

THE MESSENGER

ST. PAUL THE APOSTLE ORTHODOX CHURCH • PO BOX 12635 • 5400 ANNIE OAKLEY DRIVE
LAS VEGAS, NEVADA 89112-0635 • 702.898.4800 • WWW.LASVEGASORTHODOX.COM

OCTOBER 2016 Communicant/Community

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE AN ORTHODOX COMMUNICANT IN AN ORTHODOX COMMUNITY?

- An Orthodox Communicant is FAITHFUL. St. Paul says that faith is the hope and assurance of things unseen. From the moment of our baptism into the Church, even as infants, we are full members of the Church, communing from the same chalice and in the same Lord as everyone else, young and old. Our faith is measured by our participation in the Faith, not our knowledge. We can know about God while not knowing Him.

Obviously, part of our growing experience in the life of the Church is to learn the tenets of the faith. But, conscious, analytical, “testable” knowledge of the faith has never been seen as the measure of our membership in the Body of Christ. When we reduce the life of the parish to the life of the church school, we are making our children good Protestants, but poor Orthodox.

- An Orthodox Communicant is WORSHIPPING. It is clear from Orthodox theology and from reading the Scriptures that we each are placed on this earth for one reason only – to praise and worship God. That is done by being present for the Divine Services. Perhaps it is sad that it needs to be said, but it needs to be said – it is a sin to simply avoid, miss and skip the services of the Church. It is a sin to arrive late. Period.

A worshipping Orthodox communicant is also one who prays not only in the church building, but also uses the prayer of the Church to inspire and edify a personal prayer life. The “liturgy” of the Church (“liturgy” means “common work”) is carried out of the building to transform and transfigure the world by the way we live our lives. If the Divine Liturgy makes the liturgy of our life prayerful and holy, the whole world is affected.

- An Orthodox Communicant is PENITENT. The essential aspect of our relationship with God is that we have willfully chosen to separate ourselves from Him. When we realize that, we humbly and sorrowfully approach God and confess our sin while seeking forgiveness (or we should!).

Our problem (especially in our society) today is that we have no realization that we are separated from God, we have no sorrow that we are separated from God, and we believe that we have done nothing for which to be forgiven.

The Sacrament of Confession is necessary to the spiritual life of any Orthodox Christian. This is true for both adults and children of confessing age. It is impossible to be an Orthodox Communicant without being a regular confessor of sins.

- An Orthodox Communicant is REGULAR. One of the great sins of the Church was teaching that participation in Holy Communion was a yearly obligation that was necessary to maintain our voting membership in the Church.

The great sin of the Church today is at the exact opposite end of the poles. We have numerous faithful (perhaps even the majority) who approach the chalice every week without any kind of fear, preparation or respect. An even worse sin is that there are people who want to be “regular” communicants but see nothing wrong with just skipping services for 2-3 weeks (or more!) and then coming back to the chalice as if nothing is wrong.

“Regular” means just that – regular. Going to regular communion means that we strive to maintain a life compatible with that act. Fr. Alexander Schmemmann used to say that each day we

