

FOR PRAYER AND REFLECTION

In the days ahead, reflect on ways you might share your faith with the following:

The Active. Those already belonging to the Church are in constant need of self-evangelization

- ✧ to ensure their ongoing spiritual growth;
- ✧ to renew their commitment to Jesus Christ while perfecting their conviction in the Faith; and
- ✧ to strengthen themselves to continue the work of Jesus Christ and His Church.

The Inactive. There are many nominal Christians who participate minimally in the life of the Faith community. They need

- ✧ to be reached with the Good News;
- ✧ to be invited to take a closer look at the Faith; and
- ✧ to be reincorporated into the Church's life of prayer and fellowship.

In many instances, inactive Christians are the most receptive to renewing their spiritual ties.

The Unchurched. Evangelization efforts cannot be limited to active and inactive Church members. It is a fact that most people maintain no religious affiliation whatsoever—the unchurched. Curiously, many unchurched persons claim to believe in God and consider themselves to be essentially religious. The unchurched, regardless of their former affiliations, must be evangelized.

But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light (1 Pet 2:9-10).

Through baptism, we have been called to proclaim the wonderful deeds which reveal God's plan of salvation. Yet it is only when we have personally accepted the Good News and have experienced its power that we are capable of sharing it with others. Those of us who hope to evangelize others need continual conversion by and to the Gospel.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION,
PLEASE CONTACT:**

FIRST STEPS IN SHARING THE ORTHODOX FAITH



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While evangelizing others, we need to be evangelized continually and to experience that ongoing “growth in life and faith and spiritual understanding” for which we pray in the Divine Liturgy. The Gospel must be constantly heard and received, studied and lived. God’s People must continually be “born from above” by the Spirit of God who dwells in the Church, bears witness to Jesus Christ by reminding us of all that He has said and done, and guides and confirms us into all Truth (Jn 15:26;16:13-15).

If we are not continually converted, reversion takes place. We are reduced to “apostates,” to the ranks of those who had “once been enlightened” yet who reject the Word, “crucify the Son of God on their own account,” and “hold Him up to contempt” (Heb 6:4-6). Willful rejection of the Gospel can “outrage,” “grieve,” and “quench” the Holy Spirit (Heb 10:29; Eph 4:30), even though superficial and purely formal participation in the life of the Church continues.

AN EVANGELIZED PEOPLE

An evangelizing people, then, is an evangelized people. Faithfulness to the Gospel, conviction in the Faith, and participation in the life of the Church are essential. As evangelized people, we must hear the Gospel and live it by responding to God’s presence in our lives and by recognizing His image in others. Only then are we capable of proclaiming the Gospel to others

with authenticity, power, and truth, without rejecting God’s friendship or sinning through presumption and hypocrisy:

Woe unto you hypocrites, because you shut the kingdom of heaven against others; for you neither enter yourselves, nor allow those who would enter to go in... For you cross sea and land to make a single convert, and when he becomes a convert, you make him twice as much a child of hell as yourselves (Mt 23:13-15).

KNOWLEDGE AND ACCEPTANCE

Self-examination and personal commitment are the starting points of evangelizing. While as an evangelizing, evangelized people, we understand that it is critical to know and accept the Gospel, we must also recognize the need to know and accept those with whom we hope to share the Faith. We need to identify—and identify with—those to whom the Gospel would be proclaimed. Sensitive preparation and planning must take place. We must become the servants of all “for the sake of the Gospel.” To the strong, we must become strong. To the intellectual, we must become intellectual. To the simple, we must become simple. We must hurt with those who hurt and suffer with those who suffer. To the weak, we must become weak, that we might “win the weak.” We must become, as Saint Paul writes, “all things to all men” so that “by all means” we might “save some” (1 Cor 9:22, 23).

And, like Jesus Himself, we must lovingly bear the faults of others and even be willing to die, if it will bear fruit (Jn 12:24). We must be prepared to “share with all not only the Gospel of God, but also our own selves” (1 Thess 2:8). We must proclaim to our hearers that “what we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus’ sake,” and that we “seek not what is yours, but you” (2 Cor 4:5; 12:14).

CO-WORKERS AND GOOD STEWARDS

Evangelizers are “God’s fellow workers” (1 Cor 3:9) who are committed to “working together with Him” (2 Cor 6:1) as “good stewards of God’s varied grace” (1 Pet 4:10). It is God who calls and converts, who grants eternal life; our ministry is to proclaim this message, not our own.

God prepares those who evangelize and those to be evangelized; we respond by cooperating with Him and allowing His presence to be formed and molded in us, His “earthen vessels” (2 Cor 4:7).