

KATSAUKSET / REPORTS

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Some ABCs of Orthodox Missionary Apostolic Work

Every Orthodox Christian a Missionary

Every Orthodox Christian is a missionary. Every single one of us! The font of our sending, the font of our apostolic work, is the baptismal font itself. Every baptized Orthodox Christian is sent directly from the font into the world.

The wellspring of the baptismal service is Holy Saturday—the Great and Holy Sabbath on which the Lord rested from his labors. At the Vespereal Liturgy of Holy Saturday, that monumental service in which the well-prepared and recently confessed catechumens are washed in the sanctified waters of Baptism and illumined with the indwelling gift of the Holy Spirit in Chrismation are sent out from the very Tomb of our Lord Jesus Christ by his last earthly command:

And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age” (Matthew 28:18-20, RSV).

“Go”, commands the Lord! “Go and make disciples”, says Jesus. “Go and make disciples of all nations”, he directs, “baptizing them and teaching them to obey all that I have commanded you”. These words, the Great Commission, are read at every Orthodox Baptism, taken from the service at the very Tomb of our Lord. Our death with him in his death is transformed into new life—the Spirit-filled life. We leave the dead Old Man in the waters and the New Man is risen for a two-fold purpose: to proclaim to all who will hear of the voluntary

death and life-giving Resurrection of Jesus Christ, and to bear witness to all the good that God has done (cf. Mark 5:19).

Every Orthodox Christian is commissioned for these two purposes—from the 40-day-old infant to the newly-converted octogenarian. The motto of the State of the United States in which this author lives, South Carolina, is, in Latin, *dum spiro spero*: “while I breathe, I hope”. This is all the more true for the apostolic commission of every Christian, *dum spiro, proclamo et profiteor*—“while I breathe, I proclaim and profess”.

So, baptism is the font of missionary and apostolic labor for every Christian. One of the most important keys to a zealous missionary diocese, deanery, and parish is reclaiming the central and vital importance of Baptism as the Great Commission for every Orthodox Christian. When the Vespertal Liturgy of Holy Saturday is emphasized as central in the life of every Orthodox Christian, and from there, when Baptism is strongly linked to the Divine Liturgy of the Lord’s Day, when catechism is serious and nominalism is not tolerated, then the soil of the diocese, the deanery, the parish, and the individual heart will be well-tilled to bear good fruit and encouraged to bear witness.

Put in a more negative way, how can missionary and apostolic zeal be cultivated when Holy Saturday is overlooked by large portions of Orthodox Christians or when nominal Orthodox Christians demand Baptism on short notice, with little catechism, little accountability, and on a day and time when few more than immediate family members and the sponsors are present for the miracle of new life in Christ? We must insist, preach, proclaim, declare, bear witness to, and expect that every Orthodox Christian know his or her true vocation as one who bears two-fold witness: to Christ crucified and risen, and to the work and activity of God in his or her life.

Some Ways Mission Parishes are Organized in the Orthodox Church in America

In the Orthodox Church in America (OCA), missions are organized in a number of different ways. One of those ways is through the division of a parish, which can either be an intentional blessing of God or alternately, the work of the devil. When a parish gets to a certain size, where its long-term sustainability seems more or less set, a portion of that parish (from a particular geo-

graphical region around an existing parish) can be “calved”, be given birth. Holy Resurrection Mission in Aiken/North Augusta, South Carolina, is an example of this. Originally, members of that mission traveled from those cities approximately 45 minutes to the nearest parish in Columbia, South Carolina. Once a strong core group was founded, that group was blessed to begin its own mission “at home”, which a priest visited monthly. Eventually, with more stability, a permanent priest was assigned.

Sadly, there is another type of parish division, a diabolical parish split: when there is angst between parishioners for whatever reason, and a second parish takes root. This is the worst possible way to begin a parish, but we cannot overlook that it exists. This can be particularly problematic in the United States, since sometimes another OCA mission is established (which fosters neither healing nor accountability), and sometimes a mission belonging to a different jurisdiction is created. It is difficult for a house divided in these fashions to stand. It is only by God’s providence, goodness, and longsuffering that beauty can come from such ashes. Thankfully, the Lord can and does sometimes heal the brokenness of our own church splits.