OCTOBER 2016

St. Paul the Apostle Orthodox Church • Las Vegas, Nevada

<p>Oct 30 DIVINE LITURGY, 9:00 AM Hours: HOOD Epistle: STRANSKY Post-Comm: WHEELER CHURCH SCHOOL</p>	<p>Oct 31</p>	<p>GREETERS OCT 2: DEMKO/OSBURN OCT 9: CAMPBELL/WHEELER OCT 16: MCAULEY/CHONG OCT 23: STAFFORD/MURPHY OCT 30: CAMPBELL/OSBURN</p>				<p>1 DIVINE LITURGY, 9:00 AM PROTECTION OF THE THEOTOKOS BAPTISM, 10:30 AM GREAT VESPERS, 5:00 PM CONFESSIONS UNLV FOOTBALL GAME</p>
<p>2 DIVINE LITURGY, 9:00 AM Hours: YOUTH Epistle: YOUTH Post-Comm: YOUTH CHURCH SCHOOL</p>	<p>3</p>	<p>4</p>	<p>5 DAILY VESPERS, 6:30 PM ADULT FAITH FORUM</p>	<p>6 ERITREAN SERVICE, 8:00 AM COFFEE CHAT, 10:00 AM FELLOWSHIP CMTE, 7:00 PM</p>	<p>7</p>	<p>8 RUSSIAN CONFESSIONS, 9 AM SLAVONIC LITURGY, 10 AM GREAT VESPERS, 5:00 PM CONFESSIONS CHOIR REHEARSAL</p>
<p>9 DIVINE LITURGY, 9:00 AM Hours: TESFAY Epistle: WHEELER Post-Comm: ABRAHAM CHURCH SCHOOL</p>	<p>10 COLUMBUS DAY</p>	<p>11 12 DIOCESAN ASSEMBLY, LOS ANGELES, CA, OCT 11-13 (FR. JOHN AND FR. STEPHEN AWAY)</p>		<p>13 ERITREAN SERVICE, 8:00 AM NO COFFEE CHAT</p>	<p>14</p>	<p>15 FEEDING THE HOMELESS, 10:30 AM GREAT VESPERS, 5:00 PM CONFESSIONS</p>
<p>16 DIVINE LITURGY, 9:00 AM Hours: HOOD Epistle: W. DEMKO Post-Comm: BROOKS CHURCH SCHOOL</p>	<p>17</p>	<p>18 PARISH COUNCIL, 6:00 PM</p>	<p>19 DAILY VESPERS, 6:30 PM ADULT FAITH FORUM</p>	<p>20 ERITREAN SERVICE, 8:00 AM COFFEE CHAT, 10:00 AM</p>	<p>21</p>	<p>22 GREAT VESPERS, 5:00 PM CONFESSIONS CHOIR REHEARSAL</p>
<p>23 DIVINE LITURGY, 9:00 AM Hours: H. DEMKO Epistle: BITSKO Post-Comm: HUFFMAN CHURCH SCHOOL</p>	<p>24</p>	<p>25</p>	<p>26 DIVINE LITURGY, 8:00 AM ST. DEMETRIUS DAILY VESPERS, 6:30 PM ADULT FAITH FORUM</p>	<p>27 ERITREAN SERVICE, 8:00 AM COFFEE CHAT, 10:00 AM</p>	<p>28</p>	<p>29 GREAT VESPERS, 5:00 PM CONFESSIONS OKTOBERFEST</p>

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PO Box 12635
5400 Annie Oakley Drive
Las Vegas, Nevada 89112-0635
702.898.4800
www.lasvegasorthodox.com

RECTOR

Archpriest John J. Dresko
1747 Crystal Downs Ave
Las Vegas, NV 89123
860.833.4921 (Mobile)
fatherjohn@lasvegasorthodox.com

Father Stephen Osburn, Jr.
(702) 521-6988

CHOIR DIRECTORS

Matushka Elizabeth Dresko
Grace Brooks
Jarrod Huffman

PARISH COUNCIL

Virginia Hood, Vice-President
Karen Short, Treasurer
Catherine Wilkalis, Secretary

Gregory Brooks
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Building & Grounds
Kevin McAuley

Eritrean & Ethiopian Outreach
Tekeste Nuguru

Russian Outreach
Natalia Minkoff

Church School/Youth
Fr. Stephen Osburn, Jr.
Amy McAuley

Fellowship Committee
Charity Committee

should say a prayer of thanksgiving for the Eucharist we just received and a prayer of preparation for the Eucharist we are about to receive. We live from Eucharist to Eucharist. Confession is not necessary each and every time when someone remains a regular communicant – provided that we have not excommunicated ourselves by our behavior.

One example of behavior that excommunicates us is ignoring the services of the church. We pray for those who are “absent for a cause worthy of a blessing.” While many must work (worthy of a blessing), simply choosing to not be present is not worthy of a blessing. Confession is necessary to restore us to a proper relationship with the Lord and His Church.

But an Orthodox Communicant needs a place in which he or she can commune. That place is the Church – the Orthodox Community.

- An Orthodox Community must be a place we like to be. Our parish, indeed, the whole Church, should be a place we like to be, in fact, a place we love to be, would rather be than virtually any other place.

St. Peter said to the Lord at the

Transfiguration, “Lord, it is good for us to be here!” How often it seems that we don’t feel that way. It’s almost as if the Church were a place that we tolerate, much like the dentist’s office: “It’s good for me to be here, no matter how uncomfortable it makes me.” Or it is just another schedule-buster: “Well, I put off my gardening and dinner is going to be very late because I’m not home to turn the oven on.” Or has the appeal of television summer reruns: “Well, there’s nothing else going on at this time, so I’m here.”

