

SERVICE TO ONE'S NEIGHBOR (*DIACONIA*)

Care for those in need: of our parishioners, and others outside the parish

From the Pastoral letter of His Beatitude Sviatoslav

Serving One's Neighbor

Another important element, which expresses the inner nature of the Church and reveals the vibrancy of a parish is *diakonia*, which means serving in love or performing “charitable activity.” This service to our neighbor flows from our rootedness in Christ. Active love of neighbor is the vocation and task of each Christian without exception. It is only faith, acting in love, which leads us to salvation (see Gal. 5:6). Faith without works is dead (see James 2:26). “As you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me” (Mat. 25:40), - says the Lord Jesus.

Let us look around us – in this world there is so much tragedy and poverty, so much loneliness and sorrow, pain and suffering! All the challenging circumstances of our life on earth - these are for us an invitation to active love, which is an expression of living faith. The Lord wants to open our eyes to the suffering world so that we might learn to truly love and to express God's love to our neighbor - by our attention to them, by our sincere sympathy, support, by our words of encouragement and good cheer, but mainly, through acts of mercy. It is only then that we can consider ourselves vibrant Christians and our parishes can become places where care is given to the orphan, protection for the widow, help for the poor, and where the suffering of the sick is shared. Thus we will reveal to the world the maternal face of the Church and will become the living sign of the presence of God among humankind, according to the words of St. Augustine: “If you see charity, you see the Trinity.”