



# Facing Life's Challenges

Life works well when you do it right.

Martyrs Sophia, Faith (12), Hope (10), and Love (9); martyred by the Emperor Hadrian in the early 2<sup>nd</sup> Century.

How did they do it?  
Would we do as well?  
Our children?

# Some Background

- Who created Orthodoxy?
- What is its purpose?
- Is it effective?
- Metaphors for how it works (or doesn't)

No, Really -  
I am a marathoner & triathlete!



I just took a couple of weeks off...

# Like in Athletics & Soldiering



- Committing to the identity is only the first step.
- It's the routines and rituals that build and maintain the skills.
- The benefits do not accrue for those that don't go through the motions.
- But for those that do? **SONS AND DAUGHTERS OF GOD!**
  - Trust God!
  - Trust The Way!
  - Trust the Orthodox System! [Note: remember the 11<sup>th</sup> hour!]

# Infancy: 0 – 1 Years

**Conflict:** Trust vs. Mistrust

**Question:** “Can I trust the world?”

**Virtue Developed:** Hope

**Ritual actions (mother-centered):** feeding, changing, comforting, attentiveness



# The Instrumental Defense of Infants

- Stark: The growth of Christianity was directly tied to its protection of infants (*The Rise of Christianity*).



# What is an Infant Worth?

- **Psalm 126:3-5.** Children are a heritage from the Lord, offspring a reward from him. Like arrows in the hands of a warrior are children born in one's youth. Blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them. They will not be put to shame when they contend with their opponents in court.
- **Genesis 1:26a,27.** Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; ... So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.
- How are infants made in God's image?
  - They are weak, unintelligent, defenseless, parasitical, and needy.
  - They are imagers of God, regardless of those attributes!

# Can We Do It Wrong?

- Leviticus 18:21. *You shall not give any of your offspring to offer them to Molech...*
- Psalm 105:35-38. *But they mingled with the nations and learned their practices ... they even sacrificed their sons and their daughters to the demons ... and the land was polluted with the blood.*
- [Psalm 136:9. *Happy shall he be who takes your little ones and dashes them against the rock!]*



# Orthodox Infants

- We Baptize, Chrismate, and Commune our Infants – why?
- [PSA: We have special prayers and services for babies – they are part of the program!]
- Support families, and especially mothers; make it possible for them to attend regularly.
- The positive affect from attendance within the safety of the mother's (et al) arms transfers to affect for the smells, sounds, and place of the Church.
- Building up trust and hope – it starts here!

# Orthodox Children (2 – 11 yrs)

## **Early Childhood (1-3 yrs):**

**Conflict:** Autonomy vs. Shame & Guilt

**Question:** Is it okay to be me?

**Virtue Developed:** Will (and Purity and Authority)

**Ritual Actions:** Toilet training, washing, clothing themselves, bed time

## **Preschool Age (3–6 yrs)**

**Conflict:** Initiative vs. guilt

**Question:** Is it okay for me to do, move, and act?

**Virtue Developed:** Autonomy (and Authority, Belonging)

**Morality (Kollberg):** Based on Fear of Punishment (Obedience/Discipline)

**Ritual Actions:** Exploring, using tools, making art, beginning play

## **School Age (6–11 yrs)**

**Conflict:** Industry vs. Inferiority

**Question:** Can I make it in the world of people and things?

**Virtue Developed:** Competence (and Fairness, Loyalty/Belonging, and Equality)

**Morality (Kollberg):** Instrumental, Exchange

**Ritual Actions:** School, sports, play, negotiations

# Children - Scripture

- **Leviticus 20:9.** *Every one who curses his father or his mother shall be put to death; he has cursed his father or his mother, his blood is upon him.*
- **Deuteronomy 11:19 (& 6:7).** *And you shall teach my words to your children, speaking of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up.*
- **Proverbs 13:24.** *He that spares the rod hates his son, but he that loves him carefully chastens him.*
- **Proverbs 22:6.** *Train up (i.e. dedicate) a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it.*
- **St. Matthew 18:10.** *See that you do not despise one of these little ones\*; for I tell you that in heaven their angels always behold the face of my Father who is in heaven.*

# Children – Christ God (!)

## **St. Matthew 18:2-6.**

*And calling to him a child, he put him in the midst of them, and said, “Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever humbles himself like this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.*

*Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me; but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened round his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea.”*

# Children – Christ God (!)

**St. John Chrysostom explains what Christ said.**

*By putting the child in there he shames them and persuades them to be lowly and artless. Since both from envy the little child is pure, and from vainglory, and from longing for the first place; and he is possessed of the greatest of virtues, simplicity, and whatever is artless and lowly....*

*Seest thou how again He calls us on to all natural excellencies, indicating that of free choice it is possible to attain them, and so silences the wicked frenzy of the Manichæans? For if nature be an evil thing, wherefore doth He draw from hence His patterns of severe goodness?*

*And the child which He set in the midst suppose to have been a very young child indeed, free from all these passions. For such a little child is free from pride and the mad desire of glory, and envy, and contentiousness, and all such passions, and having many virtues, simplicity, humility, unworldliness, prides itself upon none of them; which is a twofold severity of goodness; to have these things, and not to be puffed up about them.*

# Children – Christ God (!)

**St. Jerome explains what Christ said.**

*“Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me.”* Whoever lives so as to imitate Christ’s (childlike) humility and innocence, in him Christ is taken up. And he is careful to add —so that when the apostles heard of it, they would not think that they had been honored— **that they would not be taken up for their merit but for the honor of the master (as a child is).**

# Children – Sts. Paul & John Chrysostom

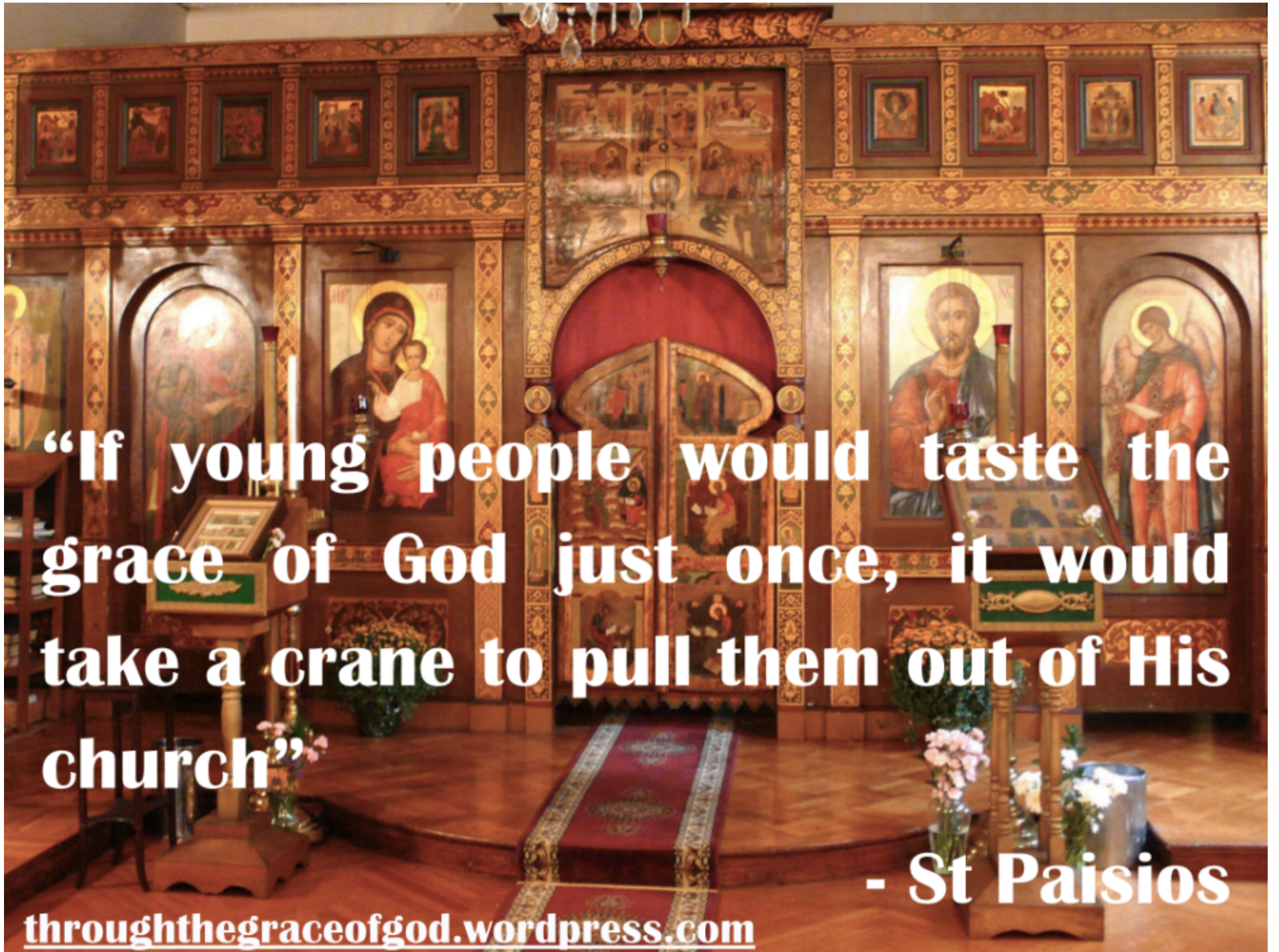
**Ephesians 6:4.** *And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.*