Our parish is where God shows us the way to salvation. He does not use the TV for this purpose. He does not call us to assemble at the soccer field. He certainly will not come to us lying in bed through the Sunday newspaper. He does not tell us to gather as a “family” to share a big breakfast and our own “special time.” He tells us to assemble on the Lord’s Day as the Church, treating each other like brothers and sisters, rejoicing in the presence of our true family.

- An Orthodox Community must be a place where we support each other. The whole world is a place that tells us to take care of ourselves “because no

AT A GLANCE...

**Oct 1: Divine Liturgy, 9:00 AM, PROTECTION OF THE THEOTOKOS
UNLV FOOTBALL GAME AFTER VESPERS**

Oct 6: Fellowship Committee Meeting, 6:00 PM; DRESKO’S

Oct 8: Russian Confessions, 9:00 AM; Slavonic Liturgy, 10:00 AM

CHOIR REHEARSAL FOLLOWING VESPERS

Oct 11-13: DIOCESAN ASSEMBLY, LOS ANGELES, CA

FATHERS JOHN AND STEPHEN AWAY

Oct 15: FEEDING THE HOMELESS, 10:30 AM

Oct 18: Parish Council Meeting, 6:00 PM

Oct 22: CHOIR REHEARSAL FOLLOWING VESPERS

Oct 26: Divine Liturgy, 8:00 AM, ST. DEMETRIUS THE MYRRHUSHER

Oct 29: OKTOBERFEST (AFTER VESPERS, 5:00 PM)

Nov 8: Divine Liturgy, 8:00 AM, ST. MICHAEL AND THE BODILESS HOSTS

Send email addresses and corrections to:
fatherjohn@lasvegasorthodox.com

one else will.” “Be your own man!” “Pull yourself up by your bootstraps!” Etc., etc.

God, however, tells us that it is only in the Church, where we experience Him in each other, that we find the true path to salvation. The Church is where we lean on each other; where we fall down together and help each other up; where we lift each other up in prayer. “The only thing we can do by ourselves,” Fr. Thomas Hopko often quoted Khomiakov saying, “is go to hell.”

- An Orthodox Community must be a place we care for. The Church, if truly God’s Kingdom, a place where we support each other, where we find salvation, where we would rather be than any other place, is also the place that we must care for.

We find nothing wrong with the bank expecting us to pay our mortgage and in return they let us keep our house. Nor with our mother expecting some help from us when she is recuperating from surgery. Nor with a family reunion at some cousin’s house. Nor with praying for a dear friend who is gravely ill. Nor with ignoring our own safety when our child is at risk from some danger.

Why, then, would we find it hard to believe that we should financially support the Church so we can keep the House of God? Or volunteer time and effort? Or offer prayers, food and assistance to someone ill or injured and recuperating? Or with fellowship on a parish level (a “family reunion,” no?) in picnics, coffee hour, and other functions? Or by extending ourselves in faith by caring for the Church even when it seems we can’t care so much for ourselves if we do that? If we love the Church, we care for her and her members – generously. It is that simple.

- An Orthodox Community must be a place that defines all other places. Think of the places that are very special to you. Your home and family. Your neighborhood and friends. Your place of employment and co-workers. Your backyard. Your kid’s ball field. Any place that you can think of that takes a piece of your life can only truly be seen when looked at with the eyes of faith in the Church.

How can you have a family if it doesn’t reflect the love and sacrifice of the Church community? St. Paul equates the life of the Church with marriage – Christ is the Bridegroom and the Church is the Bride. How can you be a loving friend, or spouse, or child, unless you reflect God, who is love? How can you be a parent without reflecting our Father who is in heaven and our Mother Church? Who or what is a better example of loving sacrifice? Indeed, how can any place in your life have meaning or importance, unless it is first seen through the Church? It can’t.

Of course, that also means a challenge for the community of the Church and especially for our local parish. Our community has to be faithful to the Christian message to be an adequate example that I may follow and pattern in the rest of my life. We each have to work to ensure this.

