generosity, joy, and expectation that God will build on what He has already accomplished and take the ministry of our Church to new spiritual heights. If we love one another and work together faithfully with well-placed zeal, 2025 can be the best year ever for our parish.

Yours in Christ,

*Father Symeon*

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The Church of St. Raphael is a parish of the  
Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America  
Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East

*"The disciples were first called Christians in Antioch" (Acts 11: 26)*