**St. John Chrysostom.** He does not say, “Love your children.” Nature itself takes care of this by implanting this in us even against our will. So that interpretation would be superfluous. Instead, what does he say? “Do not make your children angry.” So many parents do this. They do this by depriving them of their portion of the inheritance and their promises, by oppressing them with burdens, by treating them not as though they were free but as slaves.

# Orthodox Children

- Costs/Benefits of Minimal Participation
  - No positive affect (often quite the opposite)
  - No sense of belonging, legitimate authority, or knowledge of the rules/patterns of expectations
- Costs/Benefits of Regular Participation
  - Positive affect (in a healthy parish)
  - Sense of belonging, deference, intuitive sense of expectations, knowledge of rules and stories
  - Automatic identification of self as Christian; something that can be filled in over time





**“If young people would taste the grace of God just once, it would take a crane to pull them out of His church”**

**- St Paisios**

**[throughthegraceofgod.wordpress.com](http://throughthegraceofgod.wordpress.com)**

**BREAK**

# Orthodox Youth (12 – 39 yrs)

## Adolescents(12-19 yrs):

**Conflict:** Identity vs. Role Confusion

**Question:** Who am I? Who can I be?

**Virtue Developed:** Fidelity (to self?)

**Morality (Kollberg):**

- **Stage three:** Interpersonal Conformity (Good Boy/Girl)
- **Stage four:** Law and Order (Duty and Conscience)

**Ritual Actions:** Social Relations

## Young Adult (20–39 yrs)

**Conflict:** Intimacy vs. Isolation

**Question:** Can I love?

**Virtue Developed:** Love

**Morality (Kollberg):**

- **(Stage Five:** Local logical morality)
- **(Stage Six:** Universal logical morality)

**Ritual Actions:** Romantic Relationships

It is during this time that the training of the instincts, mind, and nous become essential!!!

- Worship & Prayer (Self Control)
- Fasting (Self Control)
- Chastity (Self Control)
- Tithing (Self Control)
- Almsgiving (Sympathy/Service)
- Ministry to Others (Compassion)

# Orthodox Youth (12 – 19 yrs)

It is during this time that the training of the instincts, mind, and nous become essential!!

- Worship & Prayer (Self Control, Identity, Love)
- Fasting (Self Control, Compassion)
- Chastity (Self Control, Identity)
- Tithing (Self Control, Identity)
- Almsgiving (Compassion, Identity, Love)
- Ministry to Others (Compassion, Identity, Love)

**Again, note that irregular participation does not confer the benefits of commitment!**

# Orthodox Young Adults (20 – 39 yrs)

The training of the instincts, mind, and nous continue (and become more difficult)

- Ascetic disciplines (e.g. fasting, tithing)
- Duty/love disciplines (e.g. service, ministry)

To these are added even more social disciplines!

- Learning what love means is essential (and confusing)
- Actually loving neighbor and enemy is also essential
- The demands of worldly “love” increasingly comes into conflict with what the Church teaches about it!
- This is also when Christians are called to develop their gifts for the service of God and neighbor!