(Reprinted from 2009 - but a good reflection for Stewardship Month)

Father John

FEASTDAYS

During October, we celebrate the following feasts:

PROTECTION OF THE THEOTOKOS

October 1

DIVINE LITURGY, 9:00 AM (SAT)

ST. DEMETRIUS THE MYRRHCUSHER

October 26

DIVINE LITURGY, 8:00 AM (WED)

STEWARDSHIP MONTH

Every year at St. Paul’s, we dedicate the month of October to reflections and concentration on Christian Stewardship. A fundamental part of Christian life and sacrifice, we will take sermons and some time at the end of worship to speak about the many aspects of caring for God’s Church.

In November, we will distribute the materials for the financial life, goals and support of our parish next year and then meet in early December to set the direction for the coming year. As always, we ask your prayers and efforts as we try to meet the challenge of using what God has given each of us to His glory!

PROJECT MEXICO

It’s on! We are going to be sending another mission team to Project Mexico next summer to help build a house. Anyone interested in going must see Father Stephen for details. **The first meeting of those interested will be held on Sunday, October 2.** We ask everyone for their prayers first of all, and the magnificent support shown this past year.

DIOCESAN ASSEMBLY

Father John and Father Stephen will both be attending the annual Diocesan Assembly of our diocese. The assembly will be held October 11-13 at Holy Virgin Mary Cathedral in Los Angeles. As both of our clergy will be away, but at a reasonable distance, you may still contact Father John in an emergency – 860,833.4921.

Kevin McAuley is our parish delegate. Please pray for all of us as we gather in council to set the direction for the coming year in our diocese.

SLAVONIC SERVICES

Father Alexander will be here on the customary second Saturday of the month (October 8). Russian language

confessions begin at 9:00 AM. Slavonic Liturgy is scheduled for 10:00 AM.

CHOIR REHEARSAL

Rehearsals for the choir are set for both Saturday, October 8 and Saturday, October 22, following Vespers. All choir members are asked to make every effort to be present.

FEEDING THE HOMELESS

Our next Feeding the Homeless project will be scheduled on October 15. We will begin to construct the lunches and bag all of the items which we distribute at 10:30 AM. We then take them downtown and distribute them and are usually done by 1:00 PM. Please join us! If you can donate any of the items needed for the lunches (or funds to provide such), it would be appreciated.

FELLOWSHIP DATES!

Mark your calendars and join us for the following fellowship opportunities:

4th Annual Oktoberfest: Saturday, October 29, following Vespers. Tickets on sale now! Tickets will be \$15.00 per adult and \$5.00 for kids 12 and under. Pam Campbell is selling tickets!

Christmas Bake Sale: Sunday, December 18, following Liturgy. More details to come.

Chili Cookoff: Saturday, January 21, 2017, following Vespers. Cooks, start your stoves!

2nd Annual International Dinner: May 20, 2017.

ADULT FAITH FORUM

Our regular Wednesday evening adult discussion group continues. We begin with Daily Vespers at 6:30 PM, followed by one hour of discussion in the parish hall. This year's topic will be

The Parables of Christ.

ICONOGRAPHY

The next phase of our iconography project will be to complete the east walls of the church (to the left and right of the sanctuary). Renderings are available in the church hall and you are urged to take a look. This is a MAJOR project which will require substantial funding. The two renderings posted in the hall will cost \$36,000 each, a total of \$72,000. **We are once again accepting donations to the Icon Fund. Please consider making an offering above and beyond your normal support of the parish!**

CHARITY

Our normal collections of food for Friends of the Desert continue. Needs: jelly, jam, peanut butter, canned fruit, canned tuna/chicken. Thank you!

ORTHODOX VENDORS

A list of businesses that our parish uses or are owned and operated by Orthodox Christians (some parishioners). We provide this information for you to consider if you need services.

CB Air Conditioning
Cedomir Blagojevic
(702) 493-0295

Dolphin Court Salon & Day Spa
7581 W. Lake Mead Blvd.
(702) 946-6000

Kyklos Café (Greek food)
Galleria Mall
Sophocles Frangakis
(702) 450-1515

Makeup and Hair Artist
Natalia Kasimtseva (Baker)
(I travel to client location)
Text or call: (702) 336-8300
View portfolio at:
www.facebook.com/NataliaKasBeauty

Westfield Eye Center
C. Edward Yee, MD
2575 Lindell Road
(702) 362-3937

PRAYER FOR OUR PARISH

We ask everyone to remember our parish in daily prayer:
Lord, God and Savior of all, we thank You for the blessing of St. Paul parish in our lives. May Your word become alive in each and every one of us who strive to follow You. Please bless and multiply all the gifts – time, talent and treasure – which are given in thanks to benefit our mission and glorify Your name. Bless and multiply the givers and help us all to make present Your Kingdom. For You are the Giver of all that is good, O Christ our God, and to You we give glory, together with Your Father who is without beginning and Your all-holy, good and life-giving Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

SACRAMENTS/SPECIAL SERVICES

Please follow these guidelines.

