

EXTERNAL THREATS

17 - CULTURAL & SOCIETAL SECULAR & WOKE IDEOLOGIES & PRESSURES

Pressure - Culture Hostile to Christianity: Outside secular ideologies being brought into the church either from converts and cradles; Post Christian culture; The mainstream culture of America is what Aaron Renn calls “negative world”: faith in Christ frequently seen as a bad thing. Christians sincerely living out their faith are less likely to be admired than they are to be seen as backward, foolish, or even dangerous; especially when they choose to repudiate worldly values for the sake of following Christ. Mainstream culture on the internet, on television, in popular books, etc. is crass and pornified and is getting more so. We are not violently persecuted for following Christ- thank God! There is just this general unspoken assumption of “if you follow Christ, you’re an idiot and you’re missing out.” This is most dangerous to our children, especially in their teenage years and early adulthood. The anti-Christian culture will pull at them. As much as possible, we need to provide them with a community that loves Christ and encourages their faith, and that does not throw them to the wolves when they turn eighteen. Sending them off to college- where anti-Christian prejudice is particularly virulent and hostile- alone and apart from family and church, surrounded by all kinds of temptations, for years on end- is too often a death sentence for the faith of young Christians. We should seriously consider alternatives, such as sending our children to local colleges within commuting distance from our homes and allowing them to continue living with us and going to church with us while they do so; Outside secular ideologies seeping into the church- it is all too easy for even Orthodox Christians to allow their secular ideas to seep into the church, often times are contrary to church teaching. Vigilance against such things is important (e.g. “The church needs to get rid of these outdated (or sometimes they will say bigoted) practices”); Politics are always a threat; Woke political agendas do not fit Orthodox core values; Politics are always a threat; Certain World natural disasters are addressed and others are avoided – and the church does not always speak out consistently on critical issues; Secularization and declining church attendance trends; Competing community events and activities for family time; Post Christian culture; Society hostile to Christian beliefs and people assume the milieu in the culture we are in and our children can become dangerously radicalized; Outside secular ideologies being brought into the church either from converts and cradles; Woke political agendas do not fit Orthodox core values; With more converts lead to dilution of culture as well as when they want to be and how they are Orthodox; Society hostile to Christian beliefs and people assume the milieu in the culture we are in and our children can become dangerously radicalized.

10 - ONLINE / SOCIAL MEDIA MISINFORMATION

-; Socio and geopolitical climate instigates malicious actors to share slanderous info about a parish and writing hit pieces; Social media and online churches; Malicious Actors- there have been recent attempts by bad actors visiting parishes and writing hit pieces on both the Priest and their parishioners because the Priests dare to speak out against the idols of the secular-minded world. Often, they tend to ask very probing and borderline invasive questions trying to force some sort of political talking point out of interviewees and misrepresenting the response (or in most cases, lack of response) in order to paint the parish and their Priest as domestic extremist enablers, or in some cases foreign agents. This latter point more so due to current geopolitical events; The counter-reaction to online apologetics- this ties in with malicious actors. There is a growing effort to try and dismiss or slander online apologists as “Online Orthodox” or some other derogatory term, and assert that “Oh they don’t ACTUALLY go to church” (not that there is any way the detractor can actually know that). Often times , such tactics are used by malicious actors who believe in changing the church to fit modernist secular ideas. Things like this have resulted in lawsuits due to lies and slander about clergy. This is problematic in many ways. These online apologists are either clergy in good standing that were never defrocked, deposed, etc. or laity with the correct blessing from their Priests who are regular attendees of their parish. These people are slandered because of their zealous defense of the faith. They are labeled as “extremists” or “rigorist” because they often attack the secular idols of the modern day and believe that we should be uncompromising in our faith. It often misrepresents the context in which these apologetics take place. Many of these apologists go into debate-style discussions with people who are more interested in getting out of context clips to get views on Youtube to slander Orthodoxy. Like it or not, these internet debates are often messy and reminiscent of gladiatorial combat. Passivity does not lend well to such environments, for good or for ill, and to rebuke someone who is often intentionally misrepresenting not just the arguments made but the church as a whole can be necessary. The dismissal of such apologists is a huge mistake. These apologists are great work for the church, and as evidenced by testimony from many visitors to our parish who have embraced the church as their home many credit these online sources or apologists with aiding them on their journey. They have tangible results, and leverage things like the internet and social

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media for powerful evangelism efforts among the West. Clergy or even hierarchs who attempt to brush these things aside are making a large mistake. As said earlier under opportunities, these content creators are handing us on a silver platter zealous men and young women. Yes, there are some online Orthodox who might have never attended a Liturgy or who fall into prelest on certain things, but it is up to US to ensure these men and women receive the proper catechism and hone their passion into a finely-crafted edge. To dismiss or misrepresent what these apologists have accomplished for the church is a grave error. If these types are in error on something is one issue, but if the complaint is “They were mean to someone who misrepresents Christ as a zombie carpenter who tells us to be cannibals and stubbornly refuses to change” (I have seen arguments like these be made) then that is a complaint I don’t think should be given weight; Internet and technology – lots of non-positive Orthodox information available; Social media, peer pressure, drugs and current trending societal “values” pose a major threat to our youth in particular; Internet and technology – lots of non-positive Orthodox information available. ; False information about the religion in the internet and in media; Socio and geopolitical climate instigates malicious actors to share slanderous info about a parish and writing hit pieces; False information about the religion in the internet and in media.

7 - INSUFFICIENT CATECHETICAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS AND MATERIALS

- Many outside our faith do not even know what the Orthodox church is; Update our website- way too old; Bringing in too many people with limited catechesis does not help the individuals and sow division between prior understandings of faith; Absence of good catechism material; With more converts lead to dilution of culture as well as when they want to be and how they are Orthodox; Bringing in too many people with limited catechesis does not help the individuals and sow division between prior understandings of faith; Absence of god catechism material.

6 - CLERGY SHORTAGE & VOCATION CHALLENGES

- Shortage of clergy generally; Insufficient available clergy; the challenges of becoming a priest and the hurdle of dropping everything and moving to Brookline; Shortage of clergy generally; Insufficient available clergy; the challenges of becoming a priest and the hurdle of dropping everything and moving to Brookline.

5 - SECURITY & SAFETY

- Safety and security of churchgoers- need to identify vulnerabilities and establish a security team; Strangers walking in for the purposes of malicious purposes; With the growing incidence of violence in schools, churches, etc., there is a serious need to focus on the safety of our parishioners while on church premises; Violence and safety concerns-. I know there was a group of individuals making a “safety protocol” for our parish many years ago. Is this still up to date and is each new parish council being informed of this protocol? With the growth and addition of so many new families, there is much that may have been discussed in the past that may be good to revisit periodically; With the growing number of violent incidents against churches across the country, it would be naïve for any church to assume they are immune.

5 - FINANCIAL & ECONOMIC UNCERTAINTY

- Economy and prices have gone up; Uncertain economy; Economic challenges: inflation and reduced disposable income; General economic uncertainty - inflationary costs of running parish; General economic uncertainty - inflationary costs of running parish.

2 - GEOPOLITICAL ISSUES

- Issues between Russia and Ukraine foreign churches and bishops; Issues between Russia and Ukraine foreign churches and bishops.

ONEOFFS

- Public health concerns (illness outbreaks, pandemics);

INTERNAL TO DORMITION AND THUS NOT AN EXTERNAL THREAT

- Security lapses in the Narthex;
- Physical location of church property and people in it (exterior doors are unlocked during services and on a busy street);
- Possible legal or zoning restrictions impacting parish property use;
- I appreciate the efforts being made to have police present for some evening church services and at our festival