**Again, note that irregular participation does not confer the benefits of commitment!**

# Useful Scripture

- **John 5:15.** *No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you.*
- **Galatians 3:24-26.** *The law was our custodian until Christ came, that we might be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a custodian; for in Christ Jesus you are all children of God, through faith.*
- **1 Timothy 4:12.** *Let no one despise your youth, but set the believers an example in speech and conduct, in love, in faith, in purity.*
- **1 Peter 2:9.** *You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.*

# Useful Scripture & Commentary

- **Romans 12:6-8.** *Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.*

# Useful Scripture & Commentary

- **Basil the Great.** *No one has the capacity to receive all spiritual gifts, but the grace of the Spirit is given proportionately to the faith of each one.*
- **St. John Chrysostom.** *St. Paul wants them to labor more in earnest, by showing that it is they themselves that give the grounds for their receiving more or less; but he also says that it is given by God so that he may subdue the haughty.*



# Useful Scripture & Commentary

- **Matthew 6:24.** *No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.*
- **St. Augustine.** *He does not say that one will hate the other, for scarcely anyone's conscience could hate God. But one disregards God—that is to say, one does not fear God but presumes on his goodness. From this negligent and tormented confidence, the Holy Spirit recalls us when he says through the prophet: “Son, do not add sin to sin; and do not say, ‘The mercy of God is great.’ ” Note when Paul says, “Do you not know that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?” For whose mercy can be accounted as great as the mercy of him who forgives all, if they convert to him?*



# The Youth Challenge Facts



**The “millennial generation” (born after 1980) is “less religiously affiliated” than any previous generation.**

**One in four Americans aged 18-29 do not affiliate with any particular religious group.**

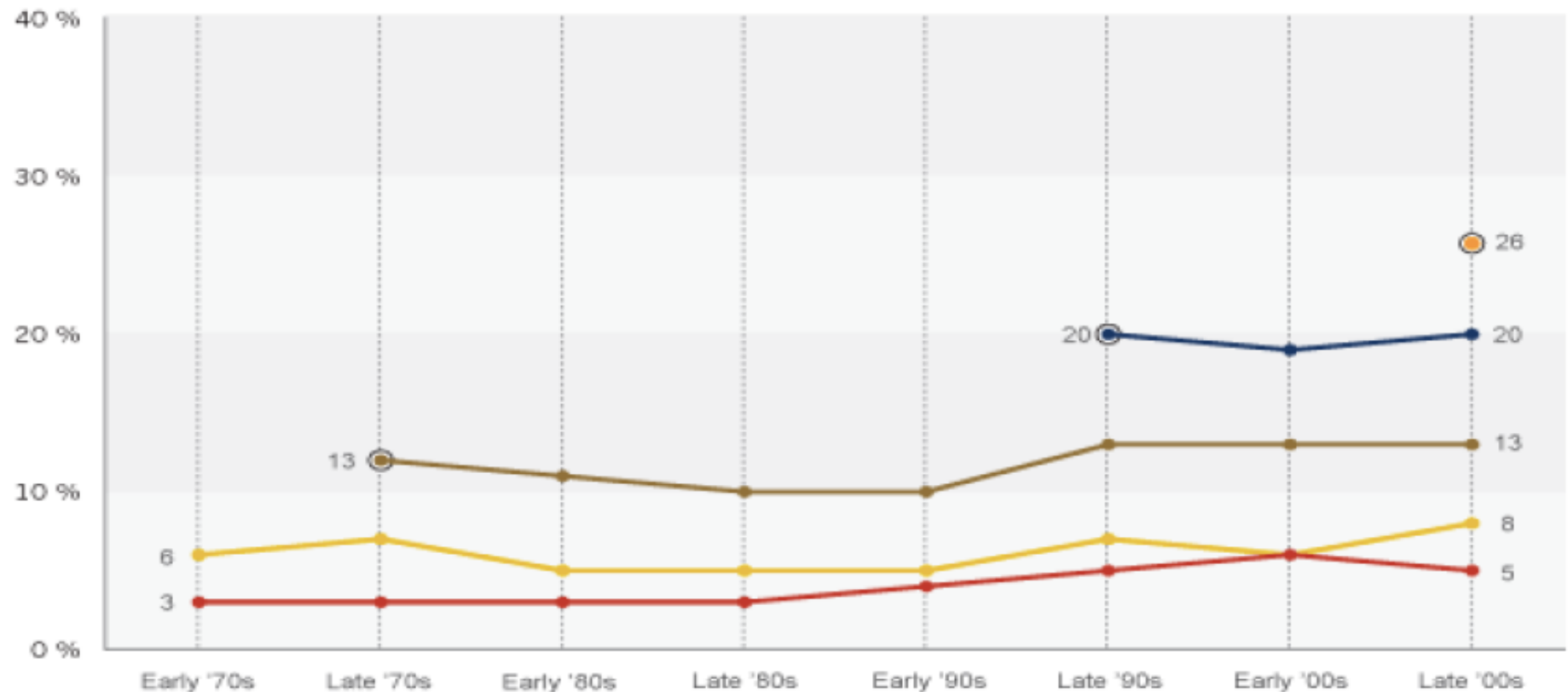
***Millennials are twice as unaffiliated as Baby Boomers (born between 1946 and 1964) were at the same age.***

