

Positioning the 21st Century Parish: Functional Structures and Church Health



Office of Church Growth and Evangelism

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If we are to position the parish for the 21st century, what position is the parish in North America in right now...?

- Our Faith
- Our Culture



Our Faith: Viewing the Future...

- At present (the) future is viewed in two mutually exclusive ways. There are those, on the one hand, who in the name of Orthodoxy reject its “Americanization” and there are those, on the other hand, who are ready, in the name of “Americanization” to give up much of Orthodoxy.

- For the first group, the future of Orthodoxy in America can only mean the perpetuation of Greek or Russian Orthodoxy and the attitude here is that of a pure negativism: the whole world is in Apostasy and the Church, to preserve Orthodoxy, must simply isolate herself in an artificially recreated past.

- In the second group, by far the most numerous, acceptance of America and “Americanization” may mean a simple surrender to secularism.
- Fr Alexander Schmemmann

Throughout its history the Church has always struggled with two main poles...

- Material--
 - Is it bad?
 - Is Christ only man?
 - Tends to Monism
- Spiritual--
 - Is that all there is?
 - Is Christ only God?
 - Tends to Dualism

Our Faith's Historic Struggle:

- Material--

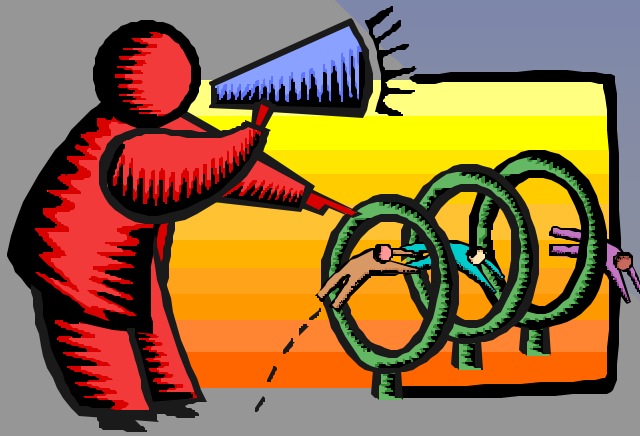
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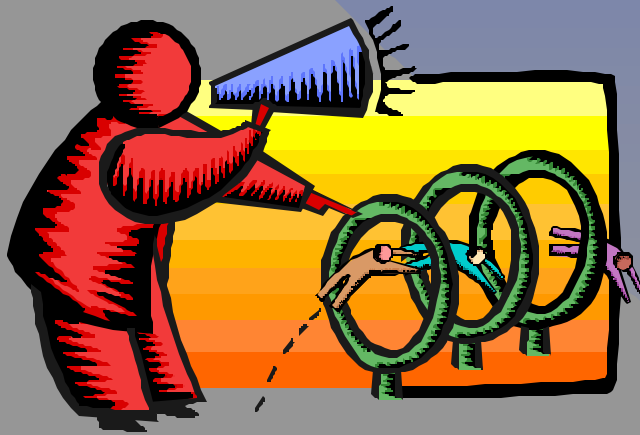
Fighting the same battles today.....

- Technocratic pole

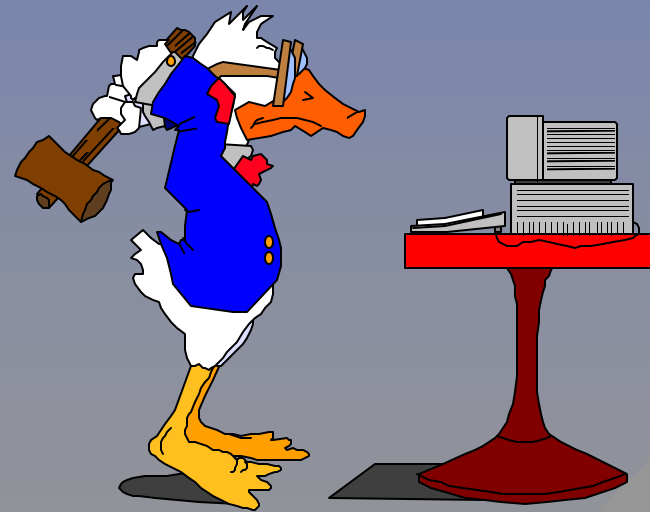


Fighting the same battles today.....

- Technocratic pole



- Spiritualistic pole



What are the results of these polarities in our parishes?

- Unhealthy churches
 - Dysfunctional structures
 - Demoralized, cynical, frustrated, and angry clergy and laity
 - Little to no growth
 - And in many cases, severe decline

Our Culture:

- In the United States in the next 24 hours...
 - 10,799 babies will be born and 6,403 people will die. There will be 6,148 marriages and 3,110 divorces.

Our Culture:

- In the United States in the next 24 hours...
 - 3236 women will have had an abortion and 3445 unmarried women will give birth to a child

Our Culture:

- In the United States in the next 24 hours...
 - 84 people will commit suicide, 45 with HIV-AIDS will die, and 43 will die from alcohol related car crashes

Our Culture:

- In the United States in the next 24 hours...
- 4,630 fifteen-year-old girls will have sexual intercourse for the first time, 1,313 students will drop out of high school, and more than 6,000 people under 18 will light up their first cigarette

Our Culture:

- In the United States in the next 24 hours...
- 411 Americans will convert to Islam, 872 will become Mormons, and 5000 will become Christians*
- **Lost in America, Tom Clegg and Warren Bird*

Our Culture:

- *And keep in mind that in the last 3 years...the OCA added a total of 414 souls to its territorial dioceses*

The Result: We have no impact on North American society...

- "In North America...Christianity generally, not to speak of Orthodoxy, is not a respected, accepted and supported part of public life and education, but is rather warred against, scorned and ridiculed by powerful forces in society." *Fr Thomas Hopko, Keynote Address: 13th AAC*

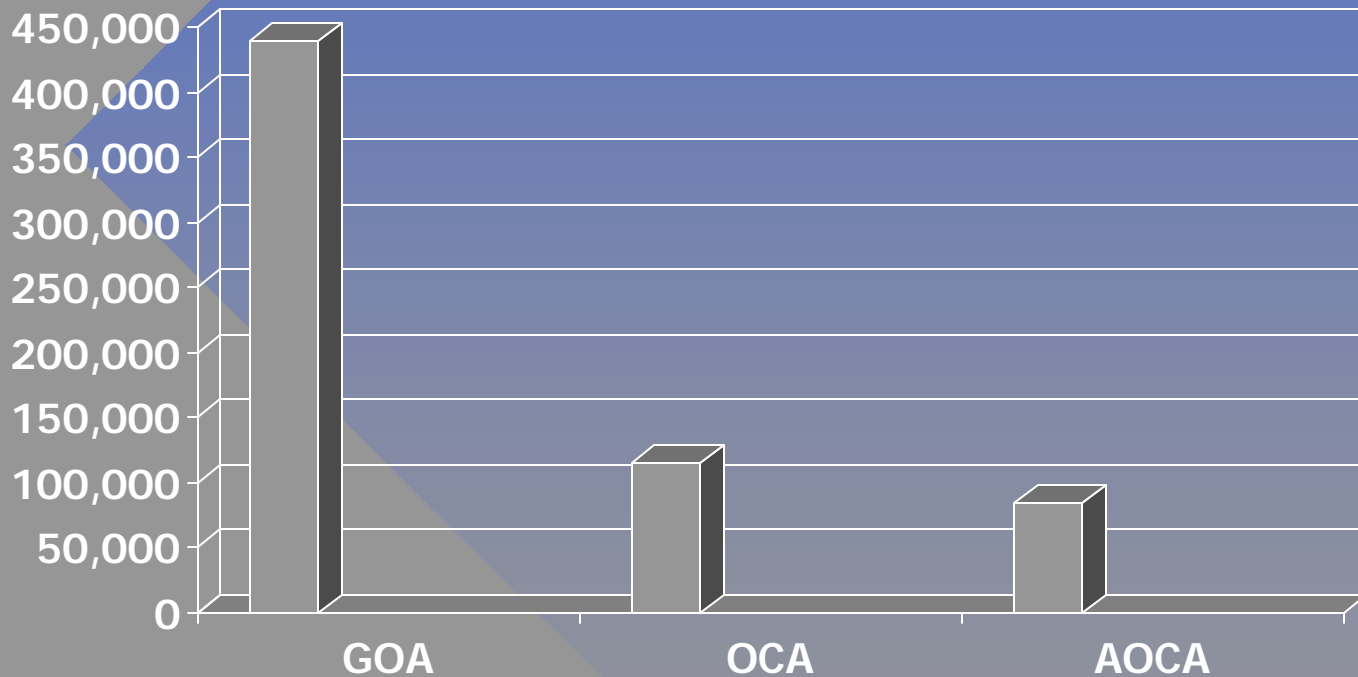
In other words...

- Orthodoxy is *irrelevant!*

In other words...

- Orthodoxy is *irrelevant!*
- And it's our fault!

What does this mean to us numerically?



- SCOBA Churches=757,340

- GOA=440,000 OCA=115,100 AOCA=83,700

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Yet:

- The Church ... is not a 'self-centered' community, but precisely a missionary community whose purpose is salvation not from, but of, the world.

– --Fr Alexander Schmemmann, *Church, World, Mission*

But if the *world* is to be saved by the *Church*...there has to be a synthesis between technocratic and spiritualistic thinking!

• Matter ↔ • Spirit

In fact there is...

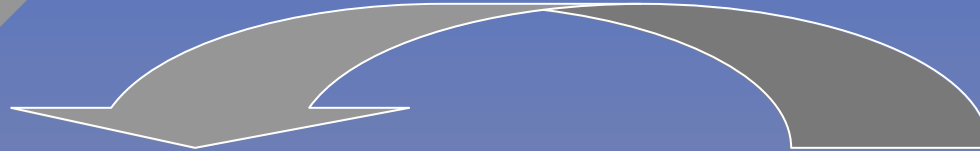
Recognizing the Tendencies:

- $A + B = \text{Outcome}$
 - Let A = study paper, program, or seminar
 - Let B = strategic plan or implementation or time line
- $0 + \text{prayer} = \text{Outcome}$
 - or, doctrine
 - or, tradition
 - or, custom

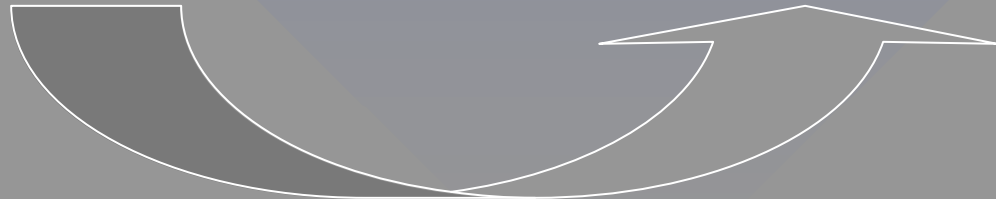
It can't be either/or...

- Strategic planning
- Effective structures...
- Praying
- Deep spiritual life...

It must be both / and



- “Do not begin any work without previous thought, and do not perform it in a careless and absentminded way, for thy work is God’s work, and he is *accursed* that does it negligently.”
- “The first and most efficient preparation is prayer, which alone can open the spring of highest teaching and bring down a blessing upon every good beginning and work.”



Recognizing Tendencies: Liturgical Worship and Sacramental Service, *Keynote p. 6*

- Technocratic tendencies
- Spiritualistic tendencies

Recognizing Tendencies: Spiritual Life and Pastoral Care, *Keynote p. 7*

- Technocratic tendencies
- Spiritualistic tendencies

Recognizing Tendencies: Education and Enlightenment, *Keynote p. 9*

- Technocratic tendencies
- Spiritualistic tendencies

Recognizing Tendencies: Mission and Philanthropy,

Keynote, p. 10

- Technocratic tendencies
- Spiritualistic tendencies

Structure and Administration,

Keynote, p. 12

- Technocratic tendencies
- Spiritualistic tendencies

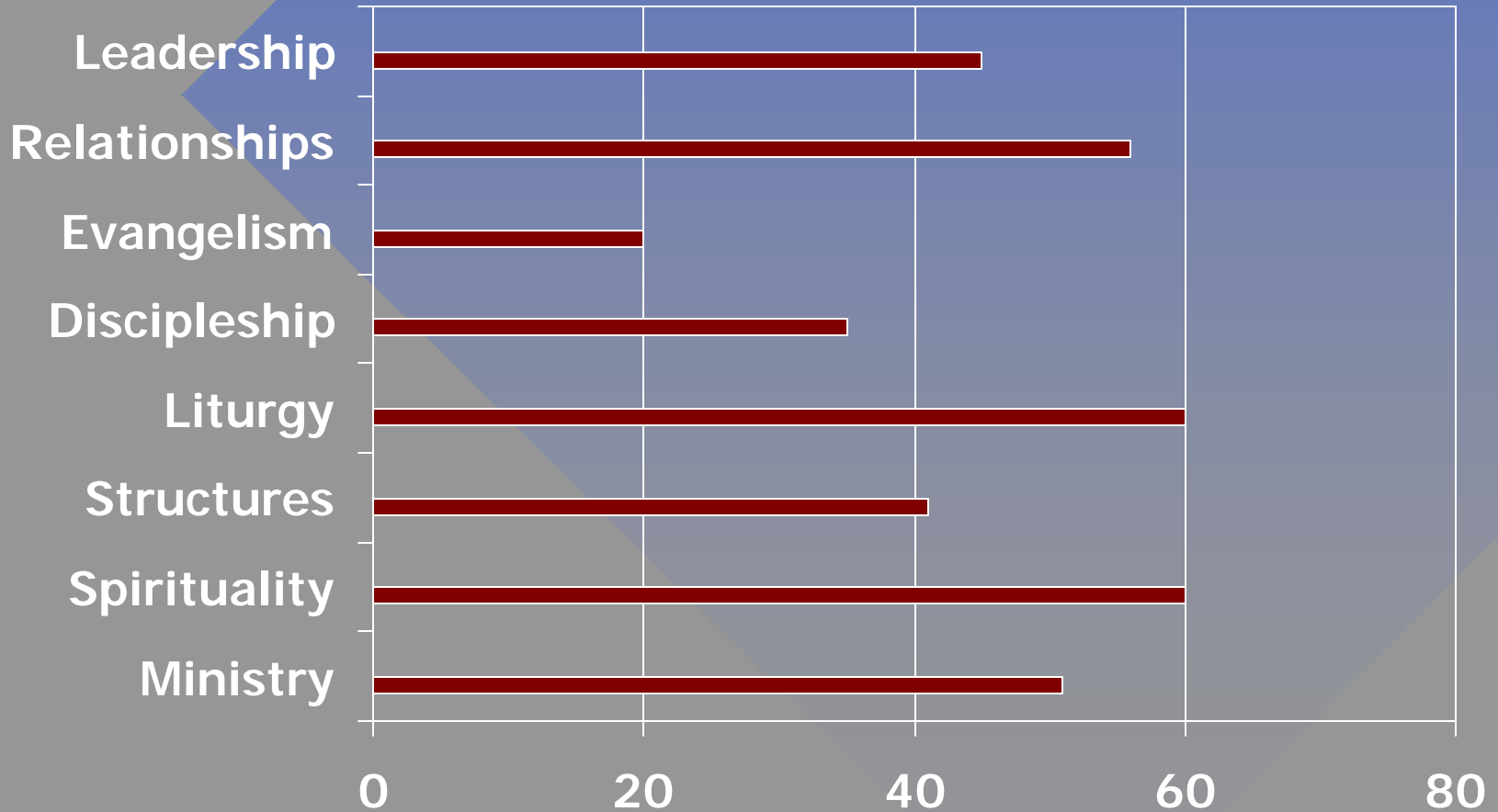
Identifying the Tendencies in *your* Parish...

- List 5-10 technocratic tendencies in your parish
 - --one per Post-It note
- Apply Post-It's to your worksheet on the left column
- List 5-10 spiritualistic tendencies in your parish
 - --one per Post-It note
- Apply your Post-It's to worksheet on the right column

Prioritize:

- Making reference to your Post-It's
- Rearrange Post-It's according to 8 categories on p. 2 of your handout
 - Leadership (Administration), Ministry, Spirituality, Structures, Liturgy, Discipleship, Evangelism, Relationships (Pastoral Care)

Typical church profile:



A new paradigm for parish health:

•Dynamic

•Static

1 Peter 2:5

“living...

stones”

Eph 2:21

“growth...

of the
temple”

Eph 4:12

“body of
Christ...

built”

I Cor 3:9

“God’s field
and...

God’s
building”

The Challenge:

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- Does it tend toward technocratic or spiritualistic thinking?
- What are your strengths?
- Using your strengths, set realistic goals to address your weakness(es).

Attribution:

- Much of this material may be found in:
 - *Natural Church Development*, by Dr Christian Schwarz, The Institute for Natural Church Development, Germany.
 - *Lost in America*, Tom Clegg and Warren Bird

Thanks from the Church Growth and Evangelism team!

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 - State College, PA
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- Dn Michael Myers
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