The more proactive ways in which missions are organized fall into two basic categories: intentional missions and chaplaincies. Chaplaincy is important—especially in places like the military and hospitals. But in my view chaplaincy as a method for planting a church is not such a good idea. Chaplaincy planting looks like this: someone says, “we are a few Orthodox Christians. Let us find a priest and the other local Orthodox Christians and have a parish to serve *our* people”. This is not an ideal perspective from which to begin a parish, since it has as its root “our people”. Of course, it takes Orthodox Christians to begin a parish (though there are examples in the United States where heterodox Christians, desiring to be Orthodox, read, studied and prayed their way to starting churches, eventually being received into the Church), but the aim of any orthodox parish is to invite every living soul around into the fold. As I like to say, “Orthodoxy is for everyone”.

Intentional Mission Planting is, in my view, the most vital and proactive way to begin a new church. A handful of zealous, pious, prayerful, generous Orthodox Christians is sufficient to plant the seeds of paradise anywhere. Armed with a solid grounding in the Orthodox faith, a joy for worshipping the One True God together, a commitment to love and forgive one another, and a healthy dose of *philoxenia* (hospitality, literally, “the love of the stranger”), these groups of people become magnets of God’s love and mercy in a given

city or town or village. In such a case, “they will know we are Christians by our love”.

Intentional mission planting can itself take several forms. In our deanery, the main form has been that of priests of a given region meeting regularly for prayer and fellowship (two day retreats). Part of our common effort is to build and maintain a list of cities of ranking size which could (demographically speaking) support the apostolic labor of a full-time priest over time. With a list of at least one of such cities (but up to and including every city!), we then begin working towards establishing a community in that city or town. There are various ways to locate who might be in such a city already, including the possibility that such faithful may and probably do come from already existing parishes, but travel a distance to get there. Following this “list plan” then allows a deanery over several years to be on the lookout for a capable pastor, paying especially close attention to upcoming seminary graduates who may have missionary aptitude, a gift which includes a great deal of flexibility, creativity, and an entrepreneurial spirit.

Another way we have begun mission churches takes the above approach, (cooperation among clergy), and locates a geographical midpoint (more or less) where there is no Orthodox church of any kind, in order to bring the Orthodox faith there formally for the first time. A good example of this is Beaufort, South Carolina. Beaufort is one of the oldest towns in South Carolina, and an important historical area. While Orthodox Christians have lived there for many decades, each one has to take one of four options: drive 40 minutes to a Mission of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese, drive an hour to a mission of the Orthodox Church in America, drive more than an hour and a half to the Greek or OCA Church to the north, or leave the faith. Over the years, Orthodox Christians in Beaufort have opted for all four approaches.

For many years I had an inquiring family at my parish near Charleston, SC (one of the two hour-and-a half-drive options from Beaufort. This family would drive to my parish nearly every week for Liturgy, but the distance proves difficult for anything other than liturgical participation once a week. At some point, I began to take my own missionary journeys to Beaufort once per month on a Sunday evening, for prayers, dinner, and catechism. Sometimes we were eight or nine adults, and as many young children, who would go upstairs and play together during the time of adult study. This resulted in the reception into the Church of one of the members of this group, including subsequent service on the parish council. With this experience, and upon learning

of other individuals and families in Beaufort, both Orthodox and inquirers, we made a more formal move to meet in a neutral location for our first public meeting.

We met formally on one Sunday evening per month for a number of months, and began to develop a dedicated small group of Orthodox Christians, one catechumen, and one inquirer. Among this robust bunch were two families who took the reins—one (from my parish) and another, who were active in the Rincon, Georgia, OCA parish. After a number of such Sundays, we put our eyes towards a priest, a then-seminarian who had indicated a desire to do missionary work in such a town. By the grace of the Holy Spirit, and the organization of the people, it was arranged within months.

This particular church plant employed a combination of methods. We had picked out the town in advance, a location with no Orthodox Church whatsoever within 25 or 30 miles. We advertised mostly by word of mouth in those early days. But we also took two faithful families (one from each of two established parishes) to serve as the “founding fathers” of the Beaufort Mission. These two families represented a significant loss to their respective home parishes. These were families devoted to active life in the parish and, it should be said, were very faithful in their financial stewardship to the churches. The resultant losses were therefore both financial and communal. That is, there was a noted loss in the bottom lines of both parishes, and each parish had one less family at the core of community life.

These were anticipated losses, but we did our best not to consider them losses, but rather to consider them as offerings. Rather than seeing these families as having “left” their parishes to establish something new much closer to home (the difference between 10 minutes to church and more than an hour), we described their exodus as a “sending”. Rather than a loss, we viewed their sending as an offering to the glory of God. As is often the case, the fears associated with such loss in the missions sending these families were largely unfounded—the Lord sent new replacements to fill those “losses” in equal or more abundant quantities.