---

<sup>1</sup> Religion in the Millennial Generation (2010) and U.S. Religious Landscape Survey (2007), Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life of the Pew Research Center.

# Young People Less Religiously Affiliated

Percent unaffiliated with a religion, by generation



**Source:** General Social Surveys.

**Question Wording:** What is your religious preference?

Is it Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, some other religion or no religion?

- Millennial (born 1981 or later)
- Gen X (born 1965-80)
- Boomer (born 1946-64)
- Silent (born 1928-45)
- Greatest (born before 1928)
- Indicates point when generations were at comparable ages

# Sam Rainer: Loosing late teens

The generational battle reaches a flash point when teens reach the age of sixteen. This critical juncture of a young person's life is where the church begins to lose the majority of people in the battle over generations. As the chart below details, what became clearly evident through our research is that most of the dropouts leave the church between the ages of seventeen and nineteen.

Percentage gain/loss for age categories in the church

- Between 15 and 16 +1%
- Between 16 and 17 -15 %
- Between 17 and 18 -24%
- Between 18 and 19 -29%
- Between 19 and 20 -5%

Source: Rainer III, Sam S.  
(2008-09-01). Essential Church .  
B&H Publishing. Kindle Edition.



---

**70%** OF YOUNG ADULTS  
DROP OUT OF CHURCH

FROM LIFEWAY RESEARCH

---

**WHY DID THEY  
LEAVE?**



**(INSERT ANECDOTAL PET PEEVE  
NARRATIVE HERE)**

**BREAK**

# Adulthood & Maturity (40 + yrs)

## Adulthood (40 – 64 yrs.)

**Conflict:** Generativity vs. Stagnation

**Question:** Can I make my life count?

**Virtue Developed:** Care

**Morality (Kollberg):**

- (Stage Five: Local logical morality)
- (Stage Six: Universal logical morality)

**Ritual Actions:** Work, parenthood

## Maturity (65 + yrs.)

**Conflict:** Ego integrity vs. Despair

**Question:** Is it okay to have been me?

**Virtue Developed:** Wisdom

**Morality (Kollberg):**

- (Stage Five: Local logical morality)
- (Stage Six: Universal logical morality)

**Ritual Actions:** Reflection on life

**St. Matthew 5:16.** *Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.*

**Job 12:12.** *Wisdom is with the aged, and understanding in length of days.*

**Titus 2:2-3.** *Older men are to be sober-minded, dignified, self-controlled, sound in faith, in love, and in steadfastness. Older women likewise are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine. They are to teach what is good.*



# Well Done, Good & Faithful Servant?



- **2 Timothy 4:7-8.** I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness...

**It is never too late to be saved... but when?**

# Take Stock: Basics

- How many services do I miss each year?
  - Vespers attendance is 1-10% of “membership”
  - Festal attendance is 5-20% of “membership”
  - Sunday attendance is 30 – 70% of “membership”
- How often do I meaningfully participate in the Sacraments?
- How often do I skip my morning, evening, and Communion prayers
  - How many of my prayers have I memorized?
  - Can I at least say the opening prayers by memory?
- How often and sacrificially do I fast?
- How often do I read the Scriptures? How well do I know the Bible? Other edifying literature?

What, exactly are waiting for? Why aren't we more serious?

# Take Stock - Basics

- What proportion do I tithe? Am I a generous and cheerful giver?
  - Do I give more/less than I do for vacations? Eating out? Luxury goods?
  - Is my giving (money and time!) truly sacrificial?
- Am I patient and consistent in my dealing with others?
- Have I invited the people I love (and hate) to my parish?
- Do people know me by the way I love?



