

# NEWSPAPER «ORTHODOX FAITH»: ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN EVANGELISM AT WORK

The first and most important thing to remember is that we do not bring anyone into the Church — its not our job. We do not attract people to the faith, we do not convince people of the Truth, we don't do any of that. God is the One Who attracts people, Who brings them in, Who cures their hearts, Who brings them to repentance, Who convinces them of the Truth; we do none of this. Too often in the North American model of evangelism, the individual person is made responsible for doing God's task, but in attempting to do God's work, we neglect our own. What is our task? Our task is the acquisition of the Holy Spirit (St Seraphim), our task is the working out of our salvation, our task is to repent and weep for our sins, our task is to enter the Kingdom of God. This more than anything else is what we must do. This is an evangelistic task — indeed the primary evangelistic task.

There are other «tasks», however, which derive from this one which are a bit more specific to «evangelism». It is God who brings people to the door of the Church and who convinces them that they should enter — however, we must keep the door to the Church open and visible. Hence, Orthodox evangelism must center on the Church — the beauty of the building, the beauty of the services, the frequency and availability of the services. Orthodox evangelism is served by beautiful icons, gold onion domes and crosses rising against the sky, the smell of incense, the pious and holy singing of the services. Orthodox evangelism is served by our visibility as Orthodox Christians in the world — the clothing of the clergy

(and in these days the modest and humble clothing of the laymen as well) — the sign of the cross as we pray at each juncture of our lives — beginning and ending a task, eating and finishing a meal, starting and ending a trip, etc. Orthodox evangelism is the keeping of icons in our homes, in our offices, in our cars. Orthodox evangelism is keeping the fast without excuses

The second specific task that we as Orthodox Christians have in evangelism is the practical expression of God's love to mankind. Orthodox evangelism is greeting visitors as they come to the Church and then modeling (neither instructing nor condemning the visitor) for them proper behavior and demeanor in the Church. Orthodox evangelism is hospitality offered

to share meals, to provide shelter and clothing as needed. Orthodox evangelism is to pray for our neighbor and to love our neighbor as ourself. Orthodox evangelism is going to the soup kitchen and serving there — Orthodox evangelism is giving to the poor without regard for «how the money will be used». Orthodox evangelism is visiting the sick in hospitals and praying for them. Orthodox evangelism is going the prisons (contact your local prison chaplain regarding how this might be done) and offering comfort and kindness to the imprisoned. Orthodox evangelism is loving your enemies (Elder Silouan of Mt Athos says that this is the true mark of a Christian — the love of one's enemies). Orthodox Evangelism is loving your neighbor as yourself. If we all did these things (and I am a wretched sinner and fall short of



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or compromises. Orthodox evangelism is setting our priorities to forgo the allures of the world in order to be at divine services whenever they are held. Orthodox evangelism is denying ourselves and bearing our cross. Orthodox evangelism is keeping the door of the Church open and visible. While the Holy Spirit is the one who draws the world to Himself, it is you and I who keep the doors of the Church open and who welcome all who come.

all that I have just said) then our Churches would be open and filled with light and glory drawing all who see her by the grace and action of the Holy Spirit in their hearts. We don't have to preach on street corners, we don't have to have «events» or revivals or seminars as evangelistic tools — we simply have to be Orthodox Christians «to the max» without reservation or compromise. That is Orthodox evangelism.



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