- Baptisms. A personal meeting scheduled with Fr. John will be necessary to schedule any baptism requested.
- Matrimony. A date and time for weddings must be requested at least six months (preferably twelve) in advance. There will be premarital sessions for both bride and groom to attend.
- Memorials (Panikhida). Requests for a memorial must be made at least one week in advance. If possible, the service should be served on Saturday. Other requests will be met as pastorally possible.

PARISH COUNCIL SYNOPSIS

SEPTEMBER 13, 2016 MEETING

Rector's Report: Reminded Council that he will leave after Liturgy tomorrow.

row for two weeks to attend the Metropolitan Council meeting and take care of personal and family matters from 14 September to 28 September. Father Stephen will serve in his absence.

Associate Priest's Report: Informed council he will no longer be tasked to serve in the Hesperia, CA mission in the foreseeable future. Their new priest is arriving from Seattle.

Father John commented that he, Archbishop Benjamin, and Father Matthew Tate, have reviewed Father Stephen's experience and the needs of St. Paul's parish and have determined that Father Stephen would remain at St. Paul's for at least the next two years until the summer of 2018. This will help him gain additional experience and prepare for his own pastorate.

Vice President's Report: Informed council that she talked to the landscaper about replenishing the courtyard ground cover and checking the irrigation lines to the trees. The wind tore up the plastic sheeting underneath the ground cover, and some of the caps on the irrigation lines have fallen off, causing water leaks. We have a supply of extra caps if needed.

Proposed the formation of a "sunshine" group to promote parish hospitality by sending cards to ill people unable to come to church, and welcome cards to new or first time visitors.

Recommended updating the church directory. Father John and Father Stephen will consider integrating the directory with the church website as a password protected section available only to those who agree to participate.

Treasurer's Report: Karen Short distributed our financials before the meeting:

Capital Fund: \$247.42
Rainy Day: \$31,087.32

Icon Fund: \$1,591.96

Income for August was \$23,600.97, with expenses of \$19,551.00 for a surplus of \$4,049.97

YEAR-TO-DATE

2016 Inc	\$ 194,184.42
2016 Exp	\$ 166,428.42
Inc over Exp	\$ 27,756.00

All parish finances including accounts payable are totally current.

Father Stephen's enrollment paperwork for the OCA Pension Plan has been sent to OCA headquarters.

Fr. John commented on his review of income from 2015 and 2016, and noted that as of the second week of September last year versus the second week of September this year, we are \$32,000 ahead.

COMMITTEES

Buildings and Grounds:

Church and parish hall doors: Door installation will need another three weeks.

Parking Lot Wall Repairs: Repair delayed pending receipt of proposal from stucco repair technician. Insurance company prefers to have all proposals in hand before releasing the money. Joe Wheeler will need to coordinate with the insurance company. Painting the wall will be done gratis. Paint is available on hand.

Sound Panels: Project is still on hold.

Outdoor lighting: Fr. John reports all outdoor lights on the buildings replaced free of charge with totally new fixtures by the lighting company. The services of the electrician were offered voluntarily gratis but the Council agreed unanimously to give him \$200 for his work.

Charity: Next feeding of the homeless is Saturday, Oct 15. There is currently

\$530.13 in the account for homeless project expenses. These funds have enabled the purchase for distribution of additional kinds of hygiene items including toothbrushes, bars of soap, washcloths and hats for cold weather.

IOCC: School bags for refugee kids sent via UPS to IOCC distribution center for shipment to Syria on August 22. Parish picked up the shipping costs of \$185.90 for 52 bags.

Church School/Youth: Church School "kick-off" picnic successfully held on Sunday, Sep 11. Many thanks to Kevin McAuley and Bill Stafford for their barbecue expertise. Thirty two youth are currently enrolled with an additional 16 potential students. Fr. John noted that Amy McAuley, Church School Coordinator, is in great need of more volunteers to serve as second instructors in the classrooms.

Amy McAuley would like to start an outreach project for Ronald McDonald House for our Church School youth. Some of the activities would involve baking cookies. Fr. John commented he would like to see the youth do some Christmas caroling in extended care facilities and nursing homes.

Eritrean/Ethiopian: no report.

Fellowship: Fr. John would like to plan a golf outing followed by lunch for 6-8 interested people on a Saturday morning.

Oktoberfest happens on Saturday, Oct 29 after Vespers. Tickets will be available this weekend. Due to shoulder replacement surgery, musician David Poe will be unable to play but he plans to arrange for a few of his friends to provide the band.

Fr. Stephen noted the UNLV game is on Saturday, Oct 1 after Vespers. 24 out of 25 tickets are currently sold, but we will be able to get more tickets if needed.

Outreach/website: Fr. Stephen is planning to redesign and update the parish website including adding the directory.

Russian: no report.

Stewardship: Stewardship Month is in October. Father commented on the results of a nationwide survey of the “giving habits of Orthodox parishioners”, and noted our parish is “ahead of the curve” due to our emphasis placed on the importance of Christian stewardship.

OLD BUSINESS

Iconography: reported he tried to contact Vladimir Krassovsky twice about fixing the Icons in the sanctuary, and so far has received no response – project is “status quo”. We are in process of collecting the 72K needed for the next Icon project.

Greeters Training: Father John still planning to conduct training for ushers. Some complaints have been received about the behavior of children (and some adults) in church. Father John will discuss with the greeters about church etiquette matters including when it is permissible to let people enter the church.

NEW BUSINESS

Diocesan Assembly: Father John will attend the Diocesan Assembly in Los Angeles at the Cathedral on Oct 11-13. Karen Short is unable to attend; Kevin McAuley will substitute. Parish will reimburse for hotel accommodations. Father Stephen will attend and will serve Vespers at the assembly on Tues, Oct 11. His transportation and airfare will be coordinated.

Next Council Meeting:
Tuesday, October 18, 2016, 6:00 PM

PARISH DIPTYCHS

This list of parish departed is to remind us all of those whom we love and miss and to spur us to remember them in our daily prayers. They will be remembered in the proskomedia before each liturgy.

MONTH OF OCTOBER

- Nikola Levrich
October 3, 1989
- Anna Shrive
October 6, 1999
- Darrell George Brezoff
October 6, 1999
- Harry George Turlish
October 7, 1994
- Svetislav Djoric
October 7, 1994
- John Pavelle
October 7, 2003
- Elmas Boyajian
October 17, 1997
- James Manassess
October 17, 1997
- John (Thouas) Thomas
October 21, 1989
- Helen Friesl
October 26, 2004
- Simona Heckel
October 27, 1991
- Maria Hernandez
October 27, 2007
- Sophia Mouratithou
October 31, 1991
- Stanley Andrews
October 31, 1993
- Milton Kevershan
October 31, 1995
- Ernest Kanakis
October 31, 1997

FATHER STEPHEN'S CORNER

ANY GIVEN ORTHODOX SUNDAY

It is officially Fall again and that means a few things; school is back in session, families are preparing for the holiday season, the weather is going from scorching hot to nice again, there is pumpkin everything (which I hate but Matushka Lindsey loves, so I'm mentioning it), everyone is getting back to their normal routines, and of course, the best of all, the return of football.

Now anyone who knows anything about me, knows that I love, love, love football (Skol Vikings!) and one of the biggest bummers of living on the west coast is that we often have to miss those early games on Sunday morning.

However, as Christians we are called in our baptism to make a choice to put Jesus Christ first in our lives. Society doesn't make it easy for us to make this choice and many of our weekend activities are scheduled on Sundays just to make it even harder, but we make that difficult choice so that we can experience the Kingdom of God present in our lives and strive to one day be in full and complete communion with Him. And really, in the end of it all, none of these extra things we do really matter when only the things that strive after God matter.

Nonetheless, this is not to say that we completely ignore the outside world - or even stop enjoying our hobbies. Believe it or not, we actually can learn a lesson or two from the things we like. The game of football, for example can be a metaphor for life.

One of my favorite movies of all time is a movie called Any Given Sunday. It is a movie about an aging football coach who is trying to find himself while struggling through his personal and professional life. Al Pacino, the coach and star in the movie gives a resounding speech at the end

of the movie about how life is a game of inches, “You find out life’s this game of inches, so is football. Because in either game - life or football - the margin for error is so small. One half a step too late or too early and you don’t quite make it. One half second too slow, too fast and you don’t quite catch it. The inches we need are everywhere around us...we know when add up all those inches, that’s gonna make the difference between winning and losing!” Of course in most games, the big plays are the ones that make the highlight reel; not the small ones. Whether it is the famous “Helmet Catch” between Eli Manning and David Tyre to help the Giants beat the undefeated ’07 Patriots or the Brett Favre interception to Tracy Porter sealing the Vikings Super Bowl fate in ’09 (still not 100% over that) or any of the hundreds of great plays that have occurred over the years, it is small plays that make the difference in getting us to these moments.

Similarly, there are the big plays in our Christian lives like baptisms, weddings, funerals, various feast days, and the biggest play of them all: Pascha. But the small steps, the grind of coming to the Divine Liturgy every Sunday, the tiresome fasting throughout the year and its seasons, the fumbling between when and how we are to give to the poor and serve the needy or worry about our bills for the month, the motion to learn and grow in the Faith, the tackling of our sins through repentance and Confession, the unnecessary roughness for us not to judge each other but instead love one another, and the continued huddling of praying and prayer in our daily lives. These are the small steps, the inches, the choices we make every play of our lives that is the difference between winning and losing. As Orthodox Christians we know that in Christ we already have won,

but He won a battle with Death. We, ourselves must also fight the battle by imitating His playbook. We are to be as faithful members of the Church, where we are called to continue that fight for those very inches. We are called to continue to pray, fast, repent, serve, read Scriptures, attend services, honor and love our neighbors, day by day, inch by inch, play by play.

If the expression “art imitates life” has any truth to it, it is our hobbies or the things we enjoy most that

can sometimes teach us our greatest lessons. Football, baseball, movies, knitting, whatever it is you fancy can be both fruitful and helpful in our struggles with daily life. They can be a source of wisdom, without losing ourselves in them to coming into a fuller understanding of the Church and Christ. As we continue to fight for those inches, let us enjoy this time of the year with all its luster, pomp and circumstance, while also continuing to work to touchdown the Kingdom of Heaven and to the glory of God.

A STUDY OF ORTHODOX GIVING IN AMERICA • ALEXEI KRINDATCH

Twelve Facts about the Generosity of Our Church Members highlights some interesting and important findings from the 2015 national study “Exploring Orthodox Generosity: Giving in US Orthodox Parishes.” 421 Orthodox parish clergy and 2,988 lay church members representing all US Orthodox Churches participated in this study. The size of the sample (nearly 3,500 respondents total) and representation of various Orthodox jurisdictions and US geographic regions makes this study the largest survey-based study of the Orthodox Christian Churches ever conducted in America. Below, we summarize some interesting facts that have relevance and can be useful for all US Orthodox parishes — no matter to what particular Orthodox jurisdiction they belong. Yet, *Twelve Facts about the Generosity of Our Church Members* is only a small portion of the full report. Enjoy this snippet and then read the full PDF report that is posted online: <http://assemblyofbishops.org/news/research>

Before revealing *Twelve Facts about the Generosity of Our Church Members*, one question needs to be answered: “In general, how do US Orthodox Christian Churches elicit money from their members? What systems do they use?” The short answer to this question is that US Orthodox parishes employ very different models of financial contributions of their parishioners. The survey asked parish clergy: “Which model best describes your parish’s system of financial contributions by parishioners?” ... “Stewardship/Pledging” is the dominant system of financial contributions used in American Orthodox Churches: 54% of parishes use this model. The adjustable tithe (i.e. pledging a certain percentage of one’s income rather than an actual dollar amount) is employed nearly by one fifth (18%) of the parishes. The old-fashioned “membership dues” model is still present in one out of six American Orthodox parishes: 16% of parishes use this model. Finally, 9% of the parishes rely on non-planned free will offerings: that is, these parishes simply “pass the plate” and hope for (and try to encourage, of course) the “spontaneous” generosity of their members.

(The study will be looked at in detail during October at St. Paul’s.)