# Laity Spirituality Challenges<sup>1</sup>



- “Regular Bible reading dropped over the last decade from 45% to 37%.
- Volunteering at church declined from 27% to 20% over the same decade.
- Church attendance has slipped from 49% to 42% percent.
- 40% of Christians do not attend church or read the Bible in a typical week
- 70% of Christians are not involved in a small group that meets for spiritual purposes
- There are more than 10 million Christians who are un-churched”

---

<sup>1</sup> State of the Church report by the Barna Research Group (BRG) from a nationwide study of the country's faith practices and perspectives



# **Factors in the Downward Slide in Mainline Churches<sup>1</sup>**



- 1. “Any church that places few demands on its congregants, and does not pay attention to the ultimate questions of faith, will find itself on the sidelines.”**
- 2. “Another factor in the decline was the lack of emphasis on evangelism or invitation among mainline churches, in contrast to evangelical churches.”**

---

<sup>1</sup> In *Vanishing Boundaries: The Religion of Mainline Protestant Baby Boomers*, by Dean R. Hoge, Benton Johnson, and Donald Luidens



# Charitable Giving Facts



1. *“Nearly all the parishioners we interviewed said that they in fact could give more than they do and believe that they should give more.”*<sup>1</sup> (i.e., our parishioners can, and do want to, give more)
2. *“The number one reason that both pastors and parishioners cited as the major barrier to Christian generosity is the individualistic, consumerist nature of American society.”*<sup>1</sup> (i.e., our “Burger King” mentality is a detriment)
3. **The annual value of charitable gifts from those who attend church weekly is \$2,210 versus only \$642 for who only attend a few times or have no religion.** (i.e., getting our parishioners engaged in church also helps our fundraising)<sup>3</sup>

---

1 Passing the Plate – Why American Christians Don't Give Away More Money, Christian Smith, Michael O. Emerson with Patricia Snell

2 *“Clergy As Reluctant Stewards of Congregational Resources”*, Daniel Conway, 1999; *“Financing American Religion”*, Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira

3 Who Really Cares - America's Charity Divide Who Gives, Who Doesn't, and Why It Matters, Arthur C. Brooks



# Greek Orthodox Archdiocese and U.S. Christian Charitable Giving Statistics<sup>1</sup>



	<u>\$</u>	<u>%</u>
<u>Best case 2010 stewardship of Greek Orthodox Archdiocese Parishioners</u> average =	<b>\$218</b>	--
<u>U.S. Christian</u> average =	<b>\$880</b>	<b>+403%</b>
<u>U.S. Evangelical Protestant</u> average =	<b>\$1,165</b>	<b>+534%</b>

<sup>1</sup> All numbers are per person - per year direct financial stewardship contributions

# Taking Stock - Intermediate

- Would others say that I have been a positive force (building up) in parish administration?
- Has the spiritual maturity and professionalism of parish leaders grown during my involvement?
- How many “new” ministry leaders have I identified, encouraged, equipped, fostered, and mentored?
- Would others say that the parish I serve is better or worse off now than when I began serving?
- Would others say that I have set the parish I serve up for future success, or have I been more focused on keeping the doors open?
- How has retention and growth been under my watch?

Discipling and Leadership is something we MUST do better!!!



# Take Stock – Preparation for repose

- Have I shared my story and the story of my parish with others?
- Have I made a good and serious confession (and have I made confession a regular part of my “warm-down”)?
- Have I made known my desire for regarding end of life care, funeral, and patronage known? (Please get a living will!)
- Am I joyful and strong enough IN CHRIST to make the remaining time good (all things are possible, but not all are useful!)?
- Have I given my life COMPLETELY to Christ?

# A Reminder of the Promise (and Desire)!

**John 3:16-17.** *For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God sent the Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him.*

**Romans 8:16-17.** *The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—**heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ**, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.*

**Psalms 84:10.** *For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand elsewhere. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness.*

# Conclusion

**To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven:**

A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted; A time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance; A time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing; A time to get, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away; A time to rend, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak; A time to love, and a time to hate; a time of war, and a time of peace...

**I know that there is nothing better than for a man to rejoice, and to do good in his life. And also that every man should eat and drink, and enjoy the good of all his labor, it is the gift of God.**

**Ecclesiastes 3:1-8, 12-13**