The keys to this mission have been the faithfulness (spiritually and financially) of the founding members of the mission, as well as the full-time services of a resident priest. I will elaborate later on our planting grant program, but suffice it to say here: the generous offerings (true 10% tithes) of a number of the founders, combined with a generous planting grant from the Central Administration of the Orthodox Church in America, plus the robust

and generous support of the Diocese of the South, allow for such a mission to plant deep roots as early as possible.

The Church Planting Grant

The Orthodox Church in America has a unique annual grant which provides matching funds for the full-time compensation of a resident priest. It is the conviction of the OCA that the full-time ministry of a resident pastor significantly impacts the establishment and growth of mission parishes. The funds for such grants have come from various sources. In some years, special appeals have been made to the full OCA; in other years the funds have come directly from the operating budget of the Central Administration of the OCA.

Each summer, missions may apply for the grant. An extensive application is prepared, starting with the basic demographics of the mission. Several essays describe the day-to-day life of the mission, its missionary goals, and its evangelical identity. Each parish council member signs the application, and agree to the standards of biblical stewardship (specifically, the tithe), so that the leadership of the mission demonstrates a firm commitment to the “first and finest” (cf. Genesis 4:4, among others) in financial stewardship. With the written blessing of the diocesan bishop, the application is forwarded to the Chair of the Department of Evangelization.

The Chair reviews the applications, and compares them to previous “successes” and “failures” in order to evaluate as best as possible the probable “success” of the applying mission. (Success is defined here as becoming capable, after the three year grant period, of sustaining the full-time service of a resident priest at, or moving towards, standard levels of compensation.) The applications are ranked according to such probabilities and strengths, with an eye as well towards current grants (in an effort to maintain a diversity of grants across as many of our geographical dioceses as possible). Recommendations are then made to our Metropolitan Council for funding approval, and to the Holy Synod of Bishops for their final word.

The Church Planting Grant is an annual grant, renewable for up to three years in total. It begins with \$24,000 to be matched by the parish, deanery, and/or diocese, and is tapered off in subsequent years to \$20,000, and then \$16,000. In a given year, approximately \$100,000 is set aside for this purpose. This amount generally allows for 4 or 5 grants, depending on the number

of missions in each year-stage of their grants. For example, in 2016, we have two missions in their third year (a total of \$36,000), one in the middle year (\$20,000), and two in the first year (\$48,000 total). This yields \$104,000 for 2016. In the last decade or so, more than two dozen missions have been successfully established through the Church Planting Grant.

Missionary Stewardship in the Diocese of the South and the Carolinas Deanery

When describing the mission-life-giving Church Planting Grant, it is also important to highlight the OCA's Diocese of the South, and to discuss briefly the Carolinas Deanery Mission Fund.

The Diocese of the South, which stretches across a remarkably vast geographical territory, was founded in 1978 by the ever-memorable Archbishop Dmitri, founding archbishop of Dallas and the South. His Eminence was born in Teague, Texas, between Dallas and Houston, and was reared, along with his sister, in the Baptist Church. They both converted in their teens to the Orthodox faith, at a time when the missionary spirit in North America had waned significantly, a result of the after-effects of the Bolshevik Revolution. This was a time period where there was indeed growth in the Orthodox Churches. At the same time, it was also the era of jurisdictionalism, the sad fruit of the rupture of the Russian Mission which had as one of its main goals the bringing of Orthodoxy to the local Americans in their local languages. This was also the season before any significant publication of materials in English was available. Still, His Eminence was received into the Orthodox Faith, eventually was ordained priest and bishop, and founded the Diocese of the South.

Archbishop Dmitri's vision was rooted in two areas: the establishing of new missions, and the teaching of the biblical tithing (a concept not unknown in other dioceses and parishes, but well-known in the Diocese of the South). Today, the Diocese of the South comprises more than 70 parishes and missions, and a number of monasteries. It ranks among the strongest (in financial terms), and the diocese's model of stewardship has begun to serve as an example for the wider OCA. Further, in the last years of his episcopate, before his retirement, he led us to commit 25% of our annual diocesan budget to the development of missions. This robust support of evangelical, missionary,

apostolic labors serves to this day as the deep root of the life of the Diocese of the South. The 25% of the annual budget is used in a variety of ways, including the support of building programs. It also funds a student-debt reduction program for newly-graduated seminarians, which allows newly-ordained young priests to serve without the burden of often heavy student debt.

Inspired by Archbishop Dmitri's missionary vision for his diocese, the Carolinas Deanery (which spans both North and South Carolina), began about a decade ago to map out cities of certain sizes capable of eventually supporting a full-blown parish. At our deanery meetings, as described above, we eventually ranked those cities and took concrete steps to plant churches in those cities. Ideally such cities had no other Orthodox presence, or at least no predominantly English-speaking parish with the missionary desire to reach out to the locals. In that decade, the following missions have been established, each with a priest:

Greensboro/High Point, NC	Holy Cross Orthodox Church
Aiken, SC	Holy Resurrection Orthodox Church
Wilmington, NC	St Basil Orthodox Church
Beaufort, SC	St James Orthodox Church
Edenton, NC	St George Orthodox Church
Rock Hill, SC	St Anthony Orthodox Church

Effectively, this works out to the planting of a new church every other year, just in our deanery alone.

The missionary zeal of the Carolinas Deanery is supported by two firm foundations. The first is a commitment to excellence in missionary work. Each one of these missions is served by an adult-convert, Orthodox-seminary-trained priest, who along with his family has essentially "left everything" to follow Christ in the fullness of the Faith. In two of the missions, there exists the service of two priests, a situation in which the rector actually has full-time outside employment and his assistant is a full-time priest. The priests are committed to sharing with their respective communities what they did not or could not find in their own youth: the Orthodox Faith.

The second foundation is a dedicated commitment to biannual deanery retreats. Almost always these are a Sunday-through-Tuesday adventure, sometimes in a home (rented or borrowed), sometimes at a retreat center (we often use a Roman Catholic center, since we don't have one of our own). It

is common to have nearly 100% deanery participation (12-15 priests). We rotate preparing meals for one another in teams, and do the same for cleanup. Some time is devoted to down-time (walk on the beach, a run or a workout, or just impromptu discussions on parish life or a non-church-related topic). Otherwise, we invite a speaker: most often, but not always, another priest. The topics span the spectrum of parish/missionary life, some liturgical, some theological, some practical. Topics have included: The Liturgical Cycle of the Nativity (for homiletical, pastoral, and didactic purposes), Islam and Orthodox Christianity, a short course on preaching (in which over three days we each preached a prepared sermon to one another for immediate constructive criticism), and the Nature of the Priesthood. These retreats (one in Great Lent, one just before the Nativity Fast) foster brotherhood, continuing education, and simply a change of pace.

Additionally, the Carolinas Deanery has developed a very simple but very effective fund: the Deanery Mission Fund. Each parish or mission is encouraged to support the fund monthly—not all do or are able to, though the majority do, some at \$100/month, others more. This fund is used to support the salaries of mission priests in their early years of ministry, sometimes in conjunction with the Church Planting Grant described above, sometimes in tandem with diocesan assistance for a similar purpose. Occasionally some of these funds, with the consent of the clergy of our deanery, support the deanery retreat, in order to cover the travel and honorarium of the visiting speaker.

The Importance of the Laity

To be sure, since the epicenter of the Orthodox Christian life is the Holy Eucharist, a priest necessarily forms a significant part of the missionary equation. However, the dedicated labors and generous stewardship of time, talent and treasure of laypeople also form a sizeable portion of the skeletal and muscular systems of a mission. It is the laypeople who will be the main evangelists. “Tell a friend” is one of the first biblical exhortations of missionary work (see the story of the Gerasene demoniac, in which Jesus commands the one healed, “Go home and tell all the good that God has done for you” (cf. Mark 5:19)! It has also been statistically shown that personal witness/invitation is the most effective form of evangelism. It is through the efforts of the laity, mainly, that new people will come to the parish, if only the laity will but invite others.

The main key from the beginning of this essay to its end is this: everyone is a missionary, and the Orthodox Church is for everyone.

In the United States, where the Church enjoys no state funding, the churches thrive or fail financially according to the stewardship and generosity of the faithful. For us, therefore, the principle of the “first and finest” (see Genesis 4:4) is not simply a biblical principle to be studied, but is a means for providing directly for the support of the parish: the priest’s compensation, the building and maintenance of churches and buildings, the routine costs of parish life (insurance, electricity), and also ministry funds (for youth, the needy, and for other needs.) Therefore under the direct teaching of Archbishop Dmitri, in each of the missions of the Carolinas Deanery the tithe is vital. And in all honesty, if it were not for generous former Protestants, already committed to such stewardship, many parishes of the Orthodox Church in America would be in very, very dire straits. I have encountered on many occasions in recent years inquirers who, after coming to church for three or four Sundays ask, “where do I put my tithe?”.

Fr Josiah Trenham, a remarkably talented priest of the Antiochian Orthodox Archdiocese of North America, whose missionary labors I recently studied in a course at St. Vladimir’s Orthodox Theological Seminary, was told by his spiritual father, a renowned hierarch, “Do only that which corresponds to your priesthood, and let the others do all the rest”. On the one hand, this word points to the unique charisma given to the priest at his ordination: to baptize and chrismate, to confess, to serve the Holy Liturgy, to bury the dead, to preach and to teach. On the other hand, it points to the tremendous labors, both large and small (though all of consequence) that fall to the laity in a parish. Everyone must serve according to his talent. Some sing, some bake, some plant flowers, some design churches, some teach, some clean, some organize. The laypeople of every parish are the hands and feet of the parish in the wider world, and they are the eyes and ears in the world to keep the Church well-informed of trends in the world. If the laity are not empowered and encouraged to take their role seriously, a church can easily stagnate in the status quo.

Lay Ministry in the Establishment of Missions

Often the request to begin a mission comes from a layperson or from a group of laypeople in an unreached area. Not only do these souls inspire new apos-

toloc labors in their cities and towns, but they also can help to make priceless connections for the church. One becomes the main organizer. Another becomes the chief reader or singer. One is a realtor, who knows where some useful building might be rented, or how or where to buy land. Another works in a hospital, and can help make connections there. Another is a sales-person who builds relationships and may eventually invite folks to church. One is the chief officer of a retirement home and invites the priest to serve monthly services or to give a bible study, and who invites the residents to special events at the church. One counsels in a funeral home, and makes connections for the church there. Another is skilled in finances and becomes the treasurer. And these are just in the organizational steps, the early days. These ministries grow and blossom from there. Some Protestant congregations make an “each one reach one” effort: each member is encouraged to reach, or bring, one additional person each year. If this were to happen, a church could double in size each year. There is no reason why Orthodox parishes could not expect and encourage the same. Every Orthodox Christian is a missionary, and Orthodox Christianity is for everyone.

Laity and the Weekly Liturgical Cycle

It is common in mission settings to get excited about and to organize once-a-month Saturday liturgies in distant places—in the cities of hopeful church plants. And to be both sure and clear, there is nothing more important in the world than that the Liturgy be served. However, using the Liturgy as the foundational church-planting service also potentially relieves the locals of the regular, routine up building of liturgical life (the Hours, Vespers, Matins, Compline), all of which can be served simply and beautifully, regularly, and often without the service of a priest. This practice can also both test and build up a fuller liturgical cycle in a new mission, where many can learn the structure of the services and how to serve them in a reader’s fashion, where community can be built up in common prayer and service together. I have seen on a number of occasions where the Divine Liturgy was established first on a once-a-month basis, and then more often; by then, the faithful have grown accustomed more or less to “Sunday Only” services and have to be cajoled into seeing the other services as integral to their spiritual lives.

In one of our deanery missions, a priest visited locally only once or twice a month. The local lay leaders asked what they should do when there was no priestly visit. Should they not meet? To the contrary! First, it is important to build a community of prayer: a regular routine of prayer. Secondly, the laypeople, with the blessing of the organizing priest, can serve a reader's service in the absence of a priest (Typica on Sundays, for example). In the southern United States, it is common for Protestants to have Wednesday evening services. These can also be organized as a lay-led Reader's Vespers. These services are vital offerings to the Lord, and they have the practical benefit of opening the doors of the church more often. In some places—I am thinking about villages in our Diocese of Alaska or our Diocese of Mexico, there are towns and villages with churches and bells, but no priests yet. To have a reader go to that church every single day and ring the bells and then to pray in the church with the doors open to the public is vital to the internal life of the mission, and to the external life of the world. In Russian, the name of the only bell (in a set of one) or the largest bell (in a set of many) is called *blagovest*, which means Annunciation! Let us announce to the world that the Church is at prayer, it is alive, and that neighbors are welcome.

Ministry which springs up from the desire of the Laity

With respect to ministries in the parish, who will lead them if not the lay people? If a priest is to even attempt to do what Fr Josiah's spiritual father taught him, lay people must not only be encouraged, but also somehow held to account to live out *their* priesthood according to their gifts and talents. In my parish, though it is not formal in any particular way, I try to have a "I'll say yes to anything" policy, by which I mean: if a parishioner comes to me with an idea for a ministry or activity, I do everything that I can to say yes to that idea, and to encourage and empower that person to do something about it. That is, I say to the person making the suggestion, "Thank you for your great suggestion! How can I support you in implementing it?" It is more common that a person will say, "Father, I have a suggestion for *you* to try." I am less and less willing to entertain any such idea. In our parish, this lay-led ministry has taken various forms. One has become the main organizer of hospitality.

Another has become our outreach coordinator in taking collections of food for the local food pantry. Another two lead the church school classes. Yet another, with a missionary heart, helped design a pocket-sized brochure/pamphlet that we can give to inquirers on the streets. A small group of lay members with an eye for beauty keep our church appointed with simple, beautiful, and matching furniture. Still others maintain the parish gardens.

Means of Mission Growth

You and I plant seeds, others water, and God gives the growth. This is the teaching of the Holy Scriptures. Everyone who is sent to us is sent by God himself, not only for their salvation, but as my friend Fr David Rucker always says, “for our salvation”. Our work is not so much to convert as it is to invite and bear witness: but invite and bear witness we must do! Jesus did not say, “wait and welcome”, rather, he said, “Go and make disciples”. Further, Jesus said that in following him he would make us fishers of men. Rare is the fisherman who captains a boat, expecting fish to jump in it. (They do jump in: one just did, while I was in the course of writing this essay: a French Huguenot woman who is reading the *Philokalia* and learning about *theosis*—and who found the *Philokalia* by God’s providence, by no labor of our own!) No, the fisherman carefully prepares his poles, his tackle, selects his bait, knows the best time and places to fish, and goes to employ his skill.

Somewhere it has been said: “some see the parish as their world, I see the world as my parish.” From the perspective of church growth, “parish as world” is a chaplaincy model—the kind of model I mentioned at the beginning of this essay. It is one in which the already present constitute the mission: We pray together, serve services together, eat together, study together, but without concern for anyone outside the current group. With the model of “the world is my parish”, everyone is seen as a part of the local congregation, whether they formally are or are not, and every activity can become an opportunity to invite others to join in. The main helpful image here is that of the solar system. Think of the parish as the sun, and people as the planets. Some are very close (Mercury), while others are very far away (Pluto). In the “world as my parish” model, one goal becomes helping others come one orbit closer to the life of the Church. Here I’ll mention a few examples.

A unique liturgical concert at the church becomes a way for those further away to come one step closer. A provocative talk on a hot topic (physician-assisted suicide) might help a person move yet closer. Our parish is in a very distinctive neighborhood. We can and should consider that our food collection for the hungry be extended to the wider neighborhood, even though out of 700 homes only 1 family attends our church. The construction of our temple included nailing 10,000 nails into the wooden floors of the building. We invited the whole neighborhood to come. Those who did “helped build that church”. And when they say in my presence, “I helped build your church”, I gently correct them: “You helped build ‘our’ church.” Recently, we erected scaffolding 40 feet into the dome of our church to paint the image of the Pantokrator and other frescos. I personally ate lunch with the workers—treated them to lunch, took pictures with them in the church and posted them to Facebook. I will send them each an enlarged photo of the completed dome. It could not have been done without them. This is, in however small a way, “their church”. So far none of these examples even begins to discuss Orthodoxy. But that will eventually come, even if it takes years. In our parish, we have printed a remarkable journal-like magazine, professionally done and beautiful to touch. It contains amazing articles introducing Orthodoxy. It features tremendous photography. We give a copy to everyone who visits. We gave a copy to the man who installed the fire alarms when our church was under construction. He read it for three years and then became a catechumen, and later served on the Parish Council. Last summer, after having met a young woman of our parish, he married at Holy Ascension. He was a subcontractor on an appointed job one day. But it was a holy appointment.

There is no recipe for this. Any Spirit-inspired group could brainstorm a dozen such activities in a local parish: in South Carolina, in Mexico, in Finland. When it comes to evangelism and parish growth, there is no silver bullet. But if each Orthodox Christian remembers that the “main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing”, God will have plenty of willing souls through whom to do His saving work. Every Orthodox Christian is a missionary. And Orthodoxy